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Afghanistan: Prospects for the Resistance

National Intelligence Estimate

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NIE 37-83
4 October 1983

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**AFGHANISTAN: PROSPECTS
FOR THE RESISTANCE**

Information available as of 26 September 1983 was
used in the preparation of this Estimate.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
SCOPE NOTE	1
KEY JUDGMENTS	3
DISCUSSION	9
The Situation in Afghanistan	9
Soviet Goals, Costs, and Options	13
A Political Settlement	14
Augmenting Soviet Forces	14
Strengthening the Afghan Government	15
Reducing Military Activity	15
Pressure on Civilians	16
Exploiting Insurgent Vulnerabilities	17
Reducing Foreign Support	17
Implications for the United States	19

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SCOPE NOTE

This Estimate focuses on the prospects for the resistance over the next two years. Although we discuss the longer term impact of some factors, we believe uncertainties about future Pakistani and Soviet policies, and popular support for the resistance preclude judgments about the survival of the resistance for a longer period.

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Figure 1
Afghanistan



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KEY JUDGMENTS

Almost four years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the resistance is an effective guerrilla force that controls much of the country. In the next two years, barring drastic changes in Soviet or Pakistani policy, the resistance will continue at a high enough level to prevent a significant improvement in the Soviet position.

We believe that the Soviets are unlikely to make the major changes in policy that could greatly reduce the level of insurgency. Moscow is, however, likely to make minor changes that could lead to some improvement in the Soviet military position in Afghanistan, but still leave the resistance an effective fighting force in much of the country. Greatly increased Soviet pressure on Pakistan could make it more difficult for Islamabad to continue its crucial role in supporting the insurgency, but we doubt that Soviet pressure alone will be able to reverse Pakistani policy in the next two years.

For at least the next two years, the resistance will be a significant military constraint but cannot prevent the Soviets from using Afghanistan as a base for projecting military power in the region, should Moscow decide to do so. The war will be a continuing, if bearable, drain on Soviet resources.

Over the longer run, uncertainties about continued Pakistani support, future Soviet policies, and popular willingness to bear the hardships of war raise serious questions about the prospects for the resistance.

The resistance is more simultaneous uprisings of a large number of villages and tribes than it is a well-organized national liberation movement. There are hundreds of insurgent bands, most operating near their home villages. Fighters alternate periodically between their insurgent band and their civilian occupations. Only a small number of bands are based in Pakistan and Iran. Many bands—probably the majority—tend to place parochial interests ahead of any national effort. Cooperation among insurgent bands has grown, but primarily at the regional and ethnic group level. Deep ideological differences—the most important of which is between Islamic fundamentalists and moderates—and the so far very limited cooperation across regional and ethnic lines suggest that a united national movement is extremely unlikely

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during the period of this Estimate, and probably for years afterward. Nonetheless, we expect the resistance to become more sophisticated politically and militarily and to continue to adapt quickly to changing conditions. Most groups have responded quickly to changes in Soviet military and nonmilitary tactics.

The Soviets' perceptions—not ours—of their own progress in attaining their longer range goals in Afghanistan will be the determining factor in any Soviet changes in counterinsurgency policy. Soviet concern about the difficulties of coping with the resistance is growing. Nevertheless, the Soviets still appear to believe that the costs are bearable, that their relations with many countries are recovering from the damage done by their invasion of Afghanistan, and that in the long run they will overcome the resistance.

The main Soviet goal in Afghanistan is to maintain a Soviet-dominated Marxist government in the country. This enables Moscow to:

- At a minimum, ensure against chaos and anarchy or the emergence of another fundamentalist Islamic state on Soviet borders.
- Ensure that there is no drastic setback to Soviet international prestige that would follow the fall of the Afghan Marxists.
- Transform Afghanistan into a Communist society.
- Enhance Soviet ability to apply military and political pressure on Pakistan, Iran, and other regional states; reduce Western influence in the region; and contribute to isolating China.

The Soviets have already instituted a number of policies that they believe will eventually turn Afghanistan into a viable Soviet-dominated Communist state. These include economic policies that tie the Afghan economy more closely to the USSR's and domestically put Afghanistan on the road to socialism, changes in local government that would increase central government control, the training of cadres, using the education system to indoctrinate Afghan youth, and the formation of party fronts to control various segments of the population. Moscow believes that, in the long run, Soviet control of Afghanistan will depend on the imposition of an effective new political order backed by Soviet military power. Because of widespread resistance, reforms have been implemented in only small areas—or not at all—and we believe it will be a decade or more before these programs have a significant impact.

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The Soviets appear to have no deadline for accomplishing these tasks and still believe that they can be accomplished without a significant increase in the level of Soviet military commitment. There is, however, growing concern about the lack of progress. The Soviets are not likely to question their goals, but over time they could decide that basic policy changes are necessary to achieve success.

