



**POTENTIAL FOR THE AFGHAN TALIBAN GOING
OVER TO THE OFFENSIVE DURING
THE POST-2014 PERIOD**

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by Tribal Analysis Center Staff



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Potential For the Afghan Taliban Going Over to the Offensive During the Post-2014 Period

The Afghans are divided into clans, over which the various chiefs exercise a sort of feudal supremacy. Their indomitable hatred of rule, and their love of individual independence, alone prevents their becoming a powerful nation; but this very irregularity and uncertainty of action makes them dangerous neighbours, liable to be blown about by the wind of caprice, or to be stirred up by political intriguers, who artfully excite their passions.

Frederick Engels¹

The enemy's objective is to have us concentrate our main forces for a decisive engagement. Our objective is exactly the opposite. We want to choose conditions favorable to us, concentrate superior forces and fight decisive campaigns and battles only when we are sure of victory, . . . we want to avoid decisive engagements under unfavorable conditions when we are not sure of victory.

Mao Tse-Tung²

The enemy, employing his small forces against a vast country, can only occupy some big cities and main lines of communication and part of the plains. Thus there are extensive areas in the territory under his occupation which he has had to leave ungarrisoned, and which provide a vast arena for our guerrilla warfare.

Mao Tse-Tung³

From the history of the Jalalabad Campaign, an example of insurgent failure at conventional warfare:

At some point in a protracted insurgency campaign, generally the insurgents must begin to concentrate their forces and enter into the use of more conventional military tactics in order to achieve victory. In the case of the period immediately following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan on February 15, 1989, the Afghan mujahedin and their Pakistani ISI advisers made a critical error by going over to the conventional offensive well before their available manpower was prepared to do so. Part of this error was created through the relatively easy success the mujahedin had experienced in Afghanistan's northeastern provinces from which the Soviets evacuated early. The insurgent capture of Barikot and Asadabad apparently gave them a false sense of primacy over their communist Afghan opponents. Another contributing factor was the relative inexperience in managing insurgent operations by the ISI commander, Hamid Gul, who was a Pakistani Armored Corps officer who was new to his position after replacing General Akhtar who had been killed in a plane crash along with President Zia and the American ambassador. In addition to these problems, Pakistani politicians who had been supporting Afghan refugees inside Pakistan were under some self-imposed pressure to gain control of Afghan territory in order to repatriate many of these refugees.

In their haste to capture a major Afghan city and install an Afghan government to compete with the communist government in Kabul, the mujahedin, Pakistani military, and intelligence planners initiated a conventional attack on the city of Jalalabad that was believed to be vulnerable.

1 First published: in *The New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. I, 1858; transcribed: Andy Blunden, 2001; MECW [Marx and Engels Collected Works] Volume 18, p. 40.

2 Mao Tse-Tung, *On Protracted Warfare*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967, p. 97.

3 Mao, *On Protracted Warfare*, p. 65.

Poor planning, the inability to control and coordinate the activities of the different insurgent groups, and the presence of Soviet artillery and air support for the communist defenders of the city led to a major defeat of the mujahedin and their Pakistani supporters. This defeat served to leave the insurgents weakened, divided, and unable to concentrate their forces again for approximately 3 years. Simultaneously, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan military forces and their tribal allies were emboldened by their ability to repel a major attack by the mujahedin so soon after the Soviets withdrew their conventional military support. As a result of this hastily conducted conventional military offensive and its failure, the communist government of President Najibullah was able to survive until after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the new Russian republic under President Boris Yeltsin stopped providing funding for the communist Afghans.

The defeat at Jalalabad had one additional lingering impact on the Pakistani government. General Hamid Gul, the armored Corps officer involved in planning the concentration of guerrilla forces to attack a regular army positioned within field fortifications, was relieved of his duties and retired by the new Pakistani president, Benazir Bhutto.

