

Central Intelligence Agency

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Pakistan: Steadfastness on Afghanistan

Pakistani leaders view the Soviet presence in Afghanistan as a strategic threat. They believe, [redacted] the Soviets want to gain permanent overland access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean littoral. They are worried that Moscow will increase its political and military pressure on Pakistan once it has consolidated its hold on Afghanistan. [redacted]

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[redacted] they are concerned that Moscow will collaborate with India to neutralize and divide Pakistan--perhaps by a combination of external military pressure and subversive meddling in Pakistan's unstable domestic politics. [redacted]

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We believe Pakistan continues to engage the Soviets in periodic talks on Afghanistan for a number of reasons:

- The UN-sponsored talks provide Pakistan both with a way to test Soviet intentions in Afghanistan and maintain international support for its position on Afghanistan.
- Pakistan keeps its channels open to Moscow because it worries that the West will in time forget about Afghanistan or reach an agreement over Pakistan's head as part of a larger East-West settlement.
- The refugee problem inside Pakistan has become a major concern to Islamabad. Rising local resentments and concern in the Army that some 3 million Afghan refugees will become a permanent burden for Pakistan have added a note of urgency to Pakistan's search for a political settlement. So far, however, relations between the Afghan refugees and locals--who belong to the same ethnic group--have been peaceful. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by the South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, [redacted] Information as of September 12, 1983 was used in preparation of this paper. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, South Asia Division, [redacted]

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We doubt Islamabad is ready to shift its stand on the issue in ways that would damage US interests. So far in the indirect talks at Geneva, Pakistan has remained steadfast in its insistence that a political settlement is contingent on a withdrawal of Soviet troops.

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- Islamabad supports the Afghan insurgents in order to make it more difficult for the Soviets to consolidate their hold on Afghanistan. An active insurgency is crucial to Pakistan's diplomatic campaign to keep Afghanistan before world opinion as an issue that can be settled only by the withdrawal of Soviet troops.
- A political settlement acceptable to the Zia regime would have to permit the voluntary return to Afghanistan of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Islamabad knows the refugees will not return home unless the Soviets first withdraw their troops.
- Pakistan has consistently refused to recognize the Babrak regime. Islamabad knows that recognition is its trump card. It is doubtful that it would play it until a pull-out of Soviet troops is largely completed and most of the refugees have returned home.
- Pakistan's current policy on Afghanistan receives strong support from conservative religious parties at home and vital friends abroad, such as Saudi Arabia, China, and the US. Pakistan's strong stand on Afghanistan and its support for an active insurgency enables it to argue more effectively with the Saudis, the US, and China that it needs and deserves enhanced diplomatic, economic, and military support.

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