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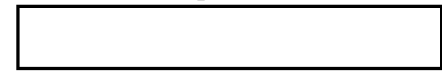
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Intelligence Memorandum

Pushtunistan—An Historical Survey

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6 November 1973
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
6 November 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

PUSHTUNISTAN-AN HISTORICAL SURVEYSUMMARY

Pushtunistan has once again become a bone of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The roots of the problem can be traced back to 1893, when a British mission to Kabul under Sir Mortimer Durand was able to reach an agreement with the Afghans on a border, subsequently known as the Durand Line, which runs 1,200 miles from Sinkiang to Persia. Unfortunately, the line cut in two an ethnic community--the Pushtuns, a Muslim tribal society which had lived in the area between the northern reaches of the Indus River and the Hindu Kush mountains for centuries. The Pushtuns have a proud military history and are fiercely independent. Today, some 8 million Pushtuns form about half of the population of Afghanistan; another 6 million live in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan.

The Pushtuns have dominated the political life of Afghanistan since it achieved independence in the 18th century. Since then, political leaders in Afghanistan have looked to the Pushtuns for support and have provided subsidies to tribal leaders to gain their loyalty. In fact, all Afghan rulers for the past 200 years have been Pushtuns.

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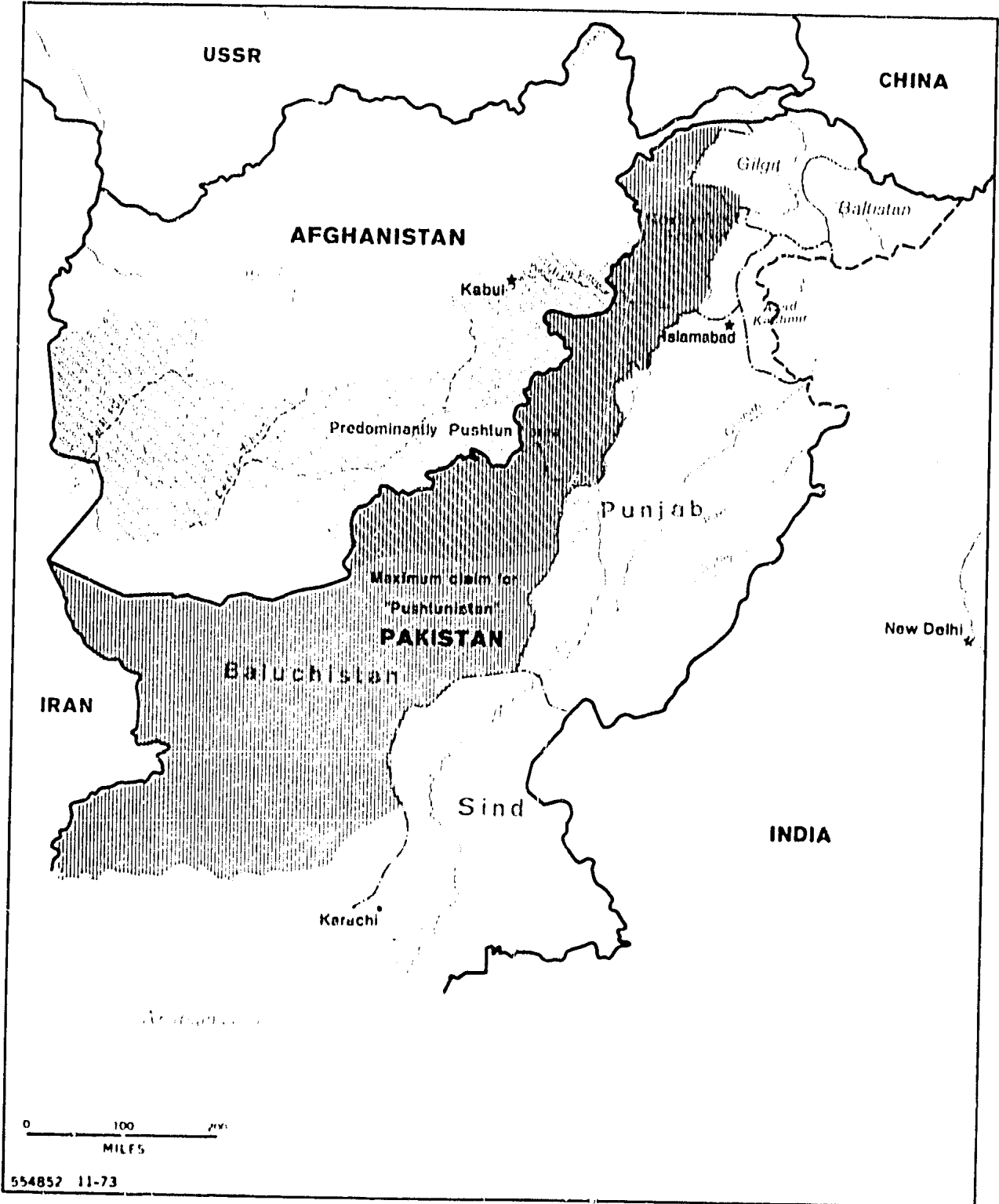
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Afghan interest in the future of the Pushtun tribes to the east of the Durand Line increased as the British prepared to leave the subcontinent. In 1947 some Pushtun leaders in the Northwest Frontier, afraid they would be incorporated in a Pakistan dominated by the hated Punjabis, proposed an independent state of Pushtunistan. The British-sponsored referendum, however, allowed for a choice only between Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, and in August 1947 the Northwest Frontier became part of Pakistan. The Afghans reacted strongly, voting against Pakistan's admission to the United Nations, refusing to recognize the validity of the Durand Line, and loudly endorsing an independent Pushtunistan.