While the Afghan insurgents have no military academies or war colleges in which to study strategy and tactics, the Pakistani military has several of these institutions. Additionally, the mistake at Jalalabad that cost Hamid Gul his job has been studied a great deal by Pakistani military officers and academics. They are very unlikely to ever go on the offensive with unsupported insurgent forces assembled rapidly. Obviously, the Pakistani military also understands very well that supporting fires from both rocket artillery and tactical aircraft made a major difference in the outcome of the fighting over Jalalabad in 1989. Many of the lessons learned were outlined carefully by ISI's Brig. Mohammed Yousaf in his book *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap*. Important details from this book follow:

“One of the most difficult decisions that a guerrilla commander has to make once his forces begin to get the upper hand is the precise moment in the campaign when he should go on the offensive, when he should progress from guerrilla to conventional strategy and tactics. It is a matter of shrewd judgment. He has to assess the enemy's position with care. Is he sufficiently weakened numerically and materially? Is he demoralized, collapsing from within? Does he lack the means to keep his units adequately supplied? If the answers to these questions are yes, then perhaps the time is ripe to shift to the conventional phase of guerrilla war. But before doing so the commander must also examine his own forces. Are his men sufficiently trained to adopt coordinated conventional attacks, and if so on what scale? Are they well equipped with heavy support weapons? Can they cope with the enemy's likely control of the air? Can the scattered groups be supplied, concentrated, and then cooperate in joint offensives? Again, if the answers are affirmative, then, probably, it is time to launch the offensive that will end the war.

“There are numerous instances in military history when the guerrilla commander has moved into the conventional phase too soon, got a bloody nose, and as a result the campaign has been set back for months, even years.... The Soviets had gone by mid-February, 1989, and in March the Mujahedin took to conventional warfare with a full-scale assault, not on Kabul, but on Jalalabad.

“Why was such an attack mounted? Why was there no strategic plan to finish the war after the Soviets had gone? These questions are difficult to answer.... The AIG [Afghan Interim Government], which was basically controlled by the seven Parties, backed by Pakistan, and seemingly with the support of ISI, selected Jalalabad as their target of their post-Soviet strategy. It was to be a conventional attack on a major city (but not the key city of Kabul). The time had come, as they thought, to abandon guerrilla warfare. Jalalabad was tempting because it was so close (30 kilometers) to the Pakistani border of the Parrot's Beak. This meant that Mujahedin reinforcements and supplies should have quick and easy access to the front line. A main road led over the Khyber Pass to Peshawar. A victory at Jalalabad would enable the AIG to move forward with ease to Jalalabad. There they could declare a part of Afghanistan liberated and a new government established. The political objectives had some merit, but

depended for its fulfillment on military success. Could the Mujahedin surround and storm the city, and if they did would the Afghan Army collapse, or would they just get bombed out of existence? Above all would the loss of Jalalabad lead to the loss of Kabul?

“I believe General Gul allowed himself to be persuaded that it was militarily a sound proposal, partly by some of his younger operational staff, partly by the Leaders, and also by pressure from the Pakistani government, who saw it as a way of shifting all the Peshawar politicians and their countless followers back into Afghanistan. The easy capture of smaller garrisons at Barikot, Azmar, and Asadabad in the Kunar Valley added to the Mujahedin’s overconfidence.⁴

Available evidence clearly shows a close tactical relationship between the Pashtun Taliban and Pakistan’s military and intelligence organizations. The reasons for these direct connections are complex and extend to the formation of Pakistan, itself, and into the history of British India. One obvious indication of the hostility between Afghanistan, with its 200 years of history as a nation-state, compared to Pakistan that was created in 1947 can be seen in the vote in the United Nations that provided entry of the new country in the world body. Only one nation voted against the admission of Pakistan – Afghanistan. Since the beginning of Afghanistan as a nation, it had been ruled by Durrani Pashtuns who had long enduring claims to wide swaths of territory along its eastern border that was also inhabited by Pashtuns. The competing claims of this area by both Afghanistan and Pakistan has resulted in a lingering animosity between repetitive Pakistani governments and the Durrani rulers of Afghanistan who had been the advocates of the creation of a Pashtun homeland, Pashtunistan, at the expense of Pakistan’s national territory for generations. This is been the underlying cause for the Pakistani government supporting nearly any non-Durrani group as the governing body of Afghanistan. The traditional enemies of the Durrani Pashtuns have been their Ghilzai cousins and it is been this group of tribes that the Pakistanis have provided their support in their goal to deny the Durrani tribes control of the seat of government in Kabul. Many, if not most, of the mujahedin groups recognized as belligerents against the Soviet Union and the communist Afghans were from the Ghilzai tribes. None of the leaders of any of the groups comprising the Seven Party Alliance allowed to operate out of Peshawar were from any of the Durrani tribes.

