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# USSR: Withdrawal From Afghanistan

Special National Intelligence Estimate

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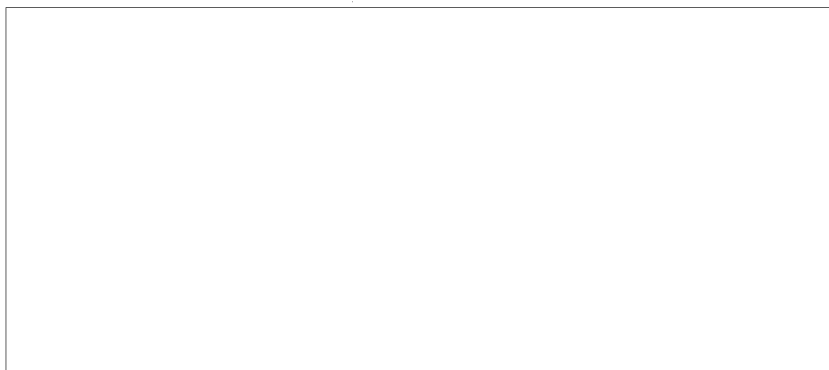
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SNIE 11/37-88

USSR: WITHDRAWAL  
FROM AFGHANISTAN



Information available as of 24 March 1988 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

We believe Moscow has made a firm decision to withdraw from Afghanistan. The decision stems from the war's effect on the Soviet regime's ability to carry out its agenda at home and abroad and its pessimism about the military and political prospects for creating a viable client regime:

- Although Afghanistan has been a controversial issue, we believe General Secretary Gorbachev has built a leadership consensus for withdrawal. The regime is aware that its client's chances of surviving without Soviet troops are poor. We do not believe that Moscow will attempt a partition of Afghanistan or start withdrawal and then renege.
- The Soviets want to withdraw under the cover of the Geneva accords. We believe they would prefer to withdraw without an agreement, however, rather than sign one that formally restricts their right to provide aid and further undermines the legitimacy of the Kabul regime.
- In our view, the Soviets will begin withdrawal this year even if the Geneva talks are deadlocked. Under such conditions, however, the Soviet leadership would not feel constrained by the provisions of the draft accords, and withdrawal would more likely be accompanied by heavy fighting. Although the Soviets in this case would have the option of delaying or prolonging the withdrawal process, we believe that—once begun in earnest—geographic, political, and military factors would lead them to opt for a relatively rapid exit.
- There is an alternative scenario. A more chaotic situation accompanying withdrawal than the Soviets expect or a political crisis in Moscow could fracture the Politburo consensus for withdrawal and lead them to delay or even reverse course. We believe the odds of this scenario are small—perhaps less than one in five.

We judge that the Najibullah regime will not long survive the completion of Soviet withdrawal even with continued Soviet assistance. The regime may fall before withdrawal is complete.

Despite infighting, we believe the resistance will retain sufficient supplies and military strength to ensure the demise of the Communist government. We cannot confidently predict the composition of the new regime, but we believe it initially will be an unstable coalition of traditionalist and fundamentalist groups whose writ will not extend far beyond Kabul and the leaders' home areas. It will be Islamic—possibly strongly fundamentalist, but not as extreme as Iran. While anti-Soviet, it

will eventually establish "correct"—not friendly—ties to the USSR. We cannot be confident of the new government's orientation toward the West; at best it will be ambivalent and at worst it may be actively hostile, especially toward the United States.

There are two alternative scenarios. There is some chance—less than 1 in 3 in our view—that fighting among resistance groups will produce so much chaos that no stable government will take hold for an extended period after the Afghan Communist regime collapses. We also cannot rule out a scenario in which the Kabul regime manages to survive for a protracted period after withdrawal, due to an increasingly divided resistance. The odds of this outcome, in our view, are very small. Both scenarios would complicate relief efforts, reduce the prospects that refugees would return, and increase opportunities for Soviet maneuvering.

The impact of the Soviet withdrawal will depend on how it proceeds and what kind of situation the Soviets leave behind. At home, we believe that ending the war will be a net plus for Gorbachev, boosting his popularity and his reform agenda. Nonetheless, withdrawal will not be universally popular and is sure to cause recriminations. There is some chance—if it proves to have a more damaging impact on Soviet interests over the long term than either we or Gorbachev anticipate—that the decision could eventually form part of a "bill of attainder" used by his opponents in an effort to oust him.

Moscow's defeat in Afghanistan will have significant international costs. It is an implicit admission that Soviet-supported revolutions can be reversed. It will demonstrate that there are limits on Moscow's willingness and ability to use its power abroad, tarnish its prestige among some elements of the Communist movement, and lead other beleaguered Soviet clients to question Soviet resolve.

Nevertheless, we—as well as the Soviets—believe the withdrawal will yield important benefits for Moscow. The move will be popular even among some Soviet allies. Moscow will net substantial public relations gains in the rest of the world—particularly in Western Europe—that could ultimately translate into more concrete diplomatic benefits. Gorbachev expects the withdrawal to have a positive impact on US-Soviet relations.