Over the next two years, we see almost no prospect that the Soviets will decide to reach a political settlement or reduce their military effort in Afghanistan:

- There is little prospect that Moscow will make the concessions that would permit a political compromise acceptable to a majority of the insurgents. Any formula acceptable to most of the resistance would mean the abandonment of Moscow's goals in Afghanistan, and would be viewed as a Soviet defeat both in the USSR and abroad.
- The Soviets could reduce somewhat the costs of the war by reducing military activity—for example, by trying to hold only the main cities or by pulling back to northern Afghanistan. This would, however, give the resistance safehavens inside Afghanistan, give it an opportunity to consolidate its control in much of the country, and, unless the Soviets were willing to write off large parts of Afghanistan permanently, make it more difficult for Moscow to gain eventual control of the country.

Nor do we believe the Soviets will opt for massive troop reinforcements:

- With a force of 400,000 to 500,000 men, the Soviets could greatly extend the area they control and gravely damage the resistance. The Soviets believe a force of this size would be required. Although the level of the insurgency would decline, we believe some opposition would continue at least in the more remote parts of the country.
- We believe such a proposed augmentation, however, would be a contentious issue within the Politburo as it would substantially expand Soviet economic costs and casualties, cause the Soviets to draw troops from other areas, and limit Moscow's ability to react to other military contingencies. It would also create an international climate hostile to the Soviet Union and sympathetic to Western foreign policy aims and defense spending.

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We do believe there will be some increase in the size of Soviet forces:

- At a minimum, the Soviets will continue to send additional small support and combat units to Afghanistan. Over the next two years, this could increase the size of the Soviet force by as much as 10,000 men. Moscow would not regard such reinforcements as increasing its commitment in Afghanistan, and the additional costs would be minimal. These new units would do little more than shore up the Soviet position in a few areas.
- We cannot rule out much larger augmentations that could, over the next two years, increase Soviet forces by 50,000 to 100,000 men. This would be intended to expand or strengthen Soviet control in some parts of Afghanistan or to deal with some major problems such as road security. The Soviets could decide that the likely improvement in their military position would be worth the additional costs. There would be some improvement in the Soviet military position and some increase in the area under government control, but the resistance would remain strong in most of the country.

The Soviets might also conclude that crop destruction, attacks on villages, and other scorched-earth tactics would reduce the insurgency:

- A widespread indiscriminate scorched-earth campaign against the Afghan people is unlikely. Soviet leaders would presumably realize that the demographic and economic damage could delay the creation of a viable Marxist state for a generation or more, and that the international costs could be as great as for a massive augmentation.
- The Soviets might conclude that more selective use of scorched-earth tactics would not negate their other efforts. Moscow would hope to face the Afghan population with a choice between accommodation to Marxist rule and severe hardships. Scorched-earth tactics might also be used occasionally when driving the population out of an area seemed to Soviet commanders to be the only way to pacify it. Many analysts believe they have been using such tactics for some time.

It is difficult for us to judge how much hardship the Afghan people are willing to bear. In some areas, reported Soviet and Afghan Government excesses have angered the population enough to bring an increase in insurgency. Nevertheless, we believe that, faced with severe

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food shortages and heavy casualties, some insurgent bands will stop fighting, if only temporarily, to end military pressure on their fellow villagers. We believe, however, that this alone will not have a significant impact on the overall level of resistance in the next two years.

The Soviet and Afghan Communists are likely to continue—and probably step up—a wide variety of covert and overt activities, such as arranging truces advantageous to the Soviets, to exploit disunity and other insurgent vulnerabilities. These tactics will be most productive if military pressure has already lowered the will to resist.

The insurgency could not continue at the present level without outside support. The insurgents probably could obtain enough small arms and ammunition in Afghanistan to continue some fighting even if foreign aid stopped, but without antitank rockets, heavy machineguns, and modern landmines—most of which come from foreign sources through Pakistan—insurgent capabilities would begin to decline within months. Most bands do not appear to have significant stockpiles of such weapons.

Should foreign support for the resistance increase, bands already fighting would become slightly more effective, and in some parts of Afghanistan new bands might form. Nevertheless, the insurgents would have difficulty in using new kinds of some weapons, and the primitive insurgent logistic system would set certain limits on the flow of arms.

The Soviets will continue to try to reduce foreign—especially Pakistani—support for the resistance. They will pursue negotiations to this end, in the hope of weakening Pakistani and Western support for the insurgency without abandoning their long-range goal of dominating Afghanistan. Pakistan, however, is likely to continue to support the resistance over the next two years, especially if the Zia government remains in power. Support for the resistance provides a number of direct benefits to Pakistan, including stepped-up US military aid and Islamic economic assistance that would constrain any Pakistani government from abandoning the insurgency. Because many factors not directly related to Afghanistan will influence Islamabad's policies, however, we cannot be confident that Pakistani support will continue over the longer run.

In any case, Pakistan will remain unable to deny all use of its territory to the resistance or halt the flow of refugees. Pakistan could force the exile political organizations to move their headquarters to some other country, such as Saudi Arabia, where their ability to support and influence bands fighting in Afghanistan would be severely reduced.

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Even the relocation of headquarters to eastern Iran would erode exile influence in Afghanistan. Islamabad could also make it far more difficult for insurgents to operate from bases in Pakistan. Most insurgent bands, however, are based permanently in Afghanistan and would not be directly affected.

There is a broad consensus in Iran against any moderation in Tehran's opposition to the Kabul regime and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The level of Iranian aid to the insurgents has increased, but, even if the war with Iraq should end, Iranian aid is unlikely to approach what the insurgents now receive through Pakistan.

