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# Developments in Afghanistan

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7 November 1986



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**Developments in Afghanistan**

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7 November 1986

1 Perspective—Soviet Union—Afghanistan: Postmortem on the Soviet Troop Withdrawal [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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The recently completed withdrawal of six Soviet regiments from Afghanistan was a sham that included the insertion of two regiments and equipment that were subsequently pulled out. The withdrawal, which did not cut Soviet combat power, also had few of the political returns the Soviets anticipated. [Redacted]

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5 Briefs

11 An Evaluation of the Changing Soviet Force Structure in Afghanistan [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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Over the past two years, the Soviets have substantially increased the mobility and firepower of their forces in Afghanistan while adding a comparatively small number of troops. These developments suggest that the USSR is relying heavily on a "technological solution" to the problems of winning the war. [Redacted]

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17 Japan Views Afghan Issue as a Minor Concern [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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Afghanistan has historically been a low priority in Japanese foreign policy, but its importance as an East-West issue prompted Japan to follow the US lead and impose sanctions against the USSR and Afghanistan in 1979. Although Japan has since given humanitarian aid to Afghan refugees and more assistance to the Pakistani Government, it is unlikely to take a much more active role on behalf of the resistance. [Redacted]

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*This document is published monthly by the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Executive Editor [Redacted]*

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**Developments in Afghanistan**



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7 November 1986

**Perspective**

**Afghanistan: Postmortem on the Soviet Troop Withdrawal**




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The recently completed withdrawal of six Soviet regiments from Afghanistan, promised in a speech by Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev, was a sham. Two of the "regiments" and some tanks were introduced in recent months for the sole purpose of withdrawing them later. Soviet hopes to make a maximum positive impression on world opinion will not be realized; initial press coverage has largely been skeptical.



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**Playing a Shell Game**

 arms and equipment to implement the sh began moving into Afghanistan on 29 July, the day after Gorbachev announced the Soviets would withdraw two motorized rifle regiments, three air defense regiments, and a tank regiment. By the time the Soviets were ready to begin the withdrawal ceremonies in mid-October, they had deployed the main elements of two new motorized rifle regiments and two tank battalions to Afghanistan to be withdrawn. The motorized rifle regiment fakery indicates that the Soviets were unwilling to cut the number of such units in country from 12 to 10; the tank and air defense regiments had little military value and were expendable.



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**Reading the Cards**

The Soviets probably hoped that publicity surrounding the withdrawal would convince world opinion of their desire for a negotiated settlement, but initial evidence suggests that reporters attending the ceremonies were not impressed. According to the US Embassy in Kabul, one Russian-speaking journalist described ceremonies at Shindand as a badly organized spectacle. He noted that the troops he spoke with were obviously well rehearsed, that many nervously looked to their seniors for prompting, and that some denied any combat contact with the insurgents. Most West European press coverage portrayed the withdrawal ceremonies as part of a propaganda offensive with little military significance, a view that was shared by most West European governments.



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Although the withdrawal almost certainly was timed for maximum impact on the UN General Assembly vote on Afghanistan on 5 November, we do not anticipate much erosion in support for the Pakistani-sponsored resolution calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces. The revelation of Soviet underhandedness in the withdrawal is unlikely, however, to win the resistance any new supporters. Even those countries that have accepted the legitimacy of the troop withdrawal have largely dismissed it as an insignificant gesture. At most, the gesture may make it more difficult in a few Third World countries to argue convincingly that the Soviets are intransigent.



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*Selected Excerpts From World Press Coverage  
of the Withdrawal*

*In France, the influential Le Monde: "The event which was noisily announced by the official press does not seem to impress the people of Kabul. . . ."*

*The right-of-center Quotidien: "A withdrawal whose meaning has no relation with the formidable propaganda operation surrounding it . . . they invited 140 correspondents in Moscow to witness the withdrawal . . . a public relations operation. . . ."*

*In Belgium, the Catholic De Standaard: "The Soviet decision can best be described as a subtraction from an unknown quantity."*

*In Portugal, Diario de Noticias, the leading daily, said "the withdrawal is a mere gesture" that signifies no basic change in Moscow's policy.*

*In Japan, the Daily Yomiuri said "There is some doubt about the Soviet Union's true intentions in starting its announced withdrawal of troops . . . but at any rate, only 8,000 out of 115,000 troops are going to leave and this will not really change the situation much."*

*The conservative Sankei Shimbun said "The Soviet Union should show a more visible withdrawal figure as it is pulling out only 8,000 of its 115,000 troops estimated to be in Afghanistan . . . the Soviets should announce a complete withdrawal timetable."*

*In China, Renmin Ribao said ". . . the number of regiments scheduled to be withdrawn amount to only a small part. In addition, the Soviet Union has not yet published the troop withdrawal schedule and has not stopped Soviet military operations in Afghanistan. For this reason, people cannot understand whether this is the beginning of a general withdrawal . . . or a tactical step for the purpose of gaining a favorable position in the US-Soviet talks."*