By enhancing the Soviet Union's image as a responsible superpower, withdrawal will present new challenges to Western diplomacy. In South Asia, US relations with Pakistan will be complicated. But Soviet withdrawal under the conditions we anticipate will also produce substantial benefits for the West:

- It will be seen as a triumph for Western policy.
- If it produces the benefits that Gorbachev expects, withdrawal will probably add impetus to the ongoing rethinking in Moscow about the utility of military power in Third World conflicts and accelerate efforts to reach negotiated solutions on other issues.

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DISCUSSION

The Soviet Withdrawal Calculus and Conditions

1. Moscow's decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan stems from the war's effect on the Soviet regime's agenda at home and abroad and its growing pessimism about the military and political prospects for creating a viable client regime. General Secretary Gorbachev and reform elements in the leadership hope the decision will dramatize their repudiation of Brezhnev's legacy and their determination to chart a new course for the country. Gorbachev undoubtedly calculates that bringing Soviet troops home will be greeted with relief among those elements of the population and the elite whose support is most important to the success of his domestic program:

- The war has fed ethnic tensions and aggravated an array of problems in Soviet society.
- While casualties and material costs have not been high—about 12,000 dead and approximately 3 percent of the annual military budget—growing concern about the human toll has contributed to a disillusionment with the war among the Soviet populace.

2. The Soviets anticipate international dividends. They expect withdrawal to reduce global perceptions of the Soviet threat, improve relations with the West—giving impetus to arms control and regional negotiations—and help create an international environment enabling them to concentrate resources on domestic revitalization.

3. Soviet leaders undoubtedly anticipate that withdrawal will be controversial in some circles at home and with some allies abroad—who will see it as a retreat in the face of Western pressure and a blow to Soviet prestige—but they probably expect the fallout to be manageable.

4. We believe Gorbachev has been pushing the leadership in the direction of withdrawal for some time. Although he almost certainly had to expend political capital to obtain support from more reluctant colleagues for the position set forth in his 8 February statement, he probably has forged a consensus by forcing them to confront the issue and the potential costs of other options. We believe the improvement in US-Soviet relations since 1985 and the considerable

Main Points of Gorbachev's 8 February Statement on Afghanistan

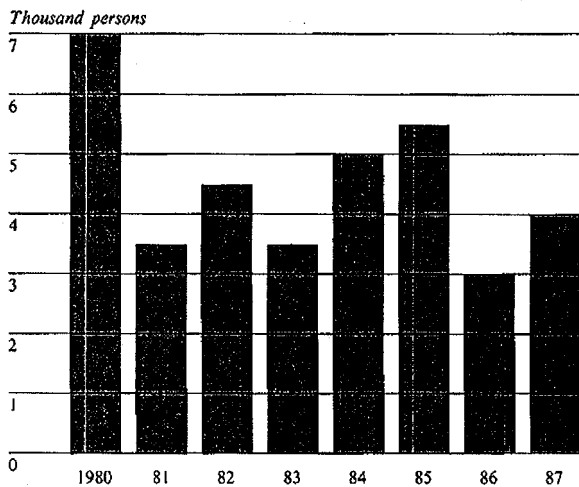
- Withdrawal of Soviet troops could begin on 15 May provided that Geneva accords were signed no later than 15 March.
- All that remained to conclude the accords was agreement on a withdrawal timetable.
- Withdrawal timetable could be 10 months or less—down from 12.
- "Frontloading"—withdrawing the bulk of the troops in the first few months—could be worked out.
- Withdrawal is not contingent on the formation of a coalition government. The USSR would not take part in talks to establish a coalition and neither should anyone else other than the Afghans themselves.
- Afghan President Najibullah's "national reconciliation" program provides a political platform for those who want peace in Afghanistan.
- Adherence to obligations on ending outside aid should preclude a renewal of major fighting after Soviet troops leave. If such fighting erupts, the UN Security Council might then play a role.

turnover in the Politburo and Defense Council membership during the same time frame facilitated the decision.

5. The Soviets want to withdraw under the cover of the Geneva accords. They believe its provisions would make withdrawal easier and give the appearance of fulfilling the original mission—stopping outside assistance to the insurgents. We believe they would prefer to withdraw without an agreement rather than sign one that formally restricts their right to provide aid and further undermines the legitimacy of the Kabul regime.

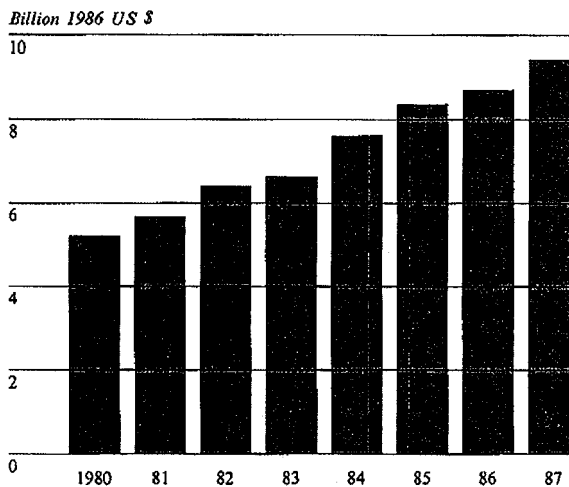
6. In the event that Pakistan signs a Geneva agreement without US guarantees, we believe the Soviets would observe it. In our view, Pakistan is unlikely to sign an agreement under these conditions.