Pakistan’s government and military officials followed this exact pattern in the formation of the Taliban Movement that was basically created by Pakistan’s ISI. Its leadership was nearly exclusively comprised of non-Durrani Pashtuns and very few of the non-Pashtun ethnic groups were affiliated with nearly Taliban. The names of major leadership personalities within the early Taliban were non-Durrani Pashtuns: Mullah Mohammad Omar, Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, Mullah Ghaus. Other long term insurgent leaders had similar ethnic and tribal backgrounds: Hekmatyar, Sayyaf, Yunus Khalis, and Mohammad Nabi Mohammedi are examples of the non-Durrani Pashtun insurgent leaders.

Having learned their lesson from the Jalalabad debacle, Pakistan’s insurgency planners and managers built logistics, training, and air support into their operational support for the Taliban. A strategy involving the use of their own troops while in civilian clothing was documented in the 1999 crisis with India over the Karghil region along their disputed Line of Control. One example was from an eyewitness who had experienced three wars in his valley since 1947. The article regarding his interview included:

4 Yousaf, Muhammad, *The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower*, Casement, 1992, pp. 224-226.

“Earlier this year, hundreds of fighters from Pakistan sneaked across the Line of Control and seized mountaintops that Indian soldiers had vacated in winter when snow blanketed the rocky peaks. India says many of the fighters were Pakistani soldiers disguised as militant guerrillas.”^{5,6}

With this as background, it should not be a surprise that Pakistani C-130 aircraft apparently flew exfiltration missions into Konduz city, Afghanistan, in order to remove their forces that were either advising or directly supporting the Taliban in late 2001 when this area was surrounded and about to be heavily bombed by American aircraft. If the Karghil pattern was followed, the Pakistani forces co-located with the Taliban would have been in civilian clothing and armed much like their Afghan allies.

Time Magazine’s Tim McGirk provided an example of direct Pakistani military and paramilitary support for unidentified individuals trapped by Northern Alliance and U.S. Special Forces in besieged Konduz in November, 2001. If Pakistani regular forces, such as Special Services Group officers and enlisted soldiers were captured while assisting the Taliban forces that were under attack this would have been a major embarrassment for President Musharraf, himself a veteran of Special Services Group. McGirk apparently was correct with his suggestion that “Pakistani loyalties were still divided”:

“Even after Sept. 11, Pakistani loyalties were still divided. At least five key ISI operatives some retired, some active, stayed on to help their Taliban comrades prepare defenses in Kandahar against the Americans. None has been punished for this disobedience. And in New Delhi, Indian intelligence agents insist that during the battle for the Taliban bastion of Kunduz, Musharraf persuaded the U.S. to allow Pakistani C-130 planes to airlift out between 300 to 1,000 of its pro-Taliban fighters before American jets poured fire onto the northern Afghan town. Both Washington and Islamabad deny this happened.”⁷

British sources confirmed this reporting in an article published on November 21, 2001:

“Mystery surrounds crucial aspects of the US campaign in Afghanistan, particularly in regard to relations to the Northern Alliance and Pakistan. The focus of fighting in the north is the besieged city of Kunduz, which has been pounded regularly this week by US B52 bombers and US Navy fighters. But according to several witnesses, the US permitted two Pakistani C-130 Hercules to fly out of the city earlier this week, with Pakistani special forces aboard who had been advising the Taliban.”⁸

These reports show the close, but cleverly deniable, direct support on the ground that was provided to the Taliban during their final days in Afghanistan. The use of Pakistani C-130 aircraft in evacuating Pakistani surrogates and their advisors was confirmed in an email exchange with a retired Pakistani Air Force lieutenant-colonel, himself a pilot, on January 5, 2013. The retired officer had learned of the special flights into Konduz

5,6 <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1999/Man-Reflects-on-India-Pakistan-War/id-e83cbd99f55d4b94f679f2860ca271ce> accessed January 7, 2013; while assigned to Islamabad in 1999, this researcher personally saw local television accounts of Pakistani regular troops departing trucks while wearing civilian clothing and combat web gear while carrying light weapons. The local announcer explained that they were engaged in the Karghil conflict; while assigned to Islamabad in 1999, this researcher personally saw local television accounts of Pakistani regular troops departing trucks while wearing civilian clothing and combat web gear. The local announcer explained that they were engaged in the Karghil conflict

7 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,233999,00.html#ixzz2GvnTaY4t> Accessed January 5, 2013.

