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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

18 April 1986

Afghanistan: Resistance Views of Peace Negotiations

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Summary

The Afghan resistance is growing increasingly concerned over the UN sponsored peace negotiations--a process they have previously shunned. Progress in the talks, more determined efforts by Kabul to coopt resistance leaders, and resistance concerns that the superpowers are about to cut a deal, have forced the resistance to begin thinking seriously about how to react. [Redacted]

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Differences among the resistance leaders will likely prevent them from achieving a unified position on the negotiations. The fundamentalists and the traditionalists do not share the same vision of a post-Soviet Afghanistan; attempting to define a new regime would risk splitting the alliance and forcing its collapse. [Redacted]

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Although we do not believe any resistance leader is now ready to risk joining a coalition government with elements of the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), we believe that the traditionalist groups--some of whom have cooperated with the PDPA, in the past--are more likely than the fundamentalists to change their stripes. The risk of defections from resistance ranks will be greatest if and when the UN-sponsored talks appear to be nearing completion. [Redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [Redacted] Afghanistan Branch, South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and should be directed to Chief, South Asia Division, [Redacted]

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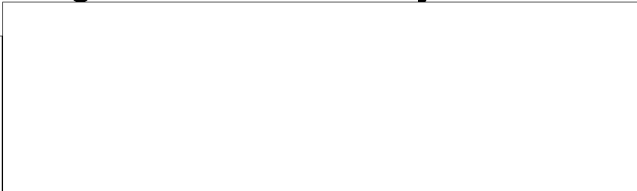
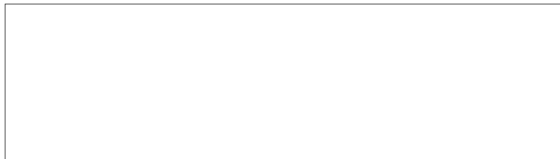
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Signs of Resistance Concern

Since last fall, Afghan resistance leaders have been increasingly concerned about the possibility that an unfavorable peace settlement, a change in Pakistani policy, or a superpower deal on Afghanistan would separate them from their primary sources of material and financial support. Rumors of a US-USSR deal on Afghanistan circulated widely in resistance circles after President Reagan's meeting with Soviet Secretary General Gorbachev in Geneva last November.



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Fundamentalist leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar complained to US officials in March that publicity surrounding the Geneva talks raised resistance concerns that a political settlement would be reached, forcing them to make "gigantic" efforts to maintain the military struggle.



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the resistance began making plans in late January for sustaining their fighting effort in case Pakistan came under increased pressure to submit to an "unacceptable" settlement in Afghanistan. These plans--some of which have been implemented--included training small self-sufficient units, establishing mobile headquarters, and stocking base camps inside Afghanistan.



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Reinvigorated Afghan regime political and military efforts are also worrying the resistance, in our view. In Qandahar, resistance commanders are deeply concerned that Kabul's political campaign to attract support--by buying off tribal leaders, offering financial incentives to residents, and agreeing to cease offensive military operations in exchange for local support--is working, although the evidence is sketchy.



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Resistance leaders, worried about these developments as well as the success of Soviet special forces (Spetsnaz), are weighing possible courses of action and taking a closer look at their negotiating options.



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In late February, an Iranian-based resistance leader publicly called for a peace conference that would include the resistance, Pakistan, Iran, the Soviet Union, and President Babrak's

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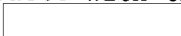


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government. Resistance leaders have also tried--so far unsuccessfully--to get briefings from UN negotiator Cordovez on the status of the Geneva talks. 

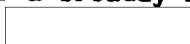
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Resistance Alliance Thinking on Negotiations

We believe there is little difference within the resistance over basic objectives. All groups want the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the return of the refugees to Afghanistan, and the eventual ouster of the Karmal government. There are, however, significant differences among the insurgents over approaches to the Geneva process, contacts with the Kabul regime, and the nature of a post-Soviet Afghanistan. 