**Figure 1**  
Afghanistan: Estimated Soviet Casualties,  
1980-87



Note: Total estimated casualties: 36,000  
(12,000 killed, 24,000 wounded)

**Figure 2**  
Estimated Dollar Cost of Soviet  
Involvement, 1980-87



Note: Total estimated cost, in 1986 dollars: \$58 billion.

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7. We believe the Soviets see the benefits of withdrawal as outweighing the risks and will find a way to follow through whether or not an agreement is signed in Geneva. Soviet leaders have so raised expectations at home and abroad as to impede their ability to continue the war without serious damage to the regime's credibility. The Soviets will probably have even less desire to mount large-scale offensive operations now that an end to the war appears to be in sight. Withdrawal planning is already under way. Moreover, the appearance of imminent withdrawal may in itself weaken the Kabul regime, pushing the Soviets to get out before its collapse.

8. The Soviets, in our view, will begin withdrawal this year even if the Geneva talks remain deadlocked. Soviet officials from Foreign Minister Shevardnadze on down have sent ambiguous signals regarding how and when they would proceed if there is no signature in Geneva. Some have said that withdrawal would still begin on 15 May (before the President arrives in Moscow), while others say it would be delayed. This ambiguity may reflect indecision in the leadership about next steps, uncertainty about the US position, and efforts to pressure Pakistan to soften its stance. The withdrawal of all Soviet troops outside a Geneva

framework would leave Moscow without US and Pakistani agreement to end aid to the Afghan resistance:

- Without a Geneva agreement, the Soviet leadership would not feel constrained by its provisions and the withdrawal would more likely be accompanied by heavy fighting. Terrorist bombings and Soviet airstrikes on resistance supply bases in Pakistan might increase.
- Although in this situation the Soviets would have the option of delaying or prolonging the process, we believe that—once withdrawal begins in earnest—they would, for geographical, political, and military reasons, opt for a relatively rapid exit.

9. We believe that withdrawal does not depend on the survival of the Kabul regime:

- The Soviets probably hope that the resistance will become less effective and less unified once the foreign enemy has withdrawn. Some Soviets have expressed the conviction that geographical proximity, natural economic ties, the availability of Soviet assistance, Western loss of interest, and



Afghanistan's probable decentralization and factional infighting would eventually enable Moscow to regain influence.

- Nonetheless, in our view Moscow is fully aware that the demise of the Kabul regime is likely. Even though referring to the possibility of continued fighting after withdrawal, Gorbachev's statement seemed to preclude the reintroduction of Soviet troops to save the government in Kabul. Recent Soviet media coverage has conveyed a bleak picture of the situation in Afghanistan, evidently to prepare the Soviet public for the uncertain outcome. Soviet officials generally have indicated a pessimistic view of the regime's staying power.

10. We believe it is highly unlikely that the Soviets will have their client partition Afghanistan, creating an autonomous zone in the north to which the regime could retreat if it is driven out of Kabul. Such a plan might provide a postwithdrawal buffer for Soviet Central Asia and a means by which to continue exploiting the region's mineral wealth:

- Given that the strongest insurgent forces are concentrated in the north, the survival of such a regime would remain uncertain. It probably could not be accomplished without a continued substantial Soviet military presence.
- A partition or annexation of northern Afghanistan would be a public relations disaster for Moscow, eliminating whatever public relations and diplomatic benefits the Soviets hope to gain from withdrawal.

Similar considerations would militate against a Soviet decision to start withdrawal and then renege on a settlement once aid to the resistance was cut off.

11. There is an alternative scenario. A more chaotic situation accompanying withdrawal than the Soviets expect or a political crisis in Moscow could fracture the Politburo consensus for withdrawal and lead them to delay withdrawal or even to reverse course. Moscow could also decide to renege if it perceived that the United States planned to establish a significant postwar presence or if violence directed against members of the Kabul regime were far more severe than the Soviets had anticipated. We believe the odds of this scenario are small—perhaps less than 1 in 5.

#### Aftermath of Withdrawal Inside Afghanistan

12. We judge that the Kabul regime will not long survive the completion of Soviet withdrawal. It may even collapse before withdrawal is complete. The

People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) will respond to a withdrawal by concentrating its forces around Kabul and several other key cities and on the road north to the Soviet Union.

13. The regime's regular armed forces and militia—even if augmented by returning trainees from the USSR—will remain ill-trained and undermanned. The army, border guards, and tribal militias—approximately 110,000 men—almost certainly will suffer massive desertions and mutinies shortly after a Soviet departure begins. Kabul's security services and police (35,000 to 50,000 men) will show more staying power and discipline, simply because they can expect no quarter from the insurgents. The PDPA's military—deprived of the Soviet Air Forces' ground support and aerial mobility—will have to assume responsibility for the vital supply route between the capital and the USSR and other critical points now secured by over 115,000 Soviet forces. We believe there are at least 175,000 resistance fighters, most of whom will continue to fight until the regime falls. Although the absence of a unified command will probably prevent the resistance from launching a direct assault on Kabul, it will eventually be able to strangle the regime by severing supply routes.

