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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN: The Refugee Problem

[REDACTED]

The domestic implications for Pakistan of the growing number of Afghan refugees were [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] when the number of refugees reached 2 million Pakistan would be unable to cope with the refugees and might face a breakdown in law and order. The only [REDACTED] to stem the flow was some kind of accommodation with the Soviets. [REDACTED]

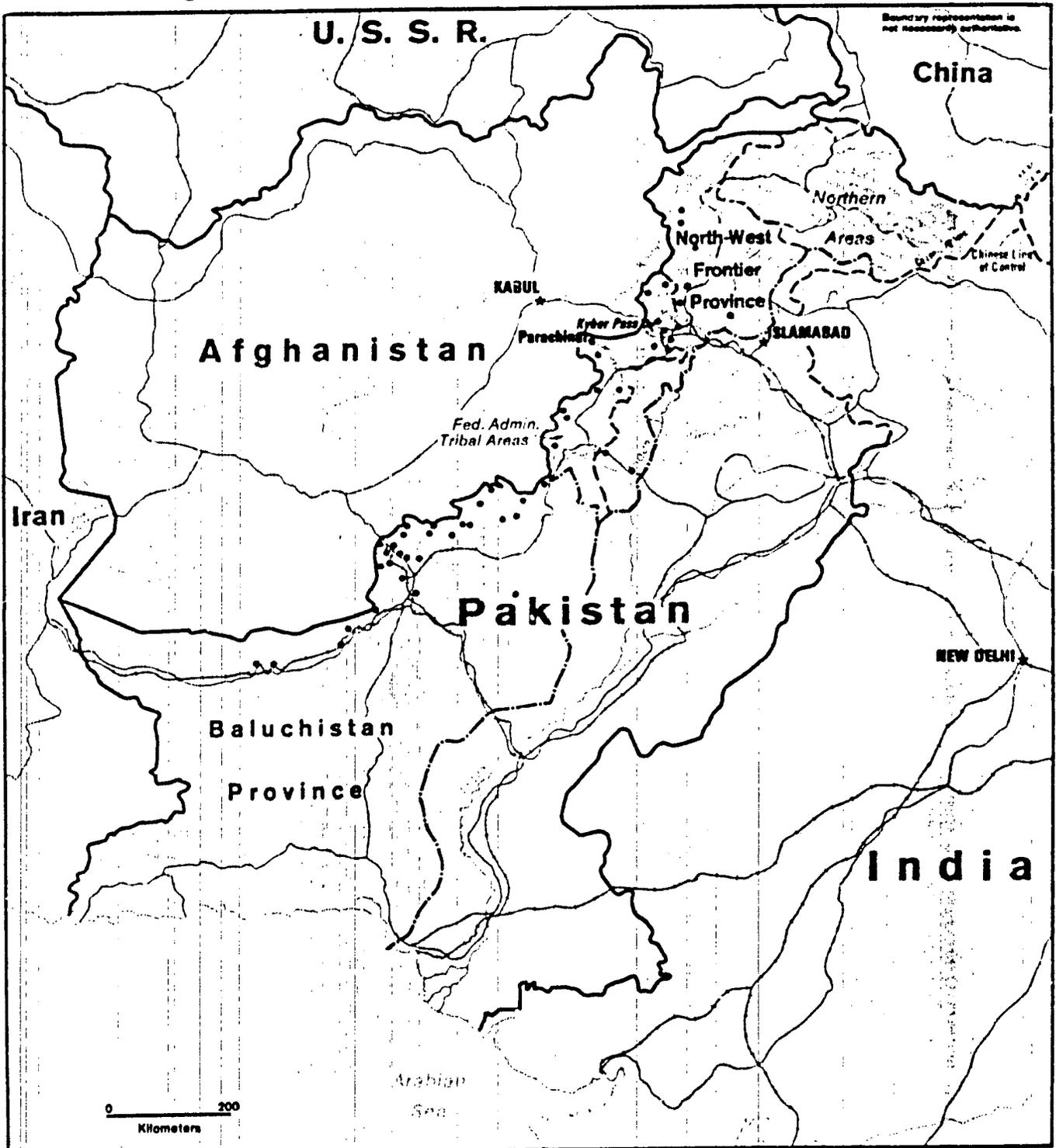
Support for rebels in Afghanistan by substantial numbers of Afghan refugees in the border zones of Pakistan could provoke retaliatory action by Soviet forces. The Afghan male refugees who reenter Afghanistan from Pakistan to defend their tribal homelands return periodically to Pakistani territory to visit their families, to acquire arms and ammunition, and to seek medical treatment. They are included in the "foreign elements" that the Afghan Government and Soviet spokesmen claim are responsible for the widespread resistance in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