Some Afghans would doubtless like to absorb Pushtunistan into Afghanistan. The Afghans controlled the area during the 18th century. Moreover, it is agreed in Kabul that the proposed state would not be viable and would probably soon be incorporated in a greater Afghanistan. Proposals that other tribal groups, such as the Baluchis be absorbed into a larger Pushtunistan are attractive to the Afghans largely because Baluchistan would presumably have access to the sea.

The Pakistanis argue that they inherited the Durand Line and accuse the Afghans of meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs. They deny that the great majority of Pushtuns in the frontier region want independence. Neutral sources tend to agree that this is true, although the Pushtun minority as a group has long pressed for increased political, economic, and cultural autonomy. The Pakistanis have allowed the tribes considerable freedom to adhere to their traditional laws and procedures. Nevertheless, the tribes have occasionally resisted by force extension of centralized control--even such limited intrusion as the development of new roads. In these cases, the government has responded with punitive expeditions.

Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan grew worse in the decade after 1953. Prince Mohammad Daoud Khan--an ardent advocate of Pushtunistan--was virtual

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dictator of Afghanistan. In 1955 and again in 1961, the trouble reached crisis proportions when Pakistan moved to integrate the tribes--Pushtun and others--more closely into the nation. During the 1961 crisis, diplomatic and economic relations were broken, to the eventual economic disadvantage of Afghanistan. This was a factor in the decision by King Zahir to remove Daoud from power in 1963.

Ten years of relative calm ensued. The Afghans were not pressing for an independent Pushtunistan, although they continued to maintain interest in the tribes. The return of Daoud in the coup last July has led once again to a rapid deterioration in Afghan-Pakistani relations.

Daoud's return to power coincided with an upsurge of internal problems across the border. Prime Minister Bhutto faces a minor insurgency in Baluchistan--caused in part by political strains with his Baluchi opponents--and a bitter wrangle with his opposition in the Northwest Frontier Province. One of Bhutto's main political foes, a Pushtun, has come close to calling on the Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan to secede.

With Bhutto under attack in Pakistan and Daoud trying to establish full control in Afghanistan, neither side was disposed to be conciliatory about Pushtunistan. The Pakistanis have been furious when Afghan officials urge the tribes in Pakistan to return to the "fatherland." Daoud, in turn, has denounced the Pakistani Government for encouraging plotting against his regime in Kabul.