14. A likely upsurge in PDPA factionalism once the withdrawal commences will further reduce the regime's chances of surviving. The majority of members of the party's Khalq and Parcham factions have opposed Parchami President Najibullah's national reconciliation policy from the beginning, believing that it is a sign of weakness and that the regime's record of abuses and association with Moscow rule out resistance cooperation in any event:

- We believe the Khalqis, who dominate the officer corps and much of the security services, may try to oust Najibullah as the Soviets leave and inaugurate a regime committed to fight to the finish.
- There is also a strong possibility that elements of the Afghan military sympathetic to the insurgents will stage a coup following the withdrawal to oust Najibullah and negotiate with resistance leaders.
- There is also a chance that urban violence in Kabul—perpetrated either by insurgents or civilians seeking revenge against regime officials—will add to the disorder spawned by PDPA factionalism.

15. Continuing Soviet military supplies probably would have little impact on the regime's ability to

survive. Kabul's forces have shown themselves unable to use effectively the weaponry they now possess. We believe that any Soviet advisers left behind would be inviting targets for the resistance and disgruntled regime elements. And they would have minimal impact on the performance of the regime's troops, unless they are able to call on Soviet artillery and air assets.

16. Despite infighting, we believe the resistance forces will have sufficient supplies and military strength to ensure the demise of the Communist government. The regime could survive only if the insurgency self-destructs from factional infighting once the unifying influence of the Soviet presence is removed. Kabul almost certainly will try to spur disintegration by offering local autonomy to some commanders and attempting to bribe others into leaving the war. We believe the Afghan Communists might meet some limited success in these efforts—among the insurgents' political leaders in Peshawar, factionalism is already more evident. Given the post-war political ambitions of such major regional commanders as Masood and Ismail Khan, however, they almost certainly will not risk their credibility by entering agreements that could give the PDPA—or any significant element within it—a new lease on life.

17. In an alternative scenario, the PDPA regime could hang on for longer than we anticipate. In this

scenario, insurgent infighting could increase to a debilitating level. A demonstration by the regime of a consistent ability to prevent infiltration into Kabul and to keep open the road north to the Soviet Union would be especially disheartening to the insurgents. A prolonged siege of Kabul could prompt a gradual melting away of insurgent forces as the fighters return to protect their possessions and political standing in their own communities. The insurgency could be undermined by internecine arguments about how best to capture Kabul and some commanders could attempt to cut a deal with elements of PDPA regime. We believe the odds of this scenario are very small.

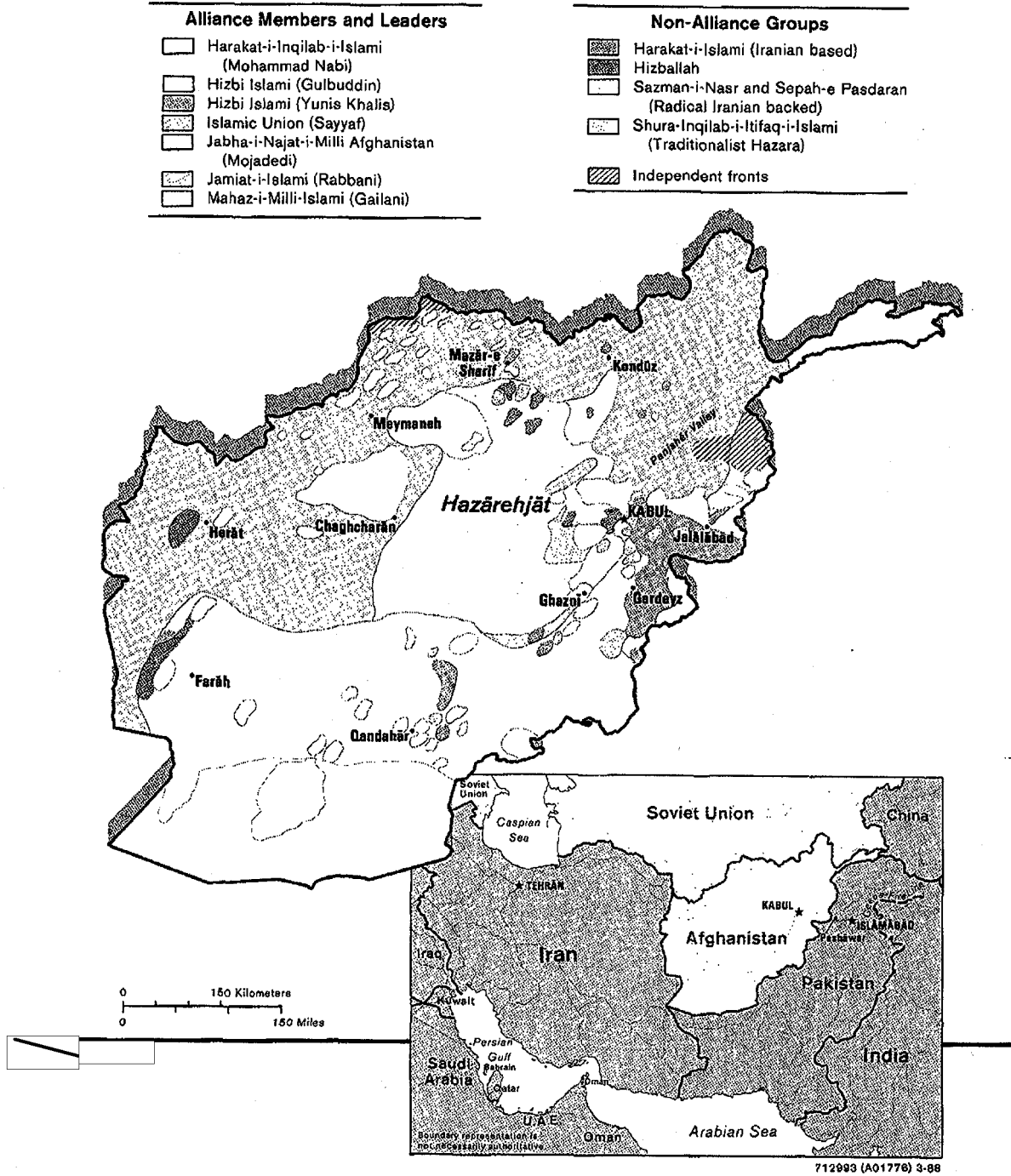
18. We cannot confidently predict the composition of the new regime, but we believe it initially will be an unstable coalition of traditionalist and fundamentalist groups whose writ will not extend far beyond Kabul and the leaders' home areas. It will be Islamic—possibly strongly fundamentalist, but not as extreme as Iran. Afghanistan's Shias constitute less than 15 percent of the population, and the country has no tradition of strong central government or direct clerical rule. No matter who "wins" Kabul, they will be under enormous pressure to proceed quickly to the formation of a more permanent government; this process could also be bloody as competing groups try to influence the outcome. In this sorting out, the military commanders will almost certainly play a greater role than the Peshawar Seven.