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The Traditionalist Perspective


The traditionalist leaders--exemplified by Sayed Ahmad Gailani, Sibghatullah Mojadedi, and Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi--represent an older political and religious school of leadership that favors returning Afghanistan's traditional elites to power, including former King Zahir Shah. Deriving their support from Afghanistan's tribal social structure, historic elites, and their religious prestige, they hope to restore pre-Communist political institutions. Most traditionalist leaders would support elections for a parliament, the creation of a broadly-based Islamic alliance, and the separation of mosque and state. 

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Although the traditionalist leaders agree that military pressure is the best way to force the Soviets out, their attitudes toward the indirect peace talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan vary:

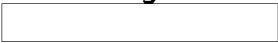
--In discussions with US officials last August, Gailani said he believed the Geneva process was useful and that Pakistan was adequately representing resistance concerns.

--Mohammadi has questioned the worth of the Geneva process, although he has concluded it should continue.

--Mojadeddi is suspicious; after hearing reports that Washington had agreed to join Moscow as guarantors of the final accord, he told US officials in January that "many Afghans in Peshawar wondered just what it was the US had offered to guarantee." 

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The traditionalists, moreover, are susceptible to Kabul's blandishments, in our view. The relatively flat terrain in the southern areas where the traditionalist groups operate makes both military success and resupply for them difficult. Their tribally based structure is also amenable to regime manipulation. [Redacted]

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If someone of Gailani's stature were to agree to an accomodation with Kabul, it would be an enormous political coup for to the Babrak government. Gailani's Islamic credentials--he claims descent from the Prophet Mohammad and spiritual authority over six million Afghans--would be exploited by Kabul to demonstrate its respect for Islam. [Redacted]

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We do not believe that the defection of Gailani would have serious repercussions for the resistance's military capabilities, although it would probably cause some diminution in fighting in the important border province of Paktia Province, where Gailani's group is strong. We would expect that clashes between groups favoring and opposed to reconciliation with the regime would deflect resistance attention from fighting Soviet-Afghan forces. [Redacted]

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The Fundamentalists' Hold Firm

The fundamentalists take a much harder line than the traditionalists. Led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Mohammad Yunus Khalis, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, and Burhanuddin Rabbani, they generally seek to establish an Islamic state and to restructure Afghanistan's traditional political and social institutions. Most blame former King Zahir Shah for creating the conditions that led to the Communist coup and would reject a role for him in any future government. [Redacted]

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The fundamentalists disapprove of the Geneva negotiations. In our view, they would prefer direct negotiations with the Soviets and see little chance that the Geneva format will provide any opportunity for meaningful negotiations. We believe that fundamentalist leaders, to a greater extent than traditionalists, regard the Babrak regime as illegitimate and would not agree to even indirect negotiations if Kabul were involved:

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--Rabbani, in press interviews last July, called "the form of these talks entirely unsuited to the situation since the two sides involved--the Soviet Union and the Afghan resistance--are not represented." He called the latest round of talks a "blind" that "will get [the resistance] nowhere."

--Gulbuddin told US officials in March that he believed the only reason the Soviets participated in the Geneva talks was to shift the blame for the war from Moscow to the resistance's "outside supporters." He said the resistance has nothing to say to the Soviets, and claimed that it has consistently rejected Soviet overtures.

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--Khalis doubts the utility of the Geneva talks and, in discussions with US officials, mused recently that it would be difficult for the refugees to return while the Soviets were in Afghanistan.

--In 1984 press interviews, Sayyaf said the resistance "won't accept the result of negotiations carried out by someone else on its behalf." Last August he told US officials that the Soviets are liars who use the Geneva talks merely to postpone consideration of troop withdrawal.