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DISCUSSION

The Situation in Afghanistan

1. Almost four years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, despite overwhelmingly superior Soviet firepower and technology, the resistance controls much of the country and has become stronger and more effective.

2. Military activity in Afghanistan has consisted largely of Soviet and Afghan Government efforts to destroy insurgent bands or drive them away from important areas, and insurgent attacks on supply lines and isolated posts in rural areas and sabotage and assassinations in the cities. The insurgents are too weak to overrun a major Soviet installation, or successfully confront a main Soviet unit in the field, and generally try to avoid contact during large sweep operations. With an authorized force of more than 100,000 men, the Soviets are unable to establish permanent garrisons to maintain control of areas they clear, can block only a few of the hundreds of insurgent supply routes from Pakistan and Iran, and are unable to prevent frequent and costly attacks on road convoys.

3. The Soviets have so far failed to transform the disloyal and ineffective Afghan military into a reliable force. Continuing desertions, defections, and casualties have prevented the Afghan Government from increasing the size of the annual forces much above 40,000 to 50,000 men—less than half of its strength when the Communists seized power in April 1978. Paramilitary forces, including police, tribal auxiliaries, and local militia units, are generally even less motivated and effective than the Army.

4. The Marxists control almost all towns of any importance, but there is some insurgent activity even in areas where Soviet and Afghan Government control is strongest. Insurgents at times have controlled Qandahar and Herat—the second and third largest cities—and, [redacted] the resistance has controlled more than half the country's administrative districts since early 1981 [redacted] There are no good statistics on civilian casualties, but they

probably run into the hundreds of thousands. Fighting has driven more than 4 million people (about a quarter of the population) into exile in Iran and Pakistan, or from rural areas into Kabul.

5. There are hundreds of insurgent bands, some completely independent and others associated with regional organizations in Afghanistan or exile political groups, the most important of which are based in Peshawar, Pakistan. [redacted]

[redacted] Exile leaders have little direct control of military operations in Afghanistan and in many cases the relationship between a band and an exile group is tenuous. The regional organizations attempt to coordinate military activity and control civil administration in their areas of Afghanistan, but most are loose coalitions and even the strongest do not control all local insurgents. Most insurgent bands operate near their home villages and men alternate between the band and their civilian occupations. Only a small number of bands are based in Pakistan and Iran, although most receive supplies from one of these countries.

6. Almost all resistance organizations claim to be fighting to free Afghanistan from the Soviets and to be protecting Islam, but there are, in fact, wide differences in their goals. One major division is between Islamic fundamentalists and moderates. The fundamentalists want to establish a theocratic government, oppose any compromise with the Soviets, are suspicious of the West, and strongly oppose any role for the former royal family. The moderates are generally pro-Western, want a secular government, believe some compromise with Moscow is necessary, and see the royal family as a unifying force.

7. Most Afghans have never had much sense of national identity, and many bands—probably the majority—tend to place parochial interests ahead of any national effort. The resistance is still more simultaneous uprisings of a large number of villages and tribes than it is a well-organized national liberation movement. Historical opposition to the authority of any

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central government, a desire to preserve local customs (which tribesmen label Islamic even when they run counter to the Koran), a culture that glorifies guerrilla warfare, resentment among some ethnic minorities of Pashtun domination, and even the profits to be made from a successful raid all help fuel the insurgency.

8. Despite the lack of a central organization and common goals, cooperation among resistance organizations has increased at the local level, sometimes even among groups ostensibly associated with rival political organizations. Although fighting between different ethnic and tribal groups—historically common—is reduced, there is little active cooperation across ethnic lines (see figure 4).

9. The ideological differences among the political organizations and the so far very limited cooperation across regional and ethnic lines suggest that the formation of a united national resistance organization is highly unlikely during the period of this Estimate, and probably for years afterward. We see little prospect in the next two years that the insurgents will achieve the degree of unity that would permit them to support

and control “main force” units able to fight the Soviets in setpiece battles, even were foreign suppliers willing to furnish the necessary training and equipment. The lack of unity will also hinder the insurgents’ ability to influence international opinion and participate in negotiations about Afghanistan’s future.

10. There are probably more than 100,000 full- or part-time insurgents who have aided the resistance in some capacity. The bands are usually small—30 to 40 men—and are armed with rifles, heavy machineguns, and antitank rockets. In recent months the effective use of mortars has increased. Both tactics and weapons inventories have improved considerably since the Soviet invasion. Although some bands are well armed, trained, and led, others still have serious deficiencies.

11. In five years of war against the Marxists, the insurgency has shown an ability to adapt quickly to changing conditions and a capacity for growth that will contribute significantly to its ability to survive changes in Soviet military and political strategy. When the Soviets invaded, the insurgents quickly abandoned tactics that were no longer effective and within a few

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months had developed ones effective against the Soviets. Subsequent changes in Soviet military tactics resulted in temporary success that evaporated quickly when the insurgents adjusted. Despite their lack of a common command, the insurgent bands have grown more sophisticated in their strategy and have increasingly concentrated on Soviet vulnerabilities.