**Afghan Resistance Alliance**

Group	Leader	Primary Ethnic Composition	Political/Religious Composition	Area of Strength
Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan	Abdul Rasul Sayyaf	Pushtun	Islamic fundamentalist	Eastern Afghanistan (mainly Kabul)
Hizbi Islami (Islamic Party) (Gulbuddin)	Gulbuddin Hikmatyar	Pushtun	Islamic fundamentalist	Eastern Afghanistan
Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society)	Burhanuddin Rabbani	Tajik	Islamic fundamentalist	Northern and western Afghanistan
Hizbi Islami (Islamic Party) (Yunus Khalis)	Muhammad Yunus Khalis	Pushtun	Islamic fundamentalist	Nangarhar and Paktia Provinces
Jabha-i-Najat-i-Millī Afghanistan (Afghanistan National Liberation Front)	Sibghatullah Mojadeddi	Pushtun	Moderate Islamic	Eastern Afghanistan
Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami (Islamic Revolutionary Movement)	Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi	Pushtun	Traditionalist	Eastern Afghanistan
Mahaz-i-Millī-Islami (National Islamic Front)	Sayyid Ahmad Gailani	Pushtun	Moderate Islamic	Eastern Afghanistan

This table is

Figure 3  
Major Insurgent Groups in Afghanistan



19. Kabul's new foreign policy would be officially nonaligned and would probably feature building strong ties to the Organization of the Islamic Conference and other Islamic organizations. Its stance toward the West would depend on the balance of traditionalists and fundamentalists in the government; at best it will be ambivalent, and at worst it may be actively hostile, especially toward the United States. [ ]

20. The new regime will need to maintain correct—not friendly—ties to Moscow in order to protect transshipment rights in the USSR for Afghan exports and to ensure its Soviet market for natural gas and minerals. It might also accept reconstruction aid from Moscow (but not Soviet civilian advisers and technicians), particularly if aid from the West and Islamic countries were to prove less than the regime expected. Kabul will not seek an open rapprochement with Moscow because of the populace's residual hatred for the Soviets and the near certainty that such an effort would prompt a fundamentalist challenge to the government. The new regime will also be unable—and perhaps unwilling—to prevent Islamic groups in the country's northern provinces from attempting to proselytize among Muslims in Soviet Central Asia. [ ]

21. The postwar Kabul regime is likely to try—probably with Pakistani and Iranian encouragement—to reduce the trade and economic dependence on the USSR that Afghanistan developed during the Soviet occupation. The new government will seek expanded Western economic ties, especially with such traditional trading partners as Japan, the United Kingdom, and West Germany. It probably will show a strong interest in acquiring reconstruction aid through multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Kabul will also try to exploit its Islamic credentials for aid from wealthy Arab states. [ ]

22. We are not sure how quickly the refugees will return. Their return will depend on a number of variables, including the timing of Soviet withdrawal in relation to the growing season, stability in their home areas, and the availability of aid [ ]

23. In an alternative scenario, there is some chance—perhaps one in three—that no stable central government will develop in Kabul after the defeat of the PDPA regime. Although Afghans have historically proven themselves able to arrive at modus vivendis among competing ethnic groups, the postwar environment will find these groups better armed than ever before and unwilling to tolerate a return to the political status quo ante. Given this instability—and the near certainty of Soviet, Iranian, and Pakistani efforts to influence Afghan affairs—Afghanistan could

evolve into a Lebanon-like polity in which there is no effective central government and regional warlords battle each other and compete for hegemony in the capital. In this scenario relief efforts would be complicated, the return of refugees delayed, and opportunities for Soviet meddling increased. [ ]