8 Fox, Robert, “U.S. Hints at Sending Ground Troops,” London evening Standard, 21 November 2001. <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/us-hints-at-sending-ground-troops-6335565.html> accessed January 3, 2013.

in a personal conversation with a former Academy classmate who was one of the C-130 pilots who flew into Konduz to evacuate the Pakistanis and their armed surrogates.⁹

There are numerous additional reports that cluster around the narrative that the Pakistani military has been involved in providing direct personnel support for the Taliban. While there are no credible eyewitness accounts, few analysts doubt that the Pakistani military has not used the Karghil scenario, with regular troops posing as insurgents, in support of Afghanistan's Pashtun Taliban. A pair of examples:

- According to Ahmad Rashid, between 80,000 and 100,000 Pakistanis trained and fought in Afghanistan.¹⁰
- Peter Tomsen claimed in his book that up until 9/11 Pakistani military and ISI officers along with thousands of regular armed forces personnel had been involved in the fighting in Afghanistan.¹¹

There is also compelling evidence that the Pakistani military establishment also prepared – and delivered in at least two cases – tactical air support for Taliban during force-on-force engagements with the non-Pashtun Northern Alliance forces as the “religious students” moved northward in an attempt to gain control of the entire country. The Pakistani Air Force officer cited previously was instrumental in providing corroboration of some sketchy media reporting.

The following reports of Pakistani tactical air support for Taliban operations are consistent with an interview in November 2012 at Rand Corporation with the retired Pakistani Air Force officer who was actually a staff planner for similar air support for the Taliban at Kabul if they had bogged down in their efforts to force Ahmad Shah Masood's Northern Alliance forces from the city in late September, 1996. According to this officer who also participated as a pilot following the contingency planning, Pakistani aircraft were overhead at Kabul and prepared to strike key targets if the Taliban were unable to capture the city.

- On August 1, 1997, the Taliban launched an attack on Sheberghan, the main base of Abdul Rashid Dostam. Dostam has said the reason the attack was successful was due to 1500 Pakistani commandos taking part and that the Pakistani Air Force also gave support.¹²
- In 1998, Iran accused Pakistan of sending its air force to bomb Mazar-i-Sharif in support of Taliban forces and directly accused Pakistani troops for “war crimes at Bamiyan.”¹³

⁹ The unidentified retired officer, now a U.S. resident employed by the U.S. Government as a cultural instructor also pursuing a PhD at a Washington area university, explained the Pakistani Air Force role in the provision of deniable support to the Taliban from their 1996 attack on Kabul through the evacuation of key personnel trapped by the Northern Alliance in the northern Afghanistan city, Konduz. An email exchange on January 5, 2013 was conducted to ensure accuracy and determine the veracity of the initial source of the information provided to the retired officer that originally discussed during an unclassified RAND Corporation briefing in November 2012. Ahmad Rashid and Musharraf provide details of this evacuation in their books.

¹⁰ Maley, William, 2009, *The Afghan Wars*, Palgrave-Macmillan, pg. 288. Rashid, Ahmed, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Yale, pg. 194.

¹¹ Tomsen, Peter, *Wars of Afghanistan*, 2011, Public Affairs, pg. 322.

¹² Clements, Frank, *Conflict in Afghanistan: A Historical Encyclopedia*, pg. 54. [This is based on a Wikipedia reference of a document that could not be retrieved in the short period allocated to complete this study. Clements is a reliable scholar and there is no reason to doubt his account.]