12. The resistance has also grown more politically sophisticated. The political programs of the moderates and fundamentalists—although a cause of friction in the resistance—offer a clear alternative to Communism. At the local level, the resistance has assumed responsibility for governmental functions in some areas and, despite limited resources, has often been more responsive to popular needs than officials appointed by Kabul ever were.

13. A loss of popular support, although unlikely, would be a crippling blow to the insurgency. Given the close ties between the insurgents and civilians, most bands would probably stop fighting to prevent the local population from suffering unbearable hardships. If so, we would expect the decline to be gradual

and uneven. Pressure on civilians in some parts of Afghanistan would become severe long before civilians in other areas were seriously affected. Moreover, whatever the cause of a collapse of the insurgency, not all bands would stop fighting. Sporadic urban terrorism and rural insurgency bordering on banditry might well continue for generations.

14. Since its installation by the Soviets in December 1979, the government of Babrak Karmal has attempted to win popular support by pursuing policies less offensive to Afghan tradition and Islam than those of its predecessors, by strengthening progovernment institutions—such as party fronts—and by trying to bring non-Communists into the regime. These programs have failed largely because Babrak has been unable to disassociate Marxist rule from the excesses of his predecessors, his less radical programs are unpopular with most Afghans, his dependence on Soviet troops tags him as a foreign puppet, and insurgent control denies the government an opportunity to implement its policies in much of the countryside. Adding to the government's problems are an incompetent bureaucracy of, at best, questionable loyalty and the deep rift in

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Soviet Goals, Costs, and Options

17. Soviet policies will, of course, be one of the most important factors determining the future of the Afghan insurgency. The Soviets have a wide variety of options for dealing with Afghanistan. In deciding which option to pursue, they will weigh the degree to which each brings Moscow closer to achieving its goals in Afghanistan against the costs.

18. The main Soviet goal in Afghanistan is to maintain a Soviet-dominated Marxist government in the country. This enables Moscow to:

- At a minimum, ensure against chaos and anarchy or the emergence of another fundamentalist Islamic state on Soviet borders.
- Ensure that there is no drastic setback to Soviet international prestige that would follow the fall of the Afghan Marxists.
- Transform Afghanistan into a Communist society.
- Enhance Soviet ability to apply military and political pressure on Pakistan, Iran, and other regional states; reduce Western influence in the region; and contribute to isolating China.

19.

Soviet media comparisons of Afghanistan to the two-decade-long effort to subdue Muslim resistance in Soviet Central Asia indicate the Soviets are prepared for a long struggle in Afghanistan and that they expect to win eventually, without any significant change in strategy. The Soviets are concerned about their lack of progress, but they do not seem to be questioning their strategy or goals. Instead, they are looking for ways to implement their strategy more effectively. Indeed, the Soviets are already giving serious consideration to some modification of their basic tactics.

20. Afghanistan has cost the USSR about \$15 billion since 1979, an average of about \$5 billion a year. We estimate Soviet military expenditures and equipment losses since 1979 at \$10 billion, but a third of this would have been spent even if the Soviets had not sent troops to Afghanistan. The Soviets have spent the equivalent of another \$2 billion on the Afghan armed forces and provided about \$200-300 million annually

to their Afghan allies in economic assistance. Indirect costs to the Soviet economy—which include the diversion of POL products and of rolling stock to transport goods to Afghanistan—are estimated to have cost the Soviets another \$2 billion. Together these costs were on the order of a quarter of a percent of Soviet GNP in 1982.

21. About 5,000 Soviets have been killed, 10,000 wounded, and many more hospitalized with serious disease. These limited casualties have not been a significant domestic problem.

22. Internationally, the invasion damaged the Soviet image, set back efforts to improve relations with many countries, and led to a whole range of political and economic restrictions that have hampered Soviet efforts to expand their influence. The Soviets, however, believe these costs are receding and cite such things as the limited rapprochement with China, improving economic and political relationships in Western Europe, and growing Soviet influence in the Middle East as evidence of the fading impact of the invasion.

23. Because Soviet policy is one of the most important factors in determining insurgent prospects, we have, in the remainder of this Estimate, examined those prospects under different Soviet options. The Soviets can try to:

- End the fighting by making enough concessions to achieve a political settlement.
- Increase pressure on the insurgents by augmenting Soviet forces.
- Reduce military costs by cutting back on the area or intensity of military operations.
- Continue to try to strengthen the Afghan Government and the People's Democratic Party through programs such as training cadres.
- Continue to exploit insurgent disunity and other vulnerabilities.
- Increase military pressure on civilians to reduce popular support for the resistance.
- Reduce foreign—especially Pakistani—support for the resistance.