#### The Impact of Withdrawal Inside the USSR

24. Our evidence about attitudes toward the war inside the Soviet Union is largely impressionistic. Termination of the war probably will enhance Gorbachev's personal popularity and the legitimacy of his reform agenda in the short run, if Soviet withdrawal is relatively peaceful and smooth. If it is not, or if Afghanistan degenerates into chaos or radicalism, his immediate gains might prove transitory. Among the urban, educated segments of Soviet society, the end of the war will be seen as evidence of the new leadership's ability to overcome the stagnation and decay of the late Brezhnev era. Informal public opinion polls suggest growing disapproval of the Afghan war among the intelligentsia and managerial elite [ ]

25. Withdrawal will remove a factor contributing to anti-Russian nationalism in the Baltic republics, the western Ukraine, and the Caucasus. In Soviet Central Asia, the end of the war may reduce tension between Russians and Central Asians. Most Muslims in Soviet Central Asia are not attracted to Iranian-style theocracy, but would prefer a more substantial role in the Soviet system. Along the Afghan border, however, where religious fundamentalism has roots, the establishment of an Islamic regime in Kabul might embolden some dissident Muslims. [ ]

26. Unless it is accompanied by violence or appears to be a retreat under pressure, we believe withdrawal is likely—at least in the short run—to be supported by the broad mass of Russians as well. Even Russian nationalist organizations have recently condemned the war and called for the trial of those who involved the USSR in it. [ ]

27. We believe withdrawal will also find support among the military and security forces, although their opinions will be more mixed:

— [ ] most KGB officials support withdrawal under the conditions laid down by the General Secretary. Nonetheless, his public remarks suggests that KGB chief Chebrikov may share the concern of those KGB directorates responsible for internal security that militant Islam from Afghanistan could infect Soviet Central Asia.

— Withdrawal could feed evident concerns among some in the military that Gorbachev is not sufficiently vigilant in protecting Soviet national security. Some officers will almost certainly be concerned that the pullout will damage the morale and prestige of the armed forces. On the other hand, there is evidence of increasing ambivalence among military professionals about the benefits of the war. Many officers reportedly believe Soviet losses are unjustifiably large and are worried about health and morale problems in the army. Senior officers apparently resent the costs of supporting an unreliable ally in a period of budgetary stringency. [ ]

28. The termination of the Afghan war will not in itself have a significant impact on the military budget. It may permit Moscow marginally to reallocate resources to modernize the armed forces. [ ]

29. We do not believe that withdrawal will present a serious short-term risk to Gorbachev's power. Even more conservative figures such as "Second Secretary" Ligachev have forcefully supported Gorbachev's 8 February announcement. [ ]

30. Gorbachev's decision could, however, entail greater mid- and long-term risks. Although popular on the whole, withdrawal will be seen by some conservative elements of the elite as further evidence of Gorbachev's misguided leadership. Their views could gain greater credence if withdrawal produces more negative results (such as turmoil in Central Asia) than he has led his colleagues to expect. His 8 February statement, which included a powerful tribute to the veterans of the war, suggests that Gorbachev is aware of and wants to defuse the potential for negative fallout within the society. [ ]

31. Afghanistan alone is unlikely to endanger Gorbachev. In a crisis arising over his reform agenda, however, Gorbachev's critics would probably use the withdrawal as part of a "bill of attainder" to oust him—just as the Cuban missile crisis figured in Khrushchev's demise. [ ]

#### Impact on Soviet Allies and Clients

32. We believe withdrawal—however much the Soviets claim that the PDPA was not actually socialist—will tarnish Moscow's prestige among some elements of the Communist movement and lead Third World clients to question Soviet resolve. Moscow probably would incur similar costs, though to a lesser extent, even if the Afghan Communists survived as one of many competing factions in a situation of chronic disorder. Nonetheless, withdrawal will be popular among some of Moscow's allies. [ ]

33. Withdrawal is unlikely to cause significant damage to the Soviet position in Eastern Europe. East European leaders have shown scant interest in the Afghan question, and we have seen no evidence that they are seriously concerned about the implications of a Soviet withdrawal. The East Europeans, moreover, generally welcome anything that reduces East-West tensions and smooths the way to the improvement of their political and economic relations with the West. Withdrawal will be regarded by many East Europeans as evidence of Gorbachev's credibility and effectiveness. A specific bone of contention would be removed from Soviet relations with Romania and—outside the Warsaw Pact—Yugoslavia. [ ]

34. Withdrawal may embolden proponents of change in Eastern Europe—particularly reform-minded intellectuals—to test Soviet resolve more assertively. The extent of this testing will depend on how the withdrawal unfolds, but we believe the fallout will in any case be modest. Some leaders will be less confident about Kremlin actions in a future East European crisis, although they realize that Moscow regards Eastern Europe as far more critical to Soviet security than Afghanistan. Those regimes that have sought to maintain some independence from Moscow may perceive more room for maneuver. [ ]