As relations have worsened, the Pakistanis have adopted a "forward" policy toward the Afghans. Troops have been moved up to the border, in some cases occupying camps vacant since 1947, and paramilitary forces along the border have been strengthened.

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One small clash has already occurred along the border; others are probable. In the prevailing atmosphere of fear and distrust, the threat of a major new crisis between the two South Asian neighbors is growing.

Background

Pushtunistan as an issue dates from 1947, although the antecedents of the problem can be clearly traced back well into the 19th century and more tenuously to the 18th. When Afghanistan became a separate state in the middle of the 18th century, it was under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Durani, a member of an ethnic community known as the Pushtuns. The Pushtuns are an Indo-European, nomadic people who have resided in an area that stretches from the northern reaches of the Indus River to the southern end of the Hindu Kush Mountains since the beginning of recorded time.

The Pushtuns, or Pukhtuns, are Muslims who speak the Pushtu, or Pukhtu, language. The name is sometimes rendered as "Pashtuns" or "Pakhtuns." On the Pakistani side of the border these people are called "Pathans," a word taken over by the British from an Indian vernacular.

During Ahmad Shah's reign, the Afghan nation grew until it included all of present-day Afghanistan and nearly all of what was to become Pakistan. When Ahmad Shah died, the empire began to fall apart, and the British eventually extended their control northward through the Sind and Punjab into Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier. In 1893, the British, anxious to obtain an agreed boundary in northwest India, sent Sir Mortimer Durand to Kabul to negotiate with the Amir of Afghanistan. Sir Mortimer was able to negotiate a border, called the Durand Line, which runs some 1,200 miles, from Sinkiang in China to the Iranian border.

The Durand Line was based on no logical geographic or ethnic consideration. It simply marked a rough approximation of the area under Afghan and

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British control at the time of Durand's mission. Unfortunately for the future, it divided in two one major ethnic community--the Pushtuns. Slightly more than half the Pushtuns (some 8 million today) ended up west of the line. Some 6 million Pushtuns live east of the Line, and most are in what the British, and later the Pakistanis, termed the Northwest Frontier Province.

Political boundaries meant little to the Pushtuns, and they continued to roam freely across the border. Following the Anglo-Afghan War in 1919 (the third in less than a century), a treaty was signed which, inter alia, stipulated that each party would inform the other of any contemplated military action considered necessary to maintain order in each side's Pushtun tribal area. The British attached a letter to the treaty recognizing Afghan interest in the condition of all the frontier tribes.

While the government in Kabul had an interest in various tribes on the eastern side of the boundary, its focus has always been on the Pushtuns. Not only do the Pushtuns form the largest ethnic community in Afghanistan, (about 50 percent) but all Afghan rulers for the last 200 years--up to and including President Daoud--have been Pushtuns. Pushtun tribal leaders on both sides of the border have looked for generations to the political leaders in Kabul for subsidies; not surprisingly, the tribes, including those east of the Durand Line, have had a large role in installing and removing Afghan governments. On occasion, Kabul has encouraged its fellow Pushtuns to rise up against the government in power east of the Durand Line. When these governments have responded with punitive expeditions against the tribes, Afghanistan has served as a refuge for the Pushtuns.

Birth of the Pushtunistan Idea

During World War II, the Afghans, alarmed by the possibility of an early departure of the British from the subcontinent, sought and apparently

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received from London a promise to consult with Kabul about the future status of the Northwest Frontier Province if and when a change appeared imminent. In the haste and confusion surrounding the 1947 partition of India, however, the British apparently failed to discuss the issue with the Afghans.

In the months immediately preceding partition, a political dispute erupted in the Northwest Frontier Province. The Red Shirt Party, led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and allied to Mohandas Gandhi's Congress Party, found itself in danger of losing power in the province to the Muslim League. The latter, under Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was advocating the partition of India and the creation of a separate Pakistan for India's Muslims. The Red Shirts responded by introducing the idea of an independent Pushtun state, called Pushtunistan. As originally conceived, the state would have roughly the same boundaries as the present Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. No attempt was made to defend the viability of the state; instead, the appeal was directed to the Pushtun's fear of being dominated by the hated Punjabis. When the British carried out a referendum in the province, giving a choice between India and Pakistan, the Red Shirts boycotted the poll, allegedly because it did not provide for a third choice--independence.

