

~~SECRET~~Impact of President Zia's Death + Prospects for Afghanistan

Military and government officials are claiming that President Zia was victim of sabotage.

--Fragmentary reporting on the crash site's appearance suggests that the crash was not caused by mechanical failure or a missile.

Calm has prevailed in Pakistan since Zia's death, and it should continue over the next several weeks.

--Ghulam Ishaq Khan became acting President as the Constitution prescribes and is in firm control.

--The Constitution requires that a new president must be elected within 30 days after parliamentary elections, now set for 16 November. Ishaq Khan has publicly stated they will be held as scheduled.

--We believe Ishaq Khan has the military's trust and can work with its leaders. Representation on the advisory council Ishaq Khan established to help run the country on a day-to-day basis ensures continued military influence.

--Opposition leaders, particularly Benazir Bhutto, have lauded the peaceful transition and pledged to work within the constitutional system. Most have urged Ishaq Khan to hold the 16 November elections.

The military would not hesitate to remove Khan and declare martial law if mass civil disturbances break out, particularly in the populous Punjab Province.

--Serious fighting between Pakistan's majority Sunni and minority Shia communities could arise during the Muharram religious procession later this month.

--The regime in Kabul could see this as an opportune time to escalate its terrorist campaign in Pakistan.

--Opposition agitation if the elections are postponed could also spark a military crackdown.

No immediate change is expected in Pakistan's Afghan policy, although Zia's death could seriously alter it in the long term.

--Ishaq Khan was closely involved in the formation of Afghan policy and the available evidence suggests that he agreed with Zia that a

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Soviet withdrawal, followed by a resistance victory, is essential to Pakistan's security.

- Zia and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Akhtar, who also perished in the crash, believed that backing fundamentalist leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar was the best way to achieve a pro-Islamabad government in Kabul. Among Pakistan's surviving

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The Soviets can plausibly claim to have removed 50 percent of their troops from Afghanistan by the 15 August deadline in the Geneva Accords.

- The intelligence community can confirm the withdrawal from Afghanistan of approximately 40,000 of the 50,200 troops the Soviets claim to have pulled out. The troops withdrawn include at least 46 percent of the Soviet combat battalions and probably at least as large a percentage of the roughly 40,000 support troops previously in the country.

- The Soviets are likely to slow the withdrawal over the next few months and may continue threats to halt it if Pakistani "interference" in Afghanistan is not stopped.

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- Moscow would almost certainly be unwilling to pay the domestic, international, and financial costs that would result from reneging on their commitment to pull their troops out of Afghanistan.

We believe that the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) will fall within six to 12 months after the Soviets have left Afghanistan. Although the regime could probably hold out militarily for up to a year, internal fragmentation is likely to undermine the regime far sooner.

- Diplomatic reporting indicates that President Najibullah's efforts to woo members of the hardline Khalqi faction have alienated his own supporters, while the Khalqis remain likely to attempt a coup once the Soviets leave Kabul.
- Attempts by the PDPA to expand its base and undermine resistance cohesion have failed. Sham elections staged last April and the appointment of non-PDPA member Mohammad Sharq as Prime Minister in June brought no new support.

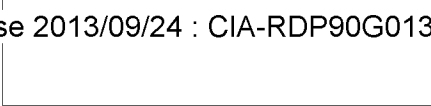
A post-PDPA Afghan government will be weak, with little authority outside Kabul.

- The process of forming the new government will be contentious, and tensions between competing ethnic and religious factions may continue

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for years:

- Former President Zia was largely responsible for the current resistance plan for an interim government. Without Zia's leadership, the plan is unlikely to succeed.
- We see minimal chances for a Khomeini-style regime in Afghanistan. Radical Islam is alien to Afghan culture.

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