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A Political Settlement

24. We see little prospect that Moscow will make the concessions that would permit a political compromise acceptable to a majority of the insurgents. There is good evidence that the Soviets badly underestimated the problems they would encounter in Afghanistan. We believe, however, that preventing the fall of a Marxist government on Soviet borders was important enough that Moscow would have intervened even had Soviet leaders foreseen the difficulties:

- Precipitate Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan would be tantamount to admitting that the Soviet leadership had made a major mistake, would probably leave Afghanistan either in chaos or with a strongly anti-Soviet government, and would be seen internationally as a defeat for the USSR. We see no prospect that in the next two years the military or economic cost will rise to a level at which Moscow would be forced to withdraw.
- A coalition government dominated by the Communists might be acceptable to Moscow. Even if it had a prominent non-Communist as figure-head chief of state, however, the insurgents and most other Afghans would see it as a continuation of Communist rule under another guise. Fighting would continue, and unless Soviet troops remained in Afghanistan the coalition government would be short-lived.
- If Soviet troops were withdrawn and Moscow abandoned efforts to influence domestic policies, some of the people and the insurgents might accept a government that gave Moscow some assurance it would not take actions threatening to the USSR and had, at most, token Communist participation. Such a government would probably be weak, with former insurgent leaders retaining control of many parts of the country. Some fundamentalist groups would continue to oppose the government and would have some chance of seizing power in Kabul. Such a government could not guarantee Moscow either stability on Soviet borders or a friendly regime in the long term. Its establishment would be viewed as a Soviet defeat both in the USSR and abroad and would mean the end of prospects for using the country as a base for projecting Soviet influence.

- Some have suggested that Moscow might agree to a compromise in which, after Soviet withdrawal, a pro-Soviet government retained control of Kabul and a few other places, with the remainder of the country under insurgent rule. We doubt, however, that Moscow would consider such an arrangement. It would mean the abandonment of most Soviet goals in Afghanistan and would be viewed as a Soviet defeat. If Soviet troops withdrew, Moscow would have no guarantee that the unaided regime would survive. If Soviet troops remained, the situation would not be much different from that discussed in paragraphs 30 and 31.

Augmenting Soviet Forces

25. With a larger force in Afghanistan, the Soviets could expand the area under government control by establishing a larger number of permanent garrisons, expand their clearing operations to more of the country, increase the security of their supply lines, and reduce outside support by gaining greater control of border areas. Soviet ability to achieve these objectives, of course, would depend on the level of augmentation:

- A modest increase in Soviet force levels with additional security units, technical combat service support units, or combat support troops would do little more than shore up the Soviet position in a few areas. The costs of such an augmentation, however, are minimal, and we expect to see some additional small units arrive in Afghanistan, especially if the insurgents appear to be making even slight gains.
- With a more extensive reinforcement (50,000 to more than 100,000 men, including major combat units such as motorized rifle divisions), the Soviets could either increase pressure on the resistance throughout the country or concentrate on a particular problem—for example, road security or the pacification of a few provinces. They would not, however, be able to reduce the insurgency significantly in most of Afghanistan.
- With a force of 400,000 to 500,000 men the Soviets could block most insurgent supply routes, establish garrisons throughout the country, and greatly improve the security of supply lines. Although the level of insurgency would decline,

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some opposition would continue at least in the more remote parts of the country. The Soviets believe a force of this size would be required.

26. Either of the latter two options would:

- Require a fundamental expansion of the existing logistic infrastructure in Afghanistan and in areas of the USSR bordering on Afghanistan.
- Require greater economic and military expenditures, which would have to be sustained for at least several years.
- Draw down strategic reserves or forces designated for employment against China or NATO.
- Be an admission that past policy in Afghanistan was a failure.
- Revive Afghanistan as a major international issue further setting back efforts to improve relations with both Western and Islamic countries.
- Increase domestic anxieties about the war and result in more economic dislocations.

27. These costs, of course, would be far less for 50,000 men than for 500,000. With the lower force level, domestic anxieties in the USSR might not rise significantly, Soviet forces elsewhere would not be weakened greatly, and the international repercussions would probably be manageable in Soviet eyes. We cannot, therefore, rule out such an augmentation during the next two years, especially if the insurgency were to grow stronger.

Strengthening the Afghan Government

28. We expect the Soviets to continue programs that they believe will eventually bear fruit, even though past performance gives little hope of early success. Despite a major ongoing Soviet training and indoctrination program, Afghan military units will remain generally ineffective for some time. We have observed signs of slight improvement in some units, notably in conducting operations with Soviet forces, and this trend is expected to continue. Slow improvements in the paramilitary forces are also likely as better trained and ideologically motivated cadres come on board. The rate of improvement, however, is likely to be so slow that generally effective Afghan military and security forces are unlikely before the early 1990s, if then.

29. The Soviets will continue programs that they believe are essential in the long run for Soviet and Communist success in Afghanistan. They will continue to strengthen ties between the Afghan and Soviet economies and use land reform, rural development, and reforms in the structure of local government (so far unimplemented) to eliminate the power of the "feudalists" in rural areas. Elementary and secondary education—although currently absent from much of the country—have already been remodeled on Soviet lines, and higher education—once heavily influenced by the West—has been tied closely to the USSR with Russian, the main foreign language. The Soviets will continue to try to strengthen the party fronts, which now exist largely on paper, to control workers, women, youth, and other groups. Eventually, the training of cadres and efforts to indoctrinate youths will increase the effectiveness of the government and lessen the rifts in the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan, but these efforts will not have much impact until long after the period of this Estimate. Efforts to increase popular acceptance of Communist rule will continue, although prospects for early success are bleak. In most of the country, Kabul has too little military control to permit it to influence the population through economic programs, propaganda, or police methods. The government cannot even protect those who might be inclined to cooperate with Kabul. Most Afghans will continue to regard the Communists as a foreign-controlled enemy and regard any promises from Kabul with suspicion. Many will view any effort to change Afghanistan—even programs not specifically Communist—as a threat to tradition and religion. The Soviets could also try to reshuffle the Kabul government, but Babrak's replacement or the inclusion of more non-Communists in the Cabinet—if any could be induced to join—is unlikely to change popular views as long as Soviet troops remain in Afghanistan.

