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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

27 May 1987

Afghanistan: The Resistance Alliance's Views on
the Political Settlement of the War [redacted]

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Summary

We believe that the thinking of the seven leaders of the resistance alliance about a political settlement of the war is rudimentary at best. The alliance's formal negotiating position--which was issued last January--calls for a quick, three-to-four month, logistically-based Soviet withdrawal to be overseen by an interim government. The interim regime would also devise Afghanistan's post-Soviet political system. Insurgent leaders have offered no particulars about how this transitional process would be managed or about who would participate in it.

[redacted]

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Because the alliance is not part of the Geneva negotiating process and is not always well informed by Islamabad about the content of the discussions, we believe the insurgent leaders have not been forced to draft a realistic and coherent plan for political negotiations. In our opinion, there is no alliance consensus on issues such as the formation of a resistance government-in-exile, the modalities for electing a representative assembly to form an interim government, or possible roles for former Afghan King Zahir Shah, other prominent Afghan exiles, or the Afghan communists in a post-Soviet government. We believe, moreover, that there is little prospect of the alliance reaching a durable consensus on these issues and considerable risk that the alliance would break-up if Pakistan tried to force it to reach a consensus.

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We believe only direct negotiations between Moscow and the resistance or the inclusion of the alliance in the Geneva process, or in another international forum such as the Iranian-proposed four-party conference

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

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among Kabul, Moscow, Islamabad, and the resistance, would generate effective pressure on the seven leaders to produce a comprehensive and detailed negotiating position for the alliance. [redacted]

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The Alliance and the Geneva Process

Because the alliance is neither a party to the Geneva negotiations nor, [redacted] well-informed about the substance of the talks, it tends to think about a political settlement of the war only during Geneva rounds. During these periods, the alliance worries primarily about being sold out by Islamabad and loudly and publicly proclaiming the necessity of securing a logistically-based Soviet withdrawal. Once a Geneva session ends, the seven parties and their leaders generally return to fighting the war and continuing traditional interparty and interpersonal rivalries. [redacted]

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In our opinion, there is little chance of persuading the seven alliance leaders to establish consensus policy positions for the Geneva process as long as they are not a party to it. We also believe it unlikely the Pakistans can force them into such unanimity. [redacted]

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Alliance Thinking on a Political Settlement

The alliance has been trying without success to craft a united political approach to settling the war since Kabul and Moscow announced their cease-fire and national reconciliation initiatives early this year. The seven leaders staged a successful public rally to announce their rejection of the peace proposals on 17 January, and to declare--without giving any details--that they had agreed an interim government should oversee a Soviet withdrawal and devise Afghanistan's future political system. Their subsequent deliberations, however, have produced much acrimony but neither details nor unanimity on how to flesh out these points. Indeed, the discussions about the various facets of a political settlement appear to be weakening alliance cohesion by widening the gap

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dividing the traditionalist leaders--Nabi, Mojadedi, and Gailani--from the Islamists--Khalis, Rabbani, and Sayyaf. Radical Islamist Gulbuddin fluctuates between the two groupings and, in our opinion, is most interested in blocking an alliance consensus that would leave him the odd man out.

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We believe that on three major policy questions there is substantive disagreement between alliance groupings:

--Zahir Shah: The traditionalist leaders support a figurehead leadership role for Zahir Shah in an interim government largely because their parties and families prospered during the royalist period. They also see alliance acceptance of a Zahir-led interim regime as a useful ploy for inducing the Soviets to withdraw.

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[Redacted] Jamiat party leader Rabbani--who generally promotes compromise in the alliance--probably quashed the last chance of the resistance supporting Zahir when he recently said that the former King was "not the solution" to forming an interim government. The traditionalist-versus-Islamist differences over Zahir are mirrored in their opposing views on the desirability of giving prominent Afghan exiles--those who served pre-1978 governments--posts in an interim regime.

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--Insurgent-Sponsored Elections: Despite Gulbuddin's announcement on 8 May that the alliance had decided to hold elections for a representative assembly--with Afghan refugees electing 20 percent of the members and Afghans residing in Afghanistan electing the remainder--there is no conclusive evidence that all seven leaders support the plan.

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We also believe that the concept of a popular western-style election along the lines described by Gulbuddin--an institution that is fundamentally foreign to the traditional Afghan political system-- will continue to be discussed without resolution in alliance counsels. Because the moderate parties are politically strongest in the refugee camps they probably will insist on assembly elections in which the refugees elect a majority of the members. The Islamists, on the other hand, are strongest inside Afghanistan and so probably will demand elections based inside the country. We believe the alliance leaders almost certainly will be unable to bridge the gaps separating the interests of their individual parties and agree on the modalities for conducting an election. [Redacted]

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In our opinion, it is much more likely that the seven parties will eventually agree to convene a loya jirgha--the traditional Afghan deliberative body composed of tribal, religious, and ethnic elders-- to make decisions about the alliance's negotiating posture and the shape of the post-Soviet Afghan political system. Even this traditional method of procedure, however, will be the subject of intense debate among the party leaders over such issues as which non-resistance groups will be allowed to participate in the forum. [Redacted]

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--The PDPA'S Future: The traditionalist leaders apparently would acquiesce in a limited PDPA role--if the party sheds itself of Najib and his closest colleagues--in an interim government and in post-Soviet elections. The traditionalists believe such a concession would be a useful tool for persuading the Soviets to withdraw and that, in any event, the PDPA would inevitably be overwhelmed once deprived of Moscow's protection. The Islamists view any role for the atheistic PDPA as a betrayal of the jihad and those who have died in the fighting. We believe that the issue of the PDPA's future divides the alliance most clearly and potentially most destructively along ideological lines. [Redacted]

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Outlook

Without formal inclusion of the alliance in the Geneva process, in another international forum, or the inception of direct talks between Moscow and the insurgents, we believe that the seven party leaders are unlikely to reach a durable consensus policy regarding a political settlement of the war. Formal participation in any of these forums would, in our opinion, force the insurgents' hand; they have consistently justified the lack of a formal insurgent negotiating position by citing the

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fact that the alliance is not a participant. We believe, in fact, that without the pressure exerted by preparing to participate in formal negotiations, inter-party discussions about such topics as elections, Zahir Shah, and the PDPA's future--particularly if the Pakistanis try to force an alliance consensus on any of these issues--probably will further divide the alliance parties. Moreover, these interparty discussions would give Gulbuddin ample opportunity to practice his divisive style of politics and perhaps cause an open split between the traditionalist and Islamist groupings. [redacted]

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**SUBJECT: Afghanistan: The Resistance Alliance's Views on
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