The View from Afghanistan

The failure of the British to consult with the Afghans prior to partition so irritated Kabul that it voted against Pakistan's admission to the UN and enthusiastically adopted the Red Shirts' call for Pushtunistan. At the same time, the Afghan Government announced that the departure of the British abrogated the 1893 agreement demarcating the border. (Subsequently, Kabul charged that the Durand Line had been accepted under duress and was therefore void.) Since 1947, the Afghans have consistently refused to accept the line as a legal international border, although in practice, they have not attempted to exercise control beyond it.

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The intensity of the Afghan campaign for creation of Pushtunistan has fluctuated considerably over the years. Unquestionably, the ethnic tie that binds together the Pushtuns on both sides of the border is strong, and the Afghans believe that all Pakistani governments suppress their Pushtun minority. There is also a degree of irredentism. Most Afghans in candid moments admit that Pushtunistan would not be a viable state and would quickly be absorbed into a greater Afghanistan. The borders of the proposed state, as seen in Kabul, have varied. At times, "Pushtunistan" has been expanded far beyond the Northwest Frontier Province to embrace the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, although few Pushtuns live in that province and the Baluchis, while also a tribal society, are a separate ethnic community with a different language. The addition of Baluchistan would, of course, give the new nation (and eventually, in all probability, Kabul) access to the sea. At no time have the Afghans proposed that the state take in the Pushtuns of Afghanistan; yet a true Pushtun state would logically include them too.

Ambitious politicians in Kabul have found the Pushtunistan issue useful for gaining popular support. No major Afghan politician in the past 25 years has been able to oppose a proposal that carries so much emotional appeal. Of all Afghan leaders, none has more vigorously supported the Pushtunistan campaign than Prince Mohammad Daoud Khan.

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He was virtual dictator of his nation between 1953 and 1963, and he is again the leading figure following the coup against King Zahir on 17 July 1973. Daoud has consistently pressed his Pushtunistan crusade. The result was two serious crises with Pakistan during his first period in power and in recent weeks a rapid deterioration of relations between the two countries.

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The View from Pakistan

The Pushtunistan issue is the most important foreign policy problem facing Afghanistan; it is but one of many foreign policy problems confronting Pakistan. Kashmir, the threat from India, the loss of East Pakistan have all occupied more attention in Islamabad than has Pushtunistan. The Pushtuns of Pakistan are a small minority in a nation of 64 million, although they do occupy a strategically important and geographically large area. Pakistan claims that, as successor state to the British, it inherited the Durand Line as its border. Various governments and constitutions have provided that tribes living along the border, including those Pushtuns who have not moved to the settled areas nearby, may retain some of their traditional ways, particularly in their system of law and government. Other than that no particular privileges are granted. Pakistan regards its handling of the tribal provinces of the Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan as an internal matter. Efforts of Afghanistan on behalf of the Pushtuns or other tribes are regarded as meddling. Pakistanis claim

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[redacted] that there is no widespread support for Pushtunistan as defined by Kabul among the Pushtuns in Pakistan. Many of the Pakistani Pushtuns who support Pushtunistan interpret the concept as simply greater provincial autonomy--political, economic, and cultural--within a united Pakistan.

Pakistani rule of the tribes has never been easy. Attempts to introduce the central or provincial government into the tribal districts, e.g., by extension of roads into the areas, have often been resisted by force. Punitive expeditions by the Pakistani armed forces have followed. The result is a residue of bitterness on both sides. The temptation in Kabul to assist the dissident tribes, whether Pushtun or other, has occasionally not been resisted in Kabul.

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When Daoud became prime minister in 1953, he had the support of the most fanatic advocates of Pushtunistan. Relations with Pakistan, which had been bad since 1947, deteriorated even further in 1955 following Daoud's strong reaction to the Pakistani Government's decision to reorganize all existing states and districts of West Pakistan into one province. Relations became so strained that the border was closed for several months. Some improvement in relations followed, but in the late 1950s President Ayub Khan tried to integrate tribal areas more fully into Pakistan. The Afghans objected, and diplomatic relations were severed in 1961, and all trade between the two countries ceased. Trade routes to India and to the port of Karachi were cut off and the resulting problems in Afghanistan contributed to the King's decision to remove Daoud from office in 1963.