Reducing Military Activity

30. The Soviets could reduce the cost of the war by reducing the overall level of operations or even by pulling back to northern Afghanistan, but we doubt that the Soviets would give serious consideration to such options.

31. The level of fighting would probably decline as insurgents in areas no longer threatened returned to

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their civilian occupations. Attacks on the periphery of the Soviet-held area and the use of nearby insurgent-held areas as safehavens, however, could eventually force the Soviets to expand the area of their operations. Moreover, the consolidation of resistance control in areas written off by the Soviets would make gaining control of those areas more difficult in the long run.

32. The Soviets will continue to avoid major military operations in areas they deem to be of little military or political importance such as the remote and rugged Hazara region of central Afghanistan where they have not made a serious incursion for three years. To demonstrate some central government control throughout Afghanistan, however, they will, continue to ensure that there is some government presence in all provinces, if only a garrison isolated in a provincial capital.

Pressure on Civilians

33. The Soviets could step up military pressure on civilians. In a few areas of Afghanistan, civilian casualties and damage to crops, irrigation facilities, and villages have already made the population reluctant to bear the costs of the war. This has not led to a break between the insurgents and the people. Instead, the insurgents who come from the same villages and are concerned about the safety of their own families and property share the views of the civilians and cut back operations, drop out of the war, or even switch sides. A decline in morale after repeated attacks in the Panjshir Valley contributed to the local insurgent leaders' willingness to agree to a truce with the Soviets. A small number of bands continue to defect to the government, most of them in areas where there has been heavy military pressure. Many of the bands redefect after a few months.

34. In most of Afghanistan, the resistance continues to have strong civilian support. Only repeated military operations, serious food shortages, and high casualties appear to erode significantly the willingness to resist, and the Soviets have not applied this kind of pressure in most of the country.

35. The Soviets have the resources to step up pressure on civilians. The bombing of villages and the destruction of crops, in fact, would require fewer resources than operations intended to surround and

destroy insurgent bands. A more extensive carrot-and-stick policy—severe hardships for civilians who support the resistance, freedom from military operations for areas where resistance ends, and government assistance—could make serious inroads into the resistance.

36. The Soviets could choose from several different levels of pressure:

- A widespread scorched-earth policy, which could include indiscriminate killing; the destruction of villages and crops; and the use of chemicals including herbicides, defoliants, and lethal agents, would kill or drive into exile thousands—if not millions—and would be likely to force those who remained to reach an accommodation with Kabul and Moscow. Soviet leaders would presumably realize that the demographic and economic damage could delay the creation of a viable Marxist state for a generation or more, and that the international costs might well be as great as for a massive augmentation.
- By pursuing such tactics in only a few areas, and avoiding or limiting the use of tactics—such as chemical warfare—that would be especially damaging to the Soviet image, the Soviets could reduce civilian support for the resistance in the most troublesome areas. Many analysts believe Moscow has been pursuing such a policy for some time. Despite US efforts to publicize Soviet excesses, there has been no significant impact on Soviet relations with most countries. Moscow might assess the benefits of attacks on civilians and the economic base of the resistance in selected areas as being well worth the cost.
- Even if the Soviets were to make no efforts directed specifically against civilians, the cumulative effect on the Afghan people of counterinsurgency operations could in time wear down civilian morale. Cumulative costs to the Afghan people will continue to rise, and it is difficult for us to judge at what level of hardship the war will become unbearable for most civilians. Although we believe it unlikely, we cannot completely rule out a significant erosion of civilian support in the next two years even without a change in Soviet tactics.

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37. A perception that the insurgent cause is hopeless—that the Soviets can never be driven from Afghanistan—could also cause some bands to stop fighting. These bands, however, are likely to be in areas where government control is already strong. Most insurgents are more interested in the fate of their own village or valley than in events in Kabul, and so they will tend to regard the war as worthwhile as long as their own area remains free.

Exploiting Insurgent Vulnerabilities

38. The Soviets and the Afghan Communists are likely to continue—and probably step up—a wide variety of covert and overt activities to exploit insurgent vulnerabilities, especially insurgent disunity. The fragmentation of the resistance makes it possible to buy off bands or set them against each other, and the preoccupation of most insurgents with the local situation makes them susceptible to arrangements with the Soviets or the regime that may be advantageous locally, but harmful to the resistance as a whole. The most successful of these operations so far has been a truce in the Panjsher Valley with Ahmad Shah Massoud, probably the best known of the insurgent field commanders.

