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July - September 1997

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Editor's Page

The rise of *Taliban* to power in Kabul in September 1996 and the continuing conflict in Afghanistan have once again brought Afghanistan into the focus of global attention. The UN and other international peace initiatives have made no headway in the face of determined *Taliban* opposition to share power with rival Afghan groups. Afghanistan thus remains a fractured and turbulent country whose survival as a cohesive and peaceful political entity is under threat both from inside and outside. The extremist agenda of the *Taliban* who have enforced the medievalist Islamic practices and have unleashed atrocities against women, children, ethnic-religious minorities and political opponents, has only deepened the internal divide in Afghanistan, apart from the violation of basic human rights.

Its geo-strategic location as the crossroads of Central, South and South West Asia underlines the importance of Afghanistan as a landbridge between Central Asia and South Asia. Afghanistan is being seen as a conduit for extending ideological and political influence to Central Asia and also for unravelling and exploiting rich energy resources of Central Asia. The quest for Central Asian riches has attracted regional and extra-regional players to the vortex of the Afghanistan conflict. Pakistan has been in the forefront of this new 'great game' in its quest for strategic depth against India and direct land access to Central Asia. To achieve its objectives, Pakistan has sought to acquire control over Afghanistan through the *Taliban* in its bid to exercise control over the Afghan corridor to Central Asia. Afghanistan has emerged as the largest producer of narcotics and also a main centre of international terrorist networks. As per UNDCP estimate, Afghanistan's total production of raw opium was about

2248 tonnes in 1996 and the heroin exported from Afghanistan accounts for about 75 to 80 billion dollars. The *Taliban* profit from their flourishing drug trade as they control over 80 percent of narcotics trade in the Golden Crescent. The terrorist activities of Afghan mercenaries and groups like *Al Faran*, *Harkat ul Ansar*, *Lashkar-i-Toiba* etc. in Kashmir, Tajikistan, Chechenya and other places reflects the deadly menace of terrorism the world over. Emergence of Afghanistan as the largest warehouse of small arms and as the second largest producer of narcotics is also linked to this conflict. As such the developments in Afghanistan have serious political, socio-economic and strategic implications for the neighbouring countries in South, South and West, Central Asia, China, Russia, CIS countries.

Application of extremist ethnic, religious and socio-political agenda by the Pak-sponsored *Taliban* not only undermines the Afghan nationalism but also contradicts the national and socio-political ideology of adjoining countries. Conflicting interests and ambitions of rival Afghan groups have made the resolution of conflict difficult. Hardening of postures and position by rival Afghan contenders for power and territory is only deepening the conflict. The prospects of peace in Afghanistan hinge upon the cessation of external arms and material support to *Taliban*, success of reconciliation between rival Afghan groups and emergence of a national broad-based government representing diverse ethnic, regional and minority interests.

K. Warikoo

THE AFGHAN FACTOR IN PAKISTAN'S INDIA POLICY

*Marvin G. Weinbaum**

Pakistan's Afghan policies have nearly always been subordinate next to its policies toward India. Its leaders have long viewed their uninterrupted political and recurrent military struggle with India as the paramount challenge to the integrity and survival of the Islamic state. While most of the time the antagonisms marking Pakistan's relations with India and Afghanistan have thus been separately conceived, during last half century policies toward the two countries have also been frequently intertwined. One of Pakistan's nightmares is that a common and simultaneous threat from India and Afghanistan will emerge—a coordinated effort to humble or destroy Pakistan. Understandably, then, policies toward Pakistan's Afghan neighbour are often formulated in terms of their implications for the balance of power with India. Only during the 1990s—with new economic and political opportunities in Pakistan's Near West perceived and the burden of Afghan refugees unrelieved—have Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan and the region begun to take on strategic considerations independent of India.

THE ANTAGONISMS

Pakistan's leaders have for much of the last half century tried to portray both Afghanistan and India as Soviet satellites, and their own country as reliably pro-Western. With U.S. policy makers engaged in their containment alliances against communism, Pakistan was accepted as an important strategic asset and Afghanistan as marginal to U. S. objectives. Anxious not to alienate Pakistan, Washington rejected Afghan government requests during the late 1940s and mid-1950s for military assistance. With Pakistan joining the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) and Afghanistan smarting from the U.S. decision to arm

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Pakistan as a participant in both CENTO and SEATO, the Kabul government refused an invitation by Washington to also join CENTO and instead accepted in 1955 Soviet offers of military and economic aid. However, in doing so, a nationalist-minded Afghanistan moved closer in foreign policy matters to a nonaligned India than to the Soviet Union.¹

Antagonism between Pakistan and Afghanistan was from outset focussed on the political fate of Pakistan's Pathan (Pashtun) population. With varying intensity, Afghan government championed the rights of their ethnic cousins in Pakistan-also Afghanistan