The two nations, aided by the Shah of Iran, resumed trade and diplomatic relations shortly after Daoud's removal. In the ten years before Daoud returned to power, relations between the two countries were relatively placid. Ayub visited Kabul in 1966, and King Zahir visited Pakistan the following year. Kabul ceased demanding full independence for the Pushtuns, although it continued officially to espouse self-determination. Afghan leaders, while never openly abandoning the concept of Pushtunistan, began to talk more about the "welfare" of their brother Pushtuns and Afghanistan's "special interest" in the future of the peoples in the border provinces. Partly as a gesture of accommodation, President Yahya Khan in 1970 decided to break up the single unified province of West Pakistan into four provinces, one of which was the Northwest Frontier Province, and to grant each considerable autonomy. The present government, under Z. A. Bhutto, has continued to support a federated nation of four provinces; the rights of the provincial governments are spelled out in the new constitution.

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Daoud--Phase II (1973-)

Daoud, in his first speech to the nation after the coup in July, noted that Afghanistan's only problem in foreign relations was with Pakistan over the Pushtunistan issue. He promised to work for a solution to the problem. In succeeding weeks, however, relations with Pakistan have steadily worsened.

Both countries have contributed to the deterioration. Since last winter, President Bhutto has been feuding with the major opposition political parties in Pakistan. He was able to remove an opposition-led government in the Northwest Frontier by constitutional means; in Baluchistan, however, his ouster of the opposition-controlled government was arbitrary and of questionable constitutionality. In retaliation for Bhutto's action, against the provincial government of Baluchistan and also for efforts by the army to expand a road into tribal areas, Baluchi insurgents have been carrying on a low-level campaign for several months. The government has responded with a major counterinsurgency operation, using both paramilitary and regular troops. Afghan leaders since July have repeatedly expressed their concern over these efforts to suppress their "Baluchi brothers."

In the Northwest Frontier, there is no open insurgency, but the political problem there is becoming more and more serious. The major opposition party in Pakistan, the National Awami Party, is led by Abdul Wali Khan, son of the old Red Shirt leader, Abdul Ghaffer Khan. He and Bhutto (like most Pakistani politicians) tend to engage in demagogic and bitter personal exchanges. In recent weeks, Wali Khan has been especially vitriolic, and his fulminations against further repressive acts by the Pakistani Government have come very close to calling for secession of the Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan. The government, with the memory of East Pakistan still fresh, has responded with arrests and other acts which will further stir up Kabul.

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Other incidents have contributed to the deterioration in relations between Kabul and Islamabad. In September the Afghan delegate to the nonaligned conference in Algiers denounced Pakistani actions in Baluchistan and called for a return of all tribal peoples to the "fatherland." The sharp Pakistani protest that followed was rejected by Kabul, and the Afghans have accused the Pakistanis of assisting a group of Afghans who were recently arrested on charges of plotting a counter-coup.

There is no question but that Daoud is still emotionally committed to the concept of Pushtunistan. Whether he would be satisfied with greater autonomy for the tribal peoples, as distinguished from independence, is not clear. It is possible that Daoud has revived the Pushtunistan issue mainly to unite his nation and to divert attention from government inefficiency and economic stagnation. Presumably, Daoud recalls that Pushtunistan was a major cause of his downfall in 1963, and he may well prove more reluctant this time around to permit the issue to reach crisis proportions. Unfortunately, once launched, the Pushtunistan issue seems to build up a momentum of its own.

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There are no indications that the Afghans have moved their forces closer to the border

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Isolated incidents have occurred along the border. One resulted in an exchange of fire, casualties, and the capture of several Pakistanis by the Afghans. The prisoners have not yet been returned despite requests from Islamabad.

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[REDACTED] In the prevailing atmosphere of fear and distrust, a major crisis between the two South Asian neighbors could erupt at any time.

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