Even if it were so inclined, the Pakistani Government could not prevent the movement of small groups of people across the border, which cuts through mountainous terrain in tribal territory over which government forces have never exercised more than limited control. [REDACTED]

The Afghan Government and the Soviets so far have been restrained in their reactions to refugee cross-border activities. Last fall the Afghan Government--probably at the urging of Soviet advisers--attempted to alleviate the refugee problem by establishing a grace period during which there would be no reprisals against returning refugees. [REDACTED]

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Pakistan: Afghan Refugee Camps



Although the period was extended, few refugees accepted the offer. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] unless the refugees return in the near future they would forfeit their rights in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

The Soviets presently are trying to seal the Pakistani-Afghan border from the Afghan side, but their efforts are unlikely to succeed. As time goes on, the Soviets may be tempted to launch air or ground attacks against rebel sanctuaries in Pakistan. The rugged terrain in the border zone would not preclude small cross-border raids by Soviet ground units, although mechanized equipment would be restricted to three or four major crossing points. [REDACTED]

Retaliation Danger Zones

The spring offensive by Afghan and Soviet military forces in the Konar Valley in eastern Afghanistan, which began in early March, increased the flow of refugees into Pakistan across the section of the border north of the Kyber Pass. The Soviets have expanded their anti-guerrilla operations into the provinces south of the Kabul River Valley, making the Parachinar area of the Kurram Valley the primary danger zone. The Kurram Valley is a traditional invasion route into Pakistan from Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

The Refugees

By current estimates more than 700,000 Afghan refugees are located on the Pakistani side of the border. Most are Afghan Pushtun tribesmen taking refuge among their fellow Pushtun tribesmen who populate Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. Fewer than 110,000 are in Baluchistan. These rural Afghan Pushtuns, with their warrior traditions and conservative Islamic outlook, are among the most active opponents of Communist rule. The number will grow as refugees displaced by the current military operations make their way to Pakistan. [REDACTED]

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There are now 53 concentrations of refugees that in a broad sense can be considered camps. Of these, 23 are in the North-West Frontier Province and 30 are in Baluchistan. The size of these encampments ranges from roughly 500 to 11,000; the number fluctuates as refugees move in and out. [REDACTED]

No clear pattern emerges on the composition of the refugee groups. Children up to 14 years old constitute a third to half the total number of refugees, and in most camps there are twice as many children as women. The ratio of men to women is high in some camps, low in others. [REDACTED]

Cross-border tribal ties, combined with the tendency to travel in extended family units, have enabled the refugees to survive without much government support. The need, however, for food, shelter, and sanitation systems is great. Most refugees eventually register with government agencies in order to establish eligibility for relief supplies, including UN aid administered by the Pakistani Government. [REDACTED]

Outlook

Military activity in the borderlands has intensified and is expected to accelerate. To avoid provoking the Soviets, the Pakistanis may already have tried to move the refugees into camps away from the border. This would also facilitate distribution of relief supplies, allow better control over the movement of refugees in the frontier areas, and reduce the tension that is sure to arise between the refugees and the local population over grazing and water rights and other economically related issues. The refugees, however, have exhibited a reluctance to leave the border area near their homelands and may resist the government's efforts to relocate them. [REDACTED]