*In Yugoslavia, domestic radio commentators said "It is obvious that the military situation and the relation of forces in Afghanistan have not changed considerably . . . Anyway, even if one discounts—but one does not have to do so—the number of soldiers who will be withdrawn, . . . there is also the composition of those forces. One of the six regiments is a tank regiment, two are mechanized and three are antiaircraft. Not only do the mujahidin not have tanks or planes, they do not have a large quantity of heavy arms. This is why mujahidin members seem not to much believe in a real withdrawal. . . ."*

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**The Key Players Add Up the Points**

The Chinese were quick to judge the withdrawal pledge as largely a rhetorical gesture. Although Soviet leader Gorbachev clearly hoped that the pledged partial withdrawal of forces would help to remove one of the three main obstacles that Beijing says stand in the way of normalized Soviet-Chinese relations, he almost certainly has not succeeded. From China's perspective, Soviet policy on Afghanistan is unchanged.



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Pakistan probably was initially cautiously hopeful that the withdrawal indicated a desire on Moscow's part to be more flexible in the UN-sponsored negotiations in Geneva. President Zia in early October commented publicly that he saw the move as "encouraging," but that he did not endorse a withdrawal in installments. He insisted that, if the situation had stabilized enough to allow a partial withdrawal, all Soviet forces should go.



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Zia, who subsequently told the press that the Soviets had introduced 15,000 troops into Afghanistan this year, is unlikely to feel any pressure to respond to the withdrawal with a "reciprocal gesture," as the Soviets insist. Although the Pakistani President may be unwilling to criticize Moscow publicly over its duplicity, the Soviet ruse may have an impact on Pakistan's negotiating position at Geneva. The Pakistanis are likely to be more suspicious of Soviet pledges, possibly more insistent on strong monitoring provisions, and probably even less willing than in the past to consider any Soviet offer to withdraw all its forces over an extended period. Pakistan will continue bilateral discussions with Moscow, however.



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At the same time, Moscow's attempts to convince the world that it wants a negotiated withdrawal in Afghanistan risks creating fears among Kabul's ruling elite that the Soviets are beginning to abandon them. We believe that the ruling party, seriously divided since the Soviets installed Najibullah as party chief, would suffer increased strains if party members were to believe that a genuine Soviet disengagement had begun.



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It was embarrassing for

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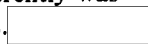
Moscow, moreover, when Babrak was publicly mobbed by well-wishers at withdrawal ceremonies in Kabul. This show of support followed his conspicuous absence from pullout ceremonies a few days earlier in Shindand and rumors of his arrest.



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**Looking at the Scorecard**

The withdrawal almost certainly has failed to win over world opinion and impress China and Pakistan with what was meant to appear as a "good faith" gesture of the Soviets' willingness to solve the Afghan problem. But the negative results of the venture—primarily the charges of Soviet duplicity—were also manageable. Even the reaction of the US Government to the deception apparently was considered by Moscow as likely to be within acceptable bounds.



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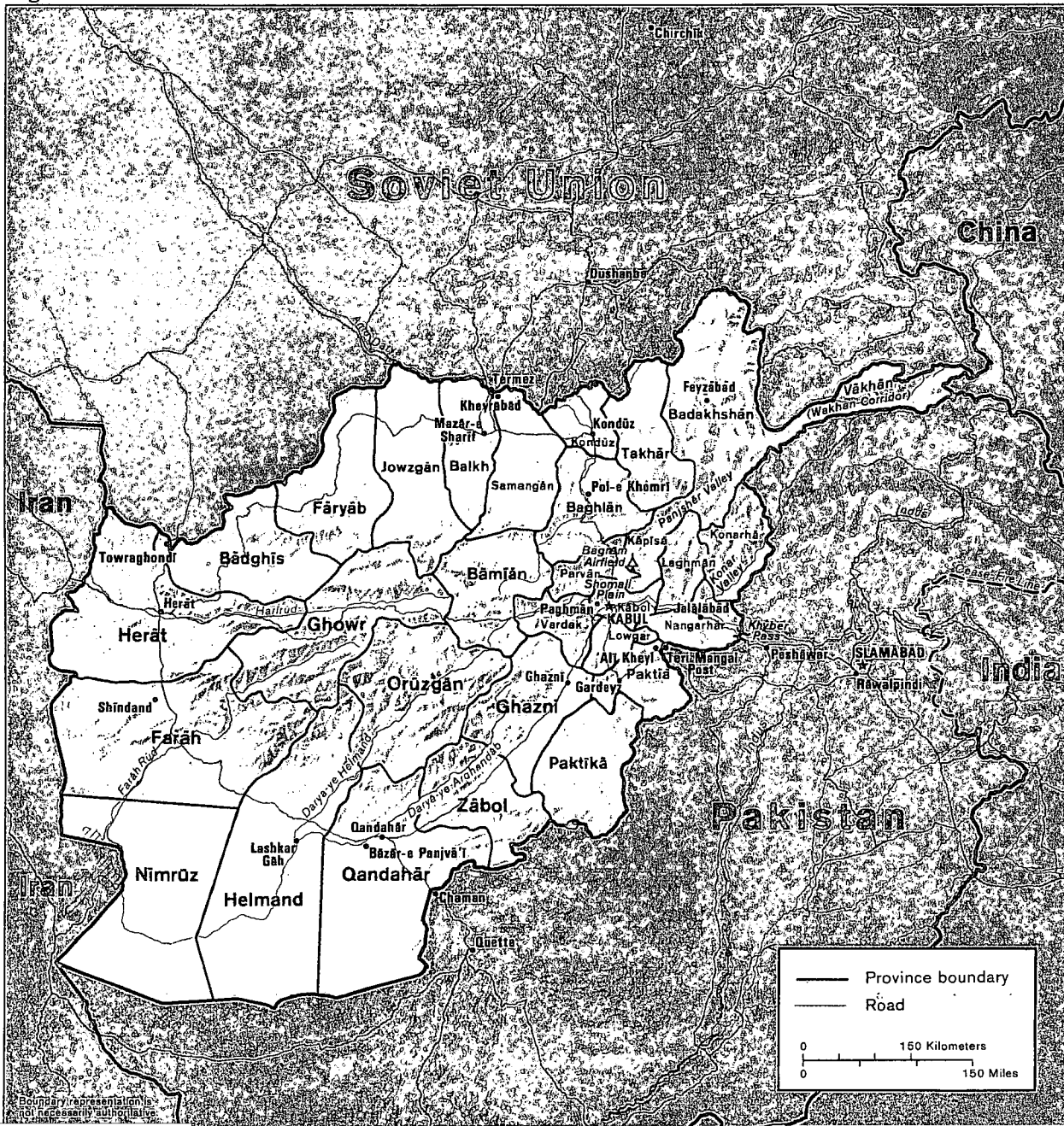