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Some of Gulbuddin's public statements suggest what a fundamentalist negotiating position might look like. In radio interviews as spokesman for the resistance alliance last October, Gulbuddin called for a Soviet troop withdrawal, reparations for the human and material losses suffered by Afghans, and a pledge by Moscow never to interfere in Afghanistan. He added that in exchange, a new Afghan resistance-led regime would not enter into any military alliances, would pursue a non-aligned foreign policy based on the teachings of Islam, and would "co-exist as peaceful neighbors within our secured border."

[redacted]

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We believe other fundamentalist leaders agree with most of Gulbuddin's demands. Although some--particularly Gulbuddin--are extremely hostile to the West, we believe that all fundamentalists would insist that a new government be strictly non-aligned.

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Rabbani probably is more sympathetic to the United States than other fundamentalists. he was upset when Gulbuddin refused to meet with President Reagan and the US Congress during his visit here last year and, in 1984, proposed to US officials that scholarships be established for Afghans wishing to study in the United States to counter "Soviet brainwashing."

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Resistance Commanders Inside

The Soviets have sought for several years to work out agreements with important insurgent commanders inside Afghanistan--such as Panjsher Valley leader Ahmad Shah Masood and Herat commander Ismail Khan--but to no lasting avail. Moscow's success rate has not improved recently, but we believe that its chances of obtaining one or two credible resistance defectors will increase if commanders see a settlement coming.

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The Pakistani Angle

Pakistan and the resistance generally agree on most of the fundamental conditions necessary for a negotiated settlement, but we believe that Islamabad is much more willing than the resistance to tolerate a coalition government in Kabul dominated by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, if not Babrak Karmal. The Pakistani Ambassador in Moscow, for example, told US officials recently that it might be possible to find some sort of "honorable place" for the PDPA in a future Kabul regime--a prospect that would be anathema to most fundamentalists and many traditionalists.

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The Resistance After a Settlement

If the Pakistanis agreed to a settlement which included a major role for the PDPA or otherwise did not meet what we believe are minimum resistance requirements, we believe the insurgents would continue to fight the Soviets and the Kabul regime.

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We believe the insurgents could maintain their current level of fighting without resupply in many parts of the country--especially in the Panjsher Valley and northern Afghanistan--for at least six months to a year using weapons from stockpiles, captured weapons, and acquisitions through the black market in Pakistan.

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In the long run, we believe that the insurgents would be able to sustain only a small-scale resistance without Pakistani or Iranian support. The resistance's ability to carry on without Pakistani support for more than a year would depend in part on Iran's willingness to offer them the kind of support that Pakistan now provides. Iranian leaders have recently begun to take a larger role in Afghanistan--mostly with Shia groups in the Hazarehjat--but we believe it is unlikely that they would agree to anything like the role that Islamabad now plays, especially while the Iran-Iraq war drags on.

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Prospects for Negotiations

Wide-ranging differences between insurgent groups are likely to continue to prevent the resistance from working out a common approach to negotiating issues. Even if the resistance were invited to play a role in the Geneva process, we think it unlikely that the Peshawar groups could agree even on participation, much less on a coherent approach to the various issues. Indeed, because many resistance leaders are aware that discussions over negotiating issues would seriously split the insurgent coalition, they would want to avoid talks.

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In our view, the resistance will continue to insist that negotiations are a matter for them and the Soviets. Although indirect expressions of interest in a negotiated settlement are likely to continue to come from both traditionalist leaders and some commanders in the field, we think it highly unlikely that any resistance leader will risk striking a separate deal with Kabul or Moscow. If Kabul succeeds in luring a traditionalist resistance leader such as Gailani into the government, however, Pakistan would face increased domestic political pressure to recognize the Kabul government.

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Lack of resistance unity on the peace negotiations will make it nearly impossible for Pakistan to sign an agreement that meets with resistance approval. Islamabad, which has been closest to the fundamentalists, is likely to consider the views of Gulbuddin and Rabbani more carefully than those of the traditionalist resistance groups--particularly because the fundamentalists have been the most effective in the fighting and have repeatedly asserted their intention to continue the war if an agreement is reached without their consent.

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