¹³ Constable, Pamela, Afghanistan: “Arena for a New Rivalry”, *Washington Post*, (1998-09-16). From Constable's article, “Tehran radio

Projecting into the future

With the past as the prologue it always seems to be, historical inertia that will continue on its reliable trajectory will not change the perceived need of the Pakistanis to undercut the Durrani Pashtun government in Kabul. Hamid Karzai and his allies are especially dangerous to Pakistani interests as he is a Durrani Pashtun, a Pashtunistan advocate, and he was educated in an enemy country: India. Karzai attended Simla University in India's northeastern region. From the Pakistani perspective, Karzai's political and military allies include the urban dwellers who also supported the communist governments of Taraki, Amin, Karmal, and Najibullah in opposition to the Pashtun insurgents supported by Pakistan. Added to Karzai's allies are the ethnic groups that supported the communists, the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, and opposed the Pashtuns supported out of Pakistan. Pakistan's allies in Afghanistan tend to be the rural Pashtuns, particularly the non-Durrani, although many of the *nang*¹⁴, or traditionally nomadic Durrani tribes and sub-tribes of Panjpai Durrani sub-confederation have consistently gravitated toward the insurgency.

Projecting into the probable future with the use of Pashtunistan as "corrective lenses," Pakistan is very unlikely to change a long-term policy intended to fragment and weaken any central authority in Kabul, especially if they are Zirk Durrani Pashtuns – as they have always been except for the communist and Soviet periods when Kabul was governed by mostly Ghilzai Pashtuns – and during the Taliban period when non-Durrani Pashtuns dominated the country. This has always been Pakistan's desired end state for Afghanistan and their military-dominated government is very unlikely to change this approach, regardless of the presence of U.S./NATO troops or not.

One thing is absolutely certain: they will not make the same mistake made in the hasty conventional offensive against Jalalabad they initiated within a month of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Guerrillas will not be concentrated to attack regular, entrenched Afghan National Army soldiers within weeks of the U.S./NATO departure and when their very probable offensive is initiated, it will be well-planned, rehearsed, and coordinated. Supporting fires, artillery, rocket, and tactical air, will be a part of the offensive, something that was such a compelling error in the 1989 attack on Jalalabad. Hamid Gul, the fired ISI commander, is still alive, politically active, and has probably lectured quietly on the planning and execution failures associated with any attempt to move guerrillas into conventional operations too quickly. They will also have studied U.S. military history, particularly the Vietnam phase and the several years of planning and preparation between the U.S. military withdrawal from there to the initiation of the North Vietnamese offensive in 1975 that quickly resulted in the total defeat of the South Vietnamese army.

Developing the realization that an active, but unacknowledged "Cold War" apparently exists between Pakistan and the United States would be a good starting point to prepare for the obvious insurgent offensive that will occur in the post-2014 period. Regardless of diplomacy and financial support provided to the Pakistani military and economy, Pashtunistan and its Zirk Durrani advocates will continue to be assessed as a mortal threat to Pakistan. Weakening Afghanistan through a fragmentation strategy will probably begin once most of the U.S./NATO forces depart. History tends to "telegraph" the most likely strategy Pakistan could utilize to accomplish its goals and once this is understood, both deterrence and counter-measures may be developed and implemented. The following are likely to result in the aftermath of the withdrawal:

accused Pakistan of sending its air force to bomb the city in support of the Taliban's advance and said Iran was holding Pakistan responsible for what it termed war crimes at Bamiyan. Pakistan has denied that accusation and previous allegations of direct involvement in the Afghan conflict.... "There is no doubt that Pakistan has a deep strategic involvement in Afghanistan now. The Taliban are their Trojan horse," [Rifaat, a professor of international relations at the University of Islamabad] Hussain said.

14 Professor Akbar Agha has explained the difference between the sedentary, or *qalang*, Pashtuns and those who remain more nomadic, at least in historical mindset, the *nang* sub-tribes. These *nang* tribes generally received poor land when compared to their Zirk Durrani cousins and this is a source of resentment that leads them toward the insurgents.