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**Afghanistan**



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**Briefs**

**Covering Withdrawing Soviet Forces** [redacted]

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Despite several weeks of combat activity on the periphery of Kabul, the Soviets and the Afghan regime have been unable to stop insurgent rocket attacks against the city. In mid-September, the US Embassy reported that the insurgents had hit Kabul Airport with several rockets. The explosion of a car bomb outside the Soviet Embassy, where a Soviet delegation headed by the Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers was visiting in late September, underscored the unsettled security conditions in the city. [redacted]

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The US Embassy claims that Soviet and Afghan regime forces employed "scorched earth" tactics during these operations in order to destroy civilian as well as insurgent targets in the Shomali Plain and Paghman. Termed by US Embassy sources as "one of the most brutal campaigns" in the Kabul area, the operations included what local residents consider to be the deliberate destruction of crops and livestock. [redacted] a primary reason for the Soviets' and the Afghan regime's inability to stop guerrilla activity directed against Kabul and Paghman is the strength of resistance support among civilians there. [redacted]

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According to the US Embassy, Soviet and Afghan regime units from the city of Qandahar launched an operation in mid-September in the Darya-ye Arghandab (Arghandab River) and Bazar-e Panjva'i regions southwest of the city, probably in an effort to curb resistance infiltration. [redacted] a combat operation was under way north of Qandahar. Afghan forces reinforced one fire-support base, added a second, and established a small security post. This activity occurred not far from where insurgent activity has kept a portion of Highway 1 closed since 1985. The Soviets and the Afghan regime have created a more easily defended detour, over 20 kilometers long, that skirts the closed road. [redacted]