35. The costs for Moscow in its relations with Third World clients—both governments and nonruling parties—will probably be more substantial, particularly among regimes facing their own insurgencies. Withdrawal will strengthen fears that Moscow is ready to sacrifice its friends to the imperatives of East-West relations and eager to reduce the material burden of its Third World commitments. Even if the Afghan Communists were to survive as part of a coalition, regimes such as those in Nicaragua and Angola might conclude that Moscow will try to pressure them into compromise with their oppositions. Vietnam and Cuba will be concerned that Moscow may urge application of the Afghan precedent where their interests are affected—such as Cambodia and Angola—and that the USSR might add teeth to that advice by withholding aid. Neither, however, is likely to see the withdrawal as heralding a fundamental change in relations with Moscow. [ ]

36. Some Soviet clients may be moved by withdrawal to compromise with their opponents while they still have the Soviet card to play, even if Moscow does not press them to do so. But their concerns about Soviet staying power are unlikely in the near term to reduce significantly Moscow's influence. Most depend heavily on Soviet support and have no ready alternative. They will in any case avoid public criticism of

Soviet actions, and some may welcome the withdrawal. Cuba, for example, attaches great importance to its prestige in Third World forums, where the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan has been an embarrassment. [ ]

### Impact on Moscow's Global Position

37. International reaction to the Soviet occupation has become increasingly rhetorical over the years, most nations not allowing their disapproval to interfere with ties to Moscow dictated by more immediate concerns. It is therefore unlikely that withdrawal from Afghanistan will produce—at least in the near term—many *concrete improvements* in Moscow's political and economic relations with individual countries. The Soviets will, however, net substantial public relations gains. The West will be deprived of an issue it has used to hammer at Soviet expansionism. Withdrawal will contribute to the already growing impression that the USSR under Gorbachev is "different," reducing elite and popular suspicions of Soviet motives. These gains may translate eventually into more tangible benefits for Moscow, both in its bilateral relations and in its ability to influence international and regional questions. [ ]

38. Soviet withdrawal will probably have the greatest impact in Western Europe. It will almost certainly enhance Gorbachev's strong standing among West European publics. It will be cited by some leaders as evidence that the USSR under Gorbachev has become a more responsible world power whose behavior might be further modified by greater Western inducements. Some West European leaders may use the withdrawal to argue that the Soviets should be accorded a more substantial role in multinational initiatives such as an Arab-Israeli peace conference. [ ]

39. In South Asia, Moscow's ability to influence Afghanistan and threaten Pakistan will be set back by withdrawal. But Soviet relations with the countries around Afghanistan—China, India, Pakistan, and Iran—will on balance be enhanced. [ ]

40. China has cited the Soviet presence in Afghanistan as one of three obstacles to improving Sino-Soviet relations, although the Chinese have said publicly that Soviet support for the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia is the most important of these. Soviet withdrawal will help to improve the atmosphere of Sino-Soviet relations and contribute to Beijing's confidence that the Kremlin is now more willing than before to make hard choices about fundamental issues in the relationship. The impact will be greater if the Soviets use the Afghan precedent to press the Vietnamese for concessions on Cambodia. [ ]

41. India will hail a Soviet withdrawal, though it would be dismayed should an Islamic fundamentalist regime emerge in Kabul. Withdrawal will accord with New Delhi's interest in reducing US and Soviet involvement in the region. Resolution of the conflict will also remove an awkward element in India's claim to leadership in the Nonaligned Movement: its refusal to jeopardize its political and economic ties to Moscow by publicly condemning the Soviet occupation. Moreover, New Delhi probably views the Soviets' recent efforts to consult on withdrawal plans as a nod to India's status as a regional power. [ ]

42. We believe Pakistan's relations with the Soviet Union are unlikely to improve significantly. Although a Soviet withdrawal under a signed agreement would create the best opportunity for improved relations, the growth of the USSR's influence will be greatly constrained by its close ties to India and by limits on its ability to offer significant foreign aid. Islamabad might, however, welcome an opportunity for more balanced relations with the superpowers. Its historical doubts of US reliability have been reinforced by the persistent threat of an aid cutoff in retaliation for Pakistan's clandestine nuclear weapons program. Any ill feeling caused by differences with the United States over end-game strategy in the Geneva talks might also make Islamabad more receptive to Soviet overtures. [ ]

43. Improvement in Soviet relations with Pakistan could be held back by the circumstances of the withdrawal—including the absence of a Geneva accord, or Soviet airstrikes and terrorist bombings in Pakistan. If a unilateral pullout or a Geneva settlement without an agreed interim government were to lead to the survival of the Kabul regime—an outcome we believe highly unlikely—Pakistan's fears about Moscow's geopolitical ambitions in the region would be perpetuated. The inevitable charges that Islamabad had sold out the resistance would incline the Pakistanis to keep their distance from Moscow. Such an outcome—or a situation of chronic disorder—would also do less to alleviate the domestic problems associated with the presence of the Afghan refugees, most of whom would not return home. Whatever the outcome, Islamabad will continue to fear Soviet subversion. [ ]

44. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan will remove a stumblingblock in the way of closer ties between Iran and the USSR. Iran wants Moscow's support in preventing UN sanctions and a reduction in Soviet assistance to Iraq. It is likely at least tacitly to condone even a settlement that falls short of its

maximum demands—such as Shia participation in any new government—as long as the successor regime is Islamic and approved by the resistance. Any warming toward Moscow would be largely tactical, however, and driven by more central Iranian concerns, particularly the war with Iraq and possible US moves in the Persian Gulf. In the long run, moreover, instability in Afghanistan—whether or not the present regime hangs on—could present Tehran with increased opportunities to meddle, possibly bringing Soviet and Iranian interests into further conflict. [ ]

45. Withdrawal will benefit Moscow's relations with Islamic countries by removing both a specific bone of contention and a factor inhibiting cooperation on other issues where coincidence of interests might otherwise enhance Soviet influence. Most Islamic organizations have condemned the Soviet occupation, and some countries—notably Saudi Arabia—have named it as an impediment to resuming normal diplomatic relations. Moreover, some Islamic countries, including Iraq and Syria, that have extensive ties to the Soviets and maintain perfunctory relations with Kabul, have privately urged the Soviets to withdraw. Although withdrawal will win Moscow points with most Muslim nations, real improvements in bilateral relations will depend on more immediate concerns of individual states. [ ]

46. Although most nonaligned Third World nations have backed international resolutions calling for an end to the Soviet occupation, they do not generally regard the issue as one in which they have an important stake, nor have they allowed it to interfere significantly with the normal course of their relations with Moscow. Withdrawal would help to reduce suspicion of Soviet motives in seeking to expand ties in such areas as Latin America and Southeast Asia and would probably enhance—particularly in international forums—Moscow's claim to be the natural ally of the Third World. How much this translated into tangible economic and political gains, however, would probably depend on Moscow's willingness to provide substantial amounts of aid—unlikely at best—and whether Gorbachev's reforms enable the Soviet Union to become an attractive trading partner for the industrializing countries. [ ]

#### Implications for the United States

47. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan—after failing to achieve the objectives of the 1979 invasion—will produce some significant benefits for the West:

- It will be seen as a triumph for Western policy.

- It will demonstrate that there are limits on Moscow's willingness and ability to use its power abroad.
- The decision to withdraw is an implicit admission that Soviet-supported revolutions can be reversed.
- If it produces the benefits that Moscow expects, withdrawal will probably add impetus to the ongoing rethinking about the utility of military power in Third World conflicts and accelerate efforts to reach negotiated solutions on other issues. Gorbachev and the reformers already appear to be deemphasizing military approaches, placing more stress on diplomatic solutions, and attempting to redirect Soviet resources to building the USSR's place in the international economic order.
- Uncertainty provoked by the Soviet withdrawal may induce some Third World regimes to reduce their reliance on Moscow, seek better relations with the United States, and mend fences with opposition parties and neighboring countries. [ ]

48. The withdrawal, however, will also have some drawbacks for the United States:

- It will remove an issue that has served to keep many nations wary of Soviet intentions and on which the United States has been able to act in concert with a wide variety of countries and international organizations.
- By enhancing Gorbachev's credentials as a leader and the USSR's image as a responsible superpower, withdrawal will present new challenges to American diplomacy. Washington could be faced with international expectations of greater responsiveness to Soviet initiatives on arms control and regional issues, which might leave the United States vulnerable to Soviet charges that it is not interested in reducing global tensions. [ ]

49. In South Asia, the implications for the United States are mixed. The Soviets' loss of position is unlikely to translate into an equivalent US gain:

- The withdrawal will probably leave US and Pakistani interests less closely tied. Pakistan will continue to seek US assistance in securing humanitarian aid for remaining refugees and to deal with the Indian threat. Islamabad probably fears, however, that, without the common cause provided by the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, US incentives to provide aid will diminish and

traditional irritants in the relationship—Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and posture on narcotics issues—will assume more salience.

- US interests in the region would suffer if a radical fundamentalist regime replaces the current regime in Afghanistan, particularly if ties with Iran were closer than we expect. We believe that the symbolism of a victory by a Muslim resistance over a superpower will give a shot in the arm to international Islamic extremists. We also see a risk that some factions within Afghanistan will work with radical Islamic groups elsewhere.

50. The Soviets certainly expect withdrawal to have a positive impact on US-Soviet relations, particularly at the forthcoming Moscow summit. They expect near-term benefits on arms control and regional negotiations. Gorbachev will cite withdrawal as an example of "new thinking" in Soviet policy and will use it to seek US concessions on other issues. Over the longer term, the impact of the withdrawal on US-Soviet relations will depend on the degree to which the United States is perceived by Moscow to have facilitat-

ed the process, US and Soviet behavior in the Third World during the period immediately after it, and the extent to which the domestic and international costs and benefits correspond to Moscow's present estimate:

- There is a chance that withdrawal will yield more negative consequences than Gorbachev has led the leadership to expect—contributing to nationality unrest in the USSR, destabilization in Eastern Europe, or what Moscow would see as more assertive US efforts to challenge Soviet global interests. In that event, a foreign policy backlash that produces a more conservative, defense-minded leadership in Moscow—and a tougher policy toward Washington—cannot be ruled out.
- We believe it is more likely, however, that the benefits of withdrawal for Moscow will on balance outweigh the costs, giving impetus to the rethinking of traditional policies already under way and improving the prospects for more innovative Soviet approaches toward issues of concern to the United States and the Western alliance.