39. Insurgent leaders may agree only to temporary truces and, if only because of pressure from their followers, eventually resume fighting. Even a temporary truce, however, will enable the Soviets to shift limited numbers of troops from one area to another and will raise suspicions about the reliability of some insurgent leaders both within the resistance and with foreign supporters. Such arrangements, however, will not necessarily discredit an insurgent leader. (Despite some worries, most Afghans appear to be withholding judgment about the truce in the Panjsher Valley until it is clear which side gained the most.)

40. Increased Soviet and Afghan Government infiltration of insurgent groups to obtain information or to kill leaders may also have some success. The insurgents claim they are identifying and killing most Communist agents; and many Soviet operations based on intelligence from agents have been unsuccessful. There have, however, also been intelligence successes for the Soviets—notably, the rescue of Soviet civilians kidnaped early this year in northern Afghanistan.

41. The Soviets are also encouraging fighting among insurgent groups. Fighting among insurgents so far has not prevented the resistance from growing, although it may have slowed that growth. Both increasing cooperation among bands throughout Afghanistan and recent defections of local leaders no longer willing to follow the divisive policies of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar argue against such clashes becoming a more serious problem in the future despite Soviet efforts to encourage them. Nevertheless, with or without Soviet encouragement, some fighting among insurgent bands seems certain to continue.

42. The Soviets are likely to increase efforts to exploit insurgent vulnerabilities along these lines. Costs are low in comparison to regular military operations. Even if many operations fail (and successes are usually temporary), the Soviets will still reap some benefits, and there will always be the chance that some operation will lead to a major political breakthrough. These essentially political operations are unlikely to have a decisive impact on the resistance; but, in situations where morale is low, popular support decreasing, or tensions among insurgent bands particularly high, they decrease an insurgent group's will to fight.

Reducing Foreign Support

43. The Soviets will also continue to try to reduce foreign—especially Pakistani—support for the resistance. The insurgents probably could obtain enough small arms and ammunition in Afghanistan to continue fighting even if foreign aid stopped. But, without antitank rockets, heavy machineguns, and modern landmines (most of which come from foreign sources), insurgent capabilities would be seriously degraded. Because most bands have only small reserves of ammunition and weapons, the decline would come quickly. At a minimum, the insurgents would have to reduce significantly their attacks on road convoys, and some bands would stop fighting altogether. Over time, the lack of such weapons could seriously affect both the willingness and the ability of large numbers to continue fighting.

44. The loss of bases in Pakistan and Iran would hurt some bands but most are based permanently in Afghanistan. Moreover, neither country has enough control along the border to prevent all use of its territory by insurgents. Pakistan and Iran would be

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likely to continue to be safehavens for insurgents' families. It would be nearly impossible to halt the influx of refugees or force them back into Afghanistan. If the Pakistanis forced the exiles to move their headquarters to some other country, they could continue most of their political activities, such as propaganda directed at international opinion. Relocation to Saudi Arabia or Western Europe, however, would virtually eliminate their role in supplying insurgent bands and severely reduce the influence of the exiles on the insurgents. Moving headquarters to eastern Iran would allow the exiles to maintain contacts, but it would be more difficult for them to obtain supplies to pass on to the insurgents, and their dependence on Tehran would make them less acceptable both in Afghanistan and abroad.

45. If aid increased, the primitive insurgent supply system and problems in using new kinds of weapons such as SA-7s might limit the impact. Nevertheless, with more arms, bands now operating would become more effective, and in some areas new bands would form.

46. Foreign assistance to the insurgents is likely to continue at the present level or higher if there is no shift in Pakistani policy. Pakistan's role is crucial. In addition to its own help, it is the conduit for most aid from third countries.

47. Islamabad refuses to recognize the Babrak government and in the indirect UN-sponsored negotiations with Kabul has insisted a settlement must include a rapid and complete withdrawal of Soviet forces. Pakistan is pursuing a negotiated settlement seriously, but we do not expect an agreement in the next two years.

48. Some of Zia's political opponents have demanded that he recognize Kabul, seal the border, and begin repatriating the nearly 3 million refugees who are increasingly viewed by the Pakistanis as consuming scarce resources and increasing the risk of conflict with the Soviets. In addition to the refugee burden, Pakistan sees itself vulnerable to a wide variety of Soviet pressures, including efforts to increase tribal dissidence along the border, help for opposition groups in Pakistan, cross-border raids, and, Pakistan's greatest fear, Soviet encouragement of pressure from India. Moscow has tried to tempt Islamabad with offers of Soviet economic aid and Kabul's acceptance of Pakistani claims on the long disputed border.

49. We believe that a major change in Pakistani policy is unlikely in the next two years. Even were the Zia government overthrown, the desire to continue good relations with the United States, China, and Saudi Arabia would at least slow any change in policy. Within Pakistan, Zia could expect some trouble from the large number of Afghan refugees, and, if they were supported by Pakistan's Islamic conservatives, his position might be weakened seriously.

50. In the longer run, however, Pakistani support of the resistance is less certain. Islamabad's policy might well change if the military government were followed by a government willing to accommodate Moscow, if tensions with India increased to a point at which Islamabad decided it had no alternative but to placate Moscow, if pressure from the USSR increased, or if relations with the United States deteriorated because of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.