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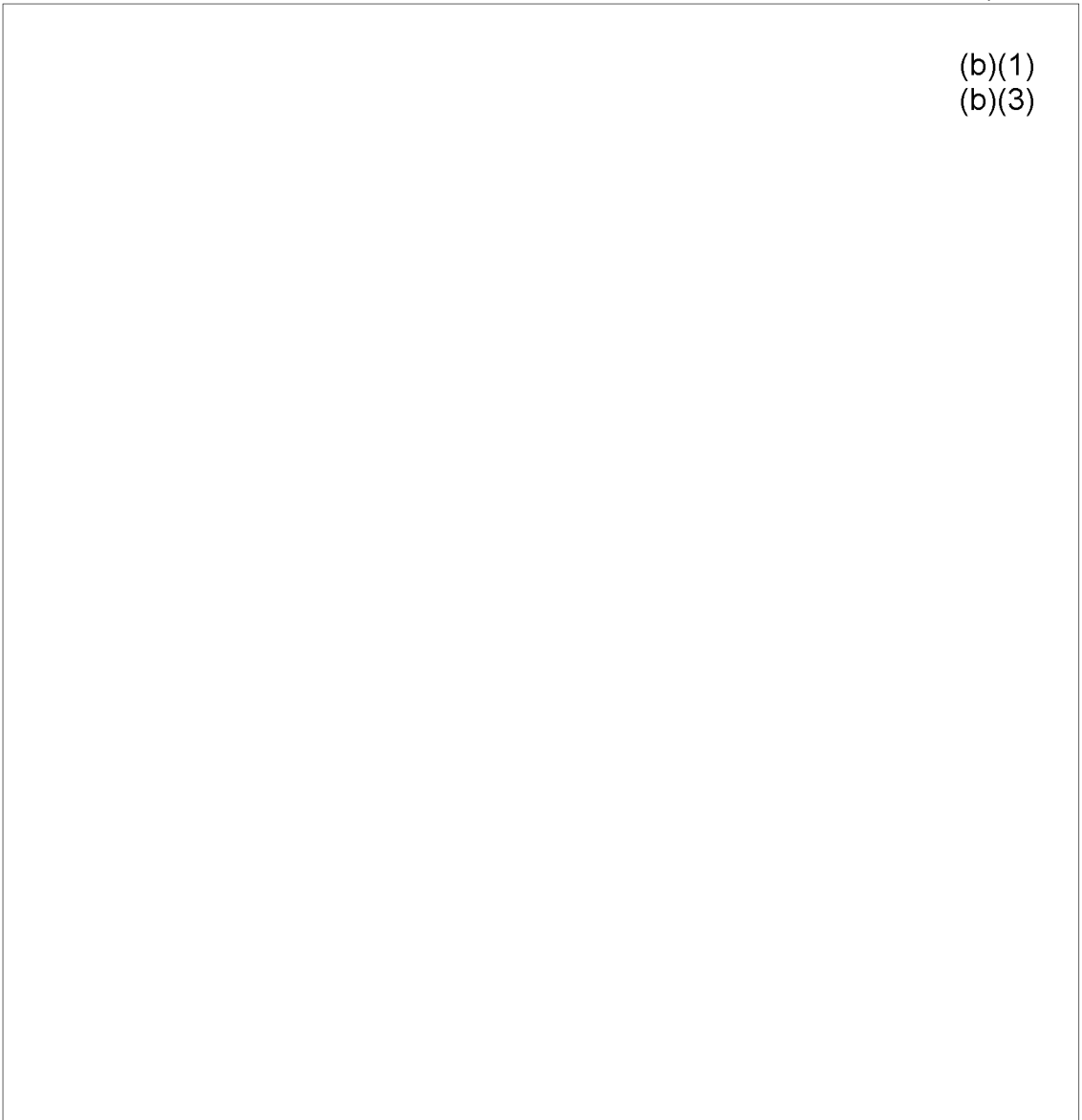
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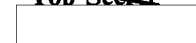


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**Afghan Regime Plans Population Relocation** [redacted]

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The Kabul regime announced in early September that it plans to relocate 30,000 Afghan families—some 300,000 people—from Konarha, Laghman, and Paktia Provinces in eastern Afghanistan to less populated Nimruz, Helmand, and Farah Provinces in western Afghanistan. The resettlement scheme, which is to take place over a 10-year period, supposedly would be voluntary. Afghan resistance leaders told US officials in Islamabad that the regime was offering tribal groups between 4,000 and 6,000 afghanis (about US \$40 at market rates) to participate in the program but that resistance commanders were countering these measures effectively. Afghan Agriculture Minister Lakanwal also claimed that the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is participating in the relocation program. [redacted]

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We believe that the regime regards the plan as a means to deny the resistance its civilian support base by depopulating the eastern border provinces. Although a forcible program would be difficult to implement because of popular resistance and weak regime control in the countryside, the regime has not hesitated to use coercion to undercut civilian support for the insurgents. Citing involvement by the FAO—which the UN agency denies—is another means by which the regime is trying to show its legitimacy in international circles. This fall, the Kabul media have been particularly aggressive in invoking the names of various international organizations to buttress bogus regime claims of humanitarian accomplishments.

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**Regime Making Strides With International Agencies?** [redacted]

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Several international humanitarian agencies appear to be considering more extensive working arrangements with the Afghan regime. Separate delegations of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross visited Afghanistan in early September to discuss the establishment of health care programs there, according to the US Embassy in Kabul. The Swedish Red Cross is thinking of participating in a children's vaccination program in Afghanistan conducted under Kabul regime auspices. UNICEF also claims it will conduct a vaccination program with both the regime's and the insurgents' assistance, but US officials in Islamabad say no arrangements to include the resistance have yet been made. The US Embassy in Bonn reported in early October that the International Assistance Mission—which oversees several medical programs in Kabul—may expand its activities outside the Afghan capital.

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These international humanitarian organizations probably believe they cannot continue denying aid to the Afghan population on the grounds that such assistance would strengthen the regime's claims to legitimacy. The expansion of these programs outside Kabul could increase pressure on other organizations—especially UN agencies, which have cited security reasons for limiting their programs to

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Kabul—to follow suit. Kabul would almost certainly point to such health programs to give credibility to its claims that it is making great strides in improving the health and welfare of the population. [Redacted]

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**Resistance Successes With Surface-to-Air Missiles** [Redacted]

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The increasing effectiveness of the insurgents in using surface-to-air missiles has forced changes in Afghan and Soviet air tactics. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Soviet and Afghan navigators and air traffic controllers are attempting to reroute military aircraft to avoid areas of heavy insurgent antiaircraft fire. [Redacted]

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The Soviets will probably employ standard countermeasures to keep losses down, including modifying flight profiles, using at least four aircraft per attack mission, and making more use of onboard systems such as infrared jammers and chaff. They are also likely to step up efforts to intimidate Pakistan by increasing sabotage and subversion in border areas as well as shallow cross-border airstrikes.