- Low level raiding and attacks will continue in border areas and in the contiguous zones surrounding Pashtun enclaves with non-Pashtun ethnic populations.
- Much of the conflict from Pakistan’s rural areas into the “settled” areas will subside as the Afghan-related insurgent groups are prepared for eventual conventional force-on-force operations against Afghanistan’s urban areas. This period is likely to take between two and three years following the departure of U.S./NATO forces. The relatively dormant phase will be minimal if the Afghan National Army experiences anticipated force reductions due to budget shortfalls.
- Changes in American political administrations likely to occur at the end of President Obama’s current term can be expected to view additional large expenditures to support the Afghan military against the dormant threat to be unnecessary. This may be a political issue with the Republican challenger against any Democrat seeking to succeed the current Democratic administration and funding can be expected to be reduced dramatically, if not halted completely. As with the Soviet Union’s collapse and Yeltsin’s Federal Republic cutting Afghanistan’s funding, the post-2014 Afghan government can be expected to suffer shortages, if not experience a collapse not unlike that experienced by Najibullah. It is into this vacuum and military disruption that the next stage of the Afghan wars is likely to erupt.
- Unlike the dramatic failure at Jalalabad in 1989, maneuvering Pashtun Taliban units will probably have skilled, experienced ISI and SSG advisers¹⁵ attached to coordinate movements, adjust supporting fires, and request tactical air strikes when felt necessary. The U.S./NATO forces, unlike the Soviets, have created no national air capability for the Afghan military and with the withdrawal of the U.S./NATO air complement from the region, any Pakistani air support for the Taliban – as in the past – will remain deniable.
- It is unlikely that the Pakistani military and intelligence services will seek to gain control of all of Afghanistan. This was attempted with poor results in the 1994-2001 period without any enduring success. Pakistan’s goal is likely to be the creation of a “Pashtunistan,” a perceived Pashtun homeland, out of Afghanistan’s national territory instead of having a similar national entity developed by the Zirak Dur-rani Pashtuns from Pakistan’s lands west of the Indus River.

Conclusions

Pakistan and its surrogates, the Taliban “Trojan Horse” identified as such by Rifaat Hussain of the University of Islamabad, are unlikely to thrive during the period of U.S./NATO withdrawal. Several large shifts in populations, attitudes, and outlooks will change swiftly once the foreign forces depart and Afghans discover that the burdens now rest on their shoulders. A few changes include:

- As in the case of the Soviet departure, “[t]he prospect of a transition fostered a further ethnic realignment of political forces as all sides scrambled for allies.”¹⁶

15 Lamb, Christina, “Taliban Leader Killed by SAS Was Pakistan Officer”, *The Sunday Times*, October 12, 2008. From the article: “British officials covered up evidence that a Taliban commander killed by special forces in Helmand last year was in fact a Pakistani military officer, according to highly placed Afghan officials. The commander, targeted in a compound in the Sangin valley, was one of six killed in the past year by SAS and SBS forces. When the British soldiers entered the compound they discovered a Pakistani military ID on the body. It was the first physical evidence of covert Pakistani military operations against British forces in Afghanistan even though Islamabad insists it is a close ally in the war against terror.”

16 Rubin, Barnett R., *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, Yale University Press, 2002 (second edition), pg. 152.

- Increased urbanization caused by refugee repatriation, instability in rural areas, and inability to earn a living on small farm plots has resulted in enormous numbers of families relocating to the relative safety of the cities – as occurred during the Soviet period. As with the Soviet-communist experience, young males have now attended government schools where they were taught by government-paid teachers and they now form a large pool of military aged males to be drawn upon, if needed, through conscription.
- The reduction of foreign presence is the primary reason some young men are in the Taliban where they are conducting their jihad. As with the Soviet experience, many – but not most – are likely to abandon their insurgent groups to return to the safety of home villages. In order to gain employment and the safety of being armed against potential Taliban retaliation, some of these individuals will probably join the rural Afghan Local Police, strengthening it against the Taliban. Others will seek employment in urban areas.
- As the low-level insurgency continues in the post-withdrawal period, it will become increasingly obvious that the Taliban remaining in the field are involved in either criminality or are serving as surrogates for the Pakistanis. As this develops, the rural Pashtun population will tend to move away from any voluntary support provided to the insurgents. Pressure from individual families will increase on Taliban members to return home.