51. To reinforce diplomatic pressure, the Soviets have the capability to conduct military operations against both Pakistan and Iran, ranging from cross-border air and artillery strikes to cross-border incursions and raids against refugee camps that are providing supplies and sustenance to the insurgents. These operations can be conducted by Soviet and Afghan forces already deployed in Afghanistan. Any operations of greater magnitude and scope than this would require the redeployment of large forces from the USSR.

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52. Moscow has little reason to believe cross-border raids would intimidate Iran and Pakistan; Islamabad and Tehran have reacted to past limited incursions by taking a harder line against the Soviets. Military gains would be slight. Insurgent groups already take some precautions—such as moving training bases periodically—in anticipation of Soviet raids, and probably could adjust quickly to Soviet attacks. The relative lack of success of Soviet efforts to interdict supply lines and destroy insurgent bases in Afghanistan argues against attempting similar actions against supply bases in Pakistan. Moscow's desire to avoid adding to its international political problems or risking greater US involvement in support of Pakistan also makes it likely that the Soviets will continue to avoid systematic substantial cross-border raids or attacks.

53. Should Moscow decide to step up pressure on Zia, it would probably conclude that increased covert

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activity was a more attractive option. Support for separatist groups, aid to the political opposition, and encouragement of civil disorder would probably be more effective and would entail fewer risks. The Soviets could attempt to intensify tensions between Afghan refugees and their Pakistani hosts.

54. There is a broad consensus among Iran's ruling clerics and their lay allies against any moderation in

Indicators of a Decline in Insurgency

Although we believe it unlikely that the resistance will decline significantly in the next two years, if it does, we would expect to see most of the following beforehand:

- Increased defections of insurgent bands to the government and a greater willingness of insurgent and tribal leaders to abide by agreements and cease-fires with the Soviets.
- Increased cooperation with the Kabul regime in government-controlled areas and efforts by some exiles to reach an accommodation with the Soviets.
- A growth in the size of the Afghan Army and a marked decline in desertions.
- Lower morale and greater reluctance to bear the hardships of war among civilians in insurgent-controlled areas and a marked sustained increase in the number of refugees fleeing Afghanistan and into the cities.
- Increased Soviet battlefield success against the insurgents such as a series of military defeats in several parts of the country, the destruction of the forces of a major insurgent leader, or a lasting significant increase in the area under government control.

The loss of Pakistani support would severely affect the ability of the resistance to continue. Early indications of a change in Islamabad's policy might be a weakening of Pakistan's position in negotiations on Afghanistan, a greater Pakistani willingness to deal with Moscow on a broad range of issues, and a major effort to restrict Afghan resistance activities within Pakistan. A *substantially increased Soviet military commitment* in Afghanistan would also make it more difficult for the resistance to continue. Such an increase would probably be foreshadowed by logistic improvements in both Afghanistan and the USSR, the mobilization and movement of Soviet units, and propaganda aimed at justifying a greater Soviet effort.

Tehran's opposition to the Kabul regime and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The level of Iranian aid to Afghan insurgents increased in late 1981, when the Khomeini regime began to consolidate its control at home and there was a further increase early this year. Should hostilities with Iraq wind down or if the economic situation further improves in Iran, the Iranians may increase their support of Afghan insurgent groups. Aid from Iran, in part because of poor Iranian relations with most other countries supporting the resistance, is unlikely to approach the level of support now received through Pakistan. Moreover, Tehran will continue trying to unite the insurgents under fundamentalist leadership, hoping they will be able to dominate the opposition to the Afghan Government and eventually establish an Islamic republic in Kabul, and so will concentrate its efforts on fundamentalist groups and the Shia minority.¹

Implications for the United States

55. For both the United States and the USSR, the major impact of continued resistance will be to hinder but not prevent Soviet use of Afghanistan as a base for projecting military power. Soviet troops are closer to Pakistan and eastern Iran than in 1979, but, as long as they are tied down fighting insurgents, and Soviet supply lines and installations are subject to insurgent attacks, Moscow will find it difficult to use its forces in Afghanistan to threaten more than cross-border raids against either country. A buildup aimed at forcing Pakistan to stop supporting the resistance is unlikely; Moscow would probably calculate that using the additional men inside Afghanistan would be less costly and more effective.

56. Afghanistan will continue to cost the USSR men and money, and complicate relations with most of the world's nations. In the next two years, however, these costs will remain at a level acceptable to Moscow, partly because the Soviets will limit their commitment of forces and partly because the resistance, even with increased foreign support, will be unable to raise costs to Moscow dramatically.

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57. As long as there is no settlement acceptable to the insurgents, Afghanistan will remain a potential threat to the US interest in a stable and cooperative Pakistan. The Afghan refugees are likely to stay in Pakistan where, even with considerable international aid, they will be a growing economic, social, and political problem for Islamabad. At a minimum, Pakistan will have to take the new reality of a permanent Soviet presence in Afghanistan into account in all its

foreign policy decisions. Over the long term Pakistan almost certainly will become subject to increased Soviet pressure. Overt Soviet pressure could require additional US response. Covert pressure, designed to weaken the military regime, could ultimately contribute to an unstable political situation in Pakistan or the replacement of the current government by one much less willing to cooperate with Washington on a broad range of issues.

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