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[Redacted] the insurgents' increased success with th [Redacted] missiles has lowered morale among Afghan fighter pilots. More pilots are ask [Redacted] for transfers to transport units or ground assignments and complaining that the Afghan military is not doing enough to counter the threat. [Redacted]

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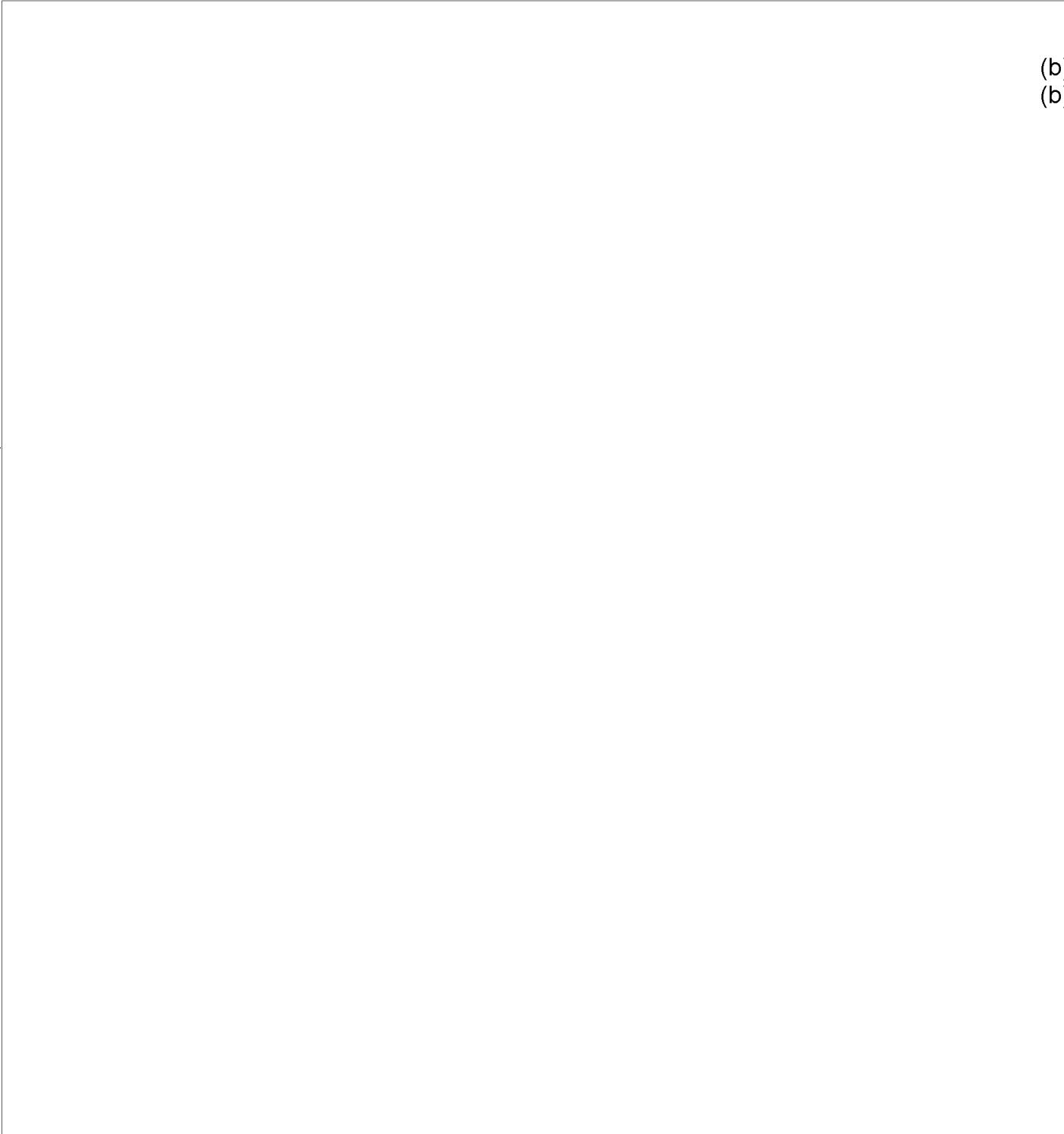
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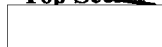


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### An Evaluation of the Changing Soviet Force Structure in Afghanistan



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In seeking a solution to the military stalemate in Afghanistan, the Soviets have tried different tactical approaches, looking for the least costly and most effective combination of manpower and weaponry to achieve their objectives. Since the fall of 1984 upgrades of major ground force weapons and the deployment of helicopters have substantially increased both the firepower and mobility of Soviet forces. At the same time, Soviet troop strength in Afghanistan has risen only gradually.



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#### Weighing the Alternatives

Although the Soviets may have considered sharply increasing the size of their combat contingent in Afghanistan, they probably concluded that they could not do so easily. They would have to draw down forces currently deployed in Eastern Europe, in interior military districts, or in the Soviet Far East. The present logistic infrastructure in Afghanistan would also have to be substantially expanded to support a major influx of forces. In addition, there would be considerable political repercussions abroad—and perhaps at home—associated with a massive reinforcement.