But the insurgency will probably continue due to the absence of any guarantor of any peace terms agreed to by both parties in the conflict. Recently, a Taliban leader from Paktika province, was interviewed by telephone in an unclassified setting at RAND Corporation and when asked about reconciliation, he lectured the group on the American experience during the revolutionary war against Great Britain. Essentially, he explained that regardless of the problems Americans suffered and the resulting losses, no one considered reconciliation. The reason was simple to him: Americans had not been defeated and there was no reason to consider reconciliation with our British cousins. He reminded the group that the Taliban had experienced great reverses but were still not defeated.¹⁷

For this reason among the more nationalistic Taliban leaders and their loyal followers, and among the Taliban participating in the insurgency for purely financial gain, the insurgency is unlikely to halt, even with some form of formal agreement between the antagonists. Pakistan will probably still provide safe havens from which to operate – as they have done for over a decade – since they have no real reason to cease this behavior and numerous reasons to stay the course. They can be expected to provide training and encourage additional insurgent operations, probably a large-scale conventional operation intended to capture and hold a key urban area, likely targeting Kandahar since this city was the actual capital of the Taliban government while they were in power. Regaining this city would return key Pashtun symbolic landmarks, such as the tombs of the two founders of the modern state of Afghanistan, Mirwais Khan Hotak and Ahmad Shah Durrani, to Taliban control as the capital of the notional “Pash-tunistan” that would remove at least one secessionist sentiment from Pakistan’s western border region.

Recommendations

- Tripwire elements of U.S. military personnel could remain in key urban areas as a reminder that any attack involving Pakistani military support, particularly artillery and air strikes, would be reported to Washington and could endanger American lives while ensuring a probable military retaliatory strike or demands in the American Congress to halt all aid to Pakistan.
- Najibullah was able to maintain a functioning government in Kabul while controlling most of the country’s urban areas and connecting transportation routes due to adequate funding from the Soviet Union. When this support was halted by Boris Yeltsin, the Afghan

17 The interview with the unnamed 57-year old Taliban leader was conducted in November, 2012.

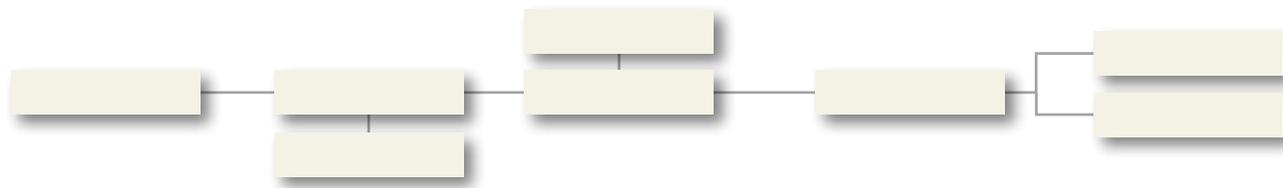
government collapsed as key supporters deserted. Funding is crucial if an Afghan national government is intended to survive. It would be ironic – if not a tragic comedy – to continue funding Pakistan while reducing support for Afghanistan.

- Air support will be needed to maintain the Afghan National Security Forces. Resupply, possibly by parachute in some areas, will be needed if insurgents are able to block roads. Combat air support could be an effective deterrent to any planned tactical air support planned by Pakistan during a future insurgent shift to conventional military operations.
- The Soviets delivered a large amount of rocket artillery to the Afghan communist government and provided advisers to ensure these were used properly. While very inaccurate, these large indirect fire weapons had a significant deterrent effect. American rocket artillery – which is far more accurate – could be maintained in a central location, such as Bagram, and be used to strike any insurgent concentrations preparing to conduct conventional operations against Afghan urban areas.

TRIBAL ANALYSIS CENTER

Traditional anthropological research conducted among tribes inhabiting remote areas where insurgents and criminals operate has become increasingly difficult to implement. Studies carried out among people living in small-scale societies now are nearly impossible due to the physical dangers associated with the civil and religious unrest found in those areas. Swat, for example, has become so dangerous that Frederick Barth's studies only could be repeated at the risk of the investigator's life. Similar research is not feasible among Burma's Rohingya tribes located on both sides of the border with Bangladesh, as well as with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's interior and within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where even Pakistan's army enters with reluctance.

Given the difficulties of conducting direct fieldwork in conflictive areas, the Tribal Analysis Center utilizes an indirect approach. Using multidisciplinary research, we seek to collect and analyze data obtained from a wide variety of sources, both current and historical. In the absence of new ethnographic fieldwork to update our base of knowledge, the Tribal Analysis Center compiles and summarizes existing research and documents on tribal societies, combining this material with contemporary press reports and articles. We assume that much can be gleaned from well-informed observers who are not anthropologists, ranging from journalists and travelers to government officials.



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