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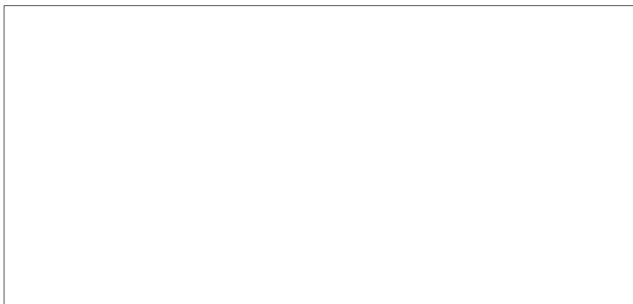
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A “technological solution” clearly has had more appeal to Soviet military leaders in recent years. They probably believed that advanced weaponry would constrain casualties relative to the level of combat. In addition, advocates of this approach probably argued that an emphasis on advanced armaments would allow the Soviets to increase firepower dramatically with only a marginal increase in manpower. Further, the military would have a unique opportunity to test new weapons in combat.



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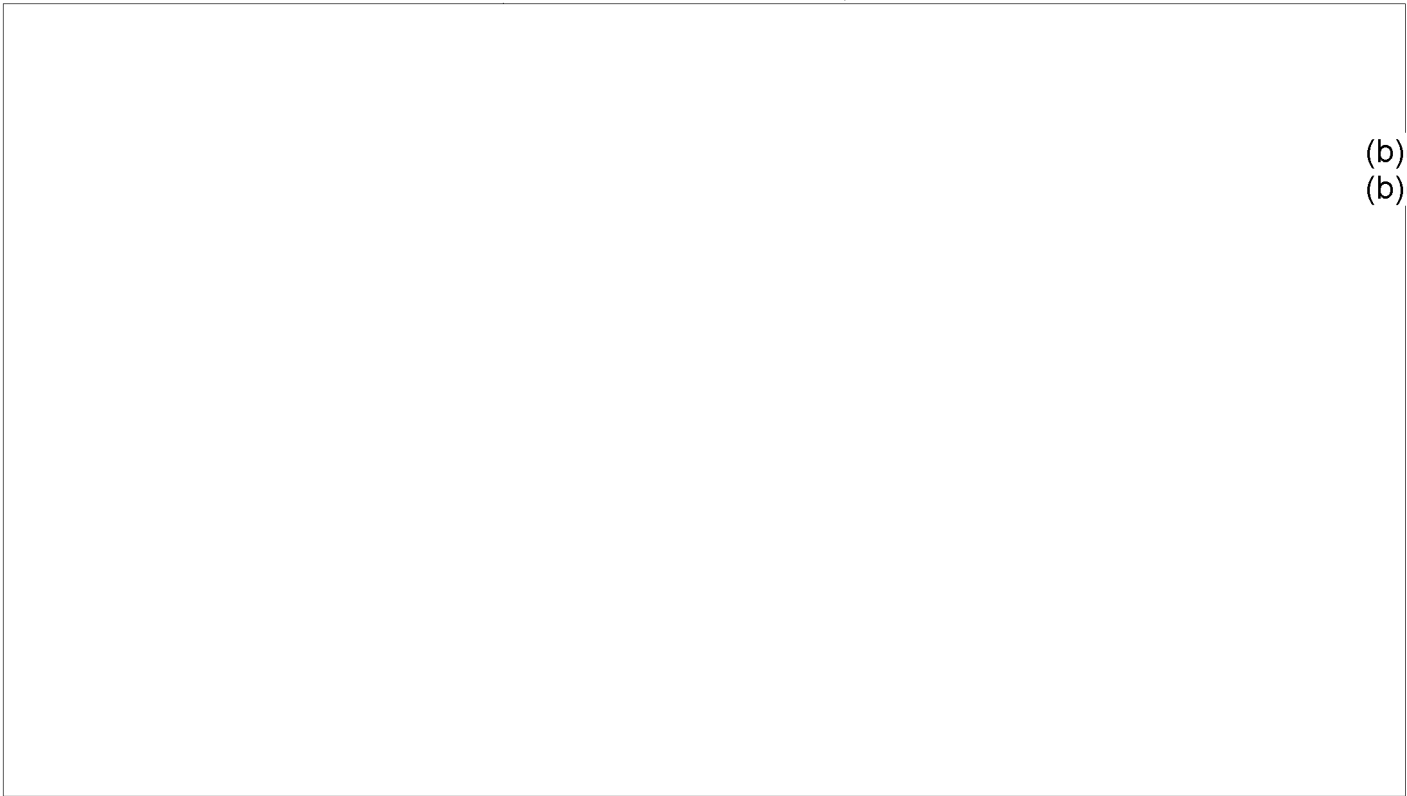
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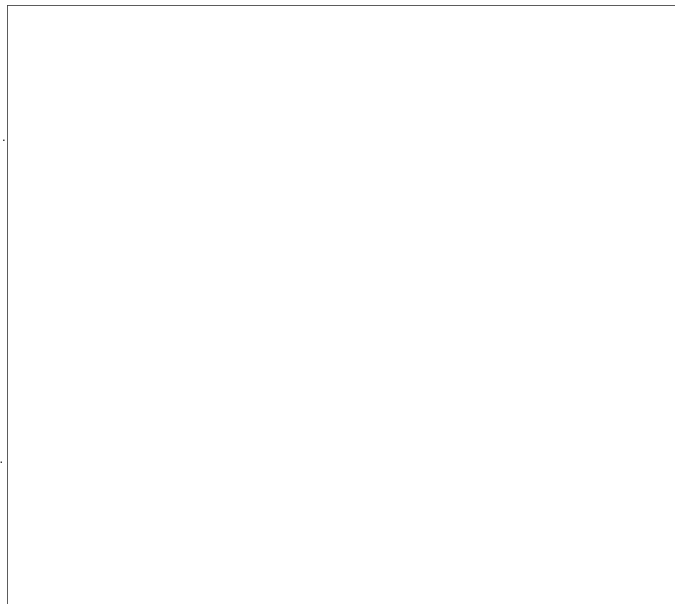
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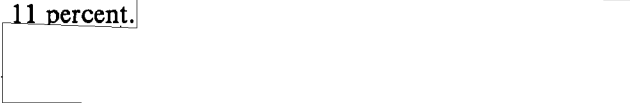
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troop strength and armaments increased at about the same rate. But in 1985 troop totals increased by 5 percent while the weapons effectiveness value grew by 11 percent.



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Firepower and mobility have been strongly emphasized in the changes in the weaponry of Soviet forces in Afghanistan since 1984:

- BMP-2 armored infantry combat vehicles and BTR-70 and BTR-80 armored personnel carriers have replaced BMP-1s, BTR-60s, and BMD airborne amphibious combat vehicles. The 30-mm gun on the BMP-2 has been far more effective in Afghanistan than has the 73-mm cannon on the BMP-1 and BMD-1, while the upgraded suspension system of the newer BTRs allows greater mobility than older BTR-60s have.

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**Firepower and Mobility**

The Soviets' emphasis on better weaponry in the past two years is well illustrated by a comparison of trends in the weapons effectiveness value and increases in the number of troops in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> From 1980 to 1984

- Vasilek 82-mm automatic mortars (some mounted on an MT-LB amphibious armored tractor), M1975 240-mm self-propelled mortars, 2S1 122-mm and

<sup>1</sup> Weapons effectiveness values are mathematical characterizations of the effectiveness of ground force and helicopter weapons systems.



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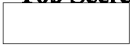


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2S3 152-mm self-propelled howitzers, and 2S5 152-mm self-propelled guns have replaced older towed artillery and mortars. The newer models have improved capabilities for delivering high volumes of direct and indirect fire and for maneuvering in rugged terrain. [Redacted]

Some of the armaments also feature better protection.

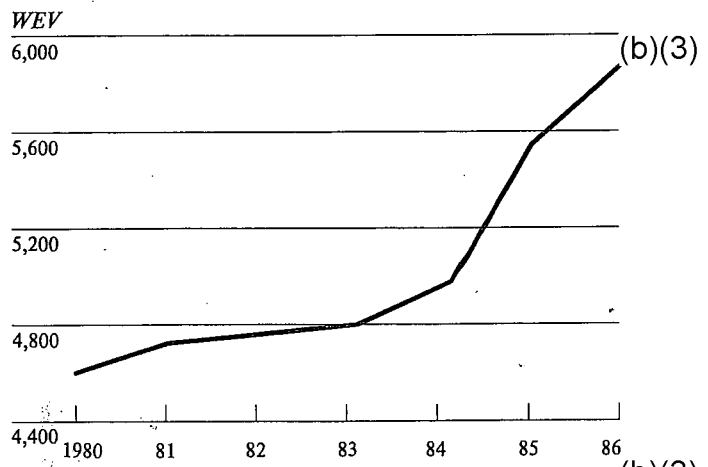
[Redacted] Most Soviet tanks and some BMP armored infantry combat vehicles in Afghanistan now have this extra protection. The modification—armor plate on the glacis and skirts over and under the track or wheel shelves—is intended to detonate shaped charges of insurgent antitank weapons before contact is made with the main body of the vehicle. On turrets, several large plates cover a 90 degree sector on both sides of the gun. [Redacted]

**Augmented Rear Service and Support**

The added mechanization and fire support of Soviet forces in Afghanistan have necessitated a corresponding increase in the rear services and support structure. To handle the greater logistic demand, the Soviets have augmented the materiel support brigade of the 40th Army with assets normally associated with a front-level command.

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**Trends in Weapon Effectiveness Values (WEV)**



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**Prospects**

Despite the Soviets' failure to make significant advances in the counterinsurgency over the past two years with the influx of more up-to-date weapons and incremental changes in forces structure, Moscow probably will continue with this approach. Soviet military leaders probably are encouraged by the limited successes with smaller, more mobile units and massive firepower in attacks on insurgent forces.

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Resistance forces have had to shift more of their supply activity to nighttime and to dispatch smaller supply caravans over varied infiltration routes. Even so, they have lost more supply trains to Soviet interdiction. The Soviets' emphasis on firepower and mobility has also caused resistance forces to place more emphasis on cover and concealment techniques and to keep their own units as small and as mobile as possible. [Redacted]

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**Japan Views Afghan Issue as a Minor Concern** [redacted]

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Afghanistan has historically been a low priority in Japanese foreign policy, but its salience as an East-West issue prompted Tokyo to follow the US lead and impose sanctions against the Soviet Union and the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan in 1979. Japan has since given modest amounts of humanitarian aid to Afghan refugees and more generous assistance to neighboring Pakistan, where it has become Islamabad's second-largest aid donor. Nonetheless, Tokyo's interest in the Afghan issue stems principally from its desire to stay in step with Washington, and we do not expect Tokyo to break stride on the Afghan issue. [redacted]

with Japanese officials, a majority of then Prime Minister Ohira's close advisers, as well as senior Foreign Ministry officials, argued that Japan should align itself closely with US policy. They said this was especially critical to mend strains in the US-Japan relationship created by Tokyo's slow imposition of sanctions against Iran during the US-hostage crisis. [redacted]

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**Sanctions Against the Soviets**

Tokyo quickly supported US initiatives following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In addition to calling for a withdrawal of Soviet forces and Afghan self-determination, Tokyo imposed its own sanctions. The Japanese took a number of steps, including:

- Postponing bilateral cultural and political exchanges.
- Supporting strengthened COCOM restrictions against high-technology exports to the Soviet Union.
- Suspending Japanese Export-Import Bank credits for forestry development, pulp manufacture, and harbor expansion joint ventures in the Soviet Union worth a total of \$1.2 billion.
- Boycotting the Olympic Games in Moscow.
- Downgrading diplomatic relations with the Soviet-backed government in Kabul and suspending aid to Afghanistan. [redacted]

But Japanese business interests, particularly powerful trading companies and their allies in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, countered that Japan's considerable economic equities in the Soviet Union should not be jeopardized. Their argument carried considerable weight during the energy shortage then occurring. Prospects of lucrative export contracts and fishing rights in Soviet waters also bolstered their more cautious view. As a result, Tokyo ensured that its long-standing ventures in coal, petroleum, and natural gas in the Soviet Union—worth some \$5 billion—went unaffected by the sanctions action. [redacted]

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**Contribution to Western Interests**

Tokyo's subsequent involvement with the Afghan issue has largely been through support for Pakistan. Japanese officials have described their aid to Islamabad as a tool to promote stability in the area, which is strategically important to Japan because of its proximity to oil supply routes. To this end, during both Pakistani President Zia's trip to Tokyo in 1983 and Prime Minister Nakasone's trip to Pakistan in 1984, Nakasone reaffirmed Japan's commitment to Pakistan's economic development. Japan has boosted its aid considerably since 1980, becoming Pakistan's second-largest bilateral aid donor, with a \$266 million commitment in 1985. Tokyo also has consistently supported Pakistan's UN resolutions on Afghanistan. It has not offered, however, to mediate, as it has in Cambodia and the Iran-Iraq war, where Japanese interests are more directly affected. [redacted]

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These actions were a result of a policy debate on sanctions, reflecting Tokyo's efforts to balance support for Western initiatives with economic interests in the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> According to interviews

<sup>1</sup> In comparison with Japan's large economic stake in the Soviet Union, Japan's economic interest in Afghanistan is insignificant. Although Japan is one of Kabul's leading Western trading partners—accounting for almost 15 percent of Afghanistan's imports—bilateral trade accounts for a miniscule percent of Japanese trade. [redacted]

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Japanese government support for the Afghan resistance has been limited to humanitarian aid, channeled primarily through the United Nations and other international organizations. Japan donated approximately \$17 million to Afghan refugee relief programs in Pakistan in 1985 and \$400,000 for refugees in Iran—far less than the Europeans and also much less than the amount Japan has funneled to Thailand for Cambodian refugees. [Redacted]

In our view, the only area in which Tokyo might become more active is in an international effort to achieve a political solution to the Afghan problem. The Japanese recently have shown heightened interest in the United Nations as a forum for their views on global issues. Japanese envoys in September 1986 called for greater funding and participation of non-military personnel in UN peacekeeping operations. If such a UN role becomes possible in Afghanistan—although it is unlikely in the near term—Tokyo may be inclined to contribute. [Redacted]

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**More of the Same?**

Japanese officials are seeking to arrange a visit to Tokyo by General Secretary Gorbachev, perhaps early in 1987, but the Afghan issue is unlikely to figure prominently on the agenda. Tokyo never believed that Moscow's announced withdrawal of six regiments from Afghanistan represented a major policy shift. Even evidence of Soviet duplicity in the partial withdrawal is unlikely to spark greater engagement in Afghanistan by the Japanese. [Redacted]

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We believe Tokyo will continue supporting the US position and maintain its moderate humanitarian aid effort for the insurgents. But we do not expect the Japanese to provide direct financial support or a public forum for the resistance. [Redacted]

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~~Top Secret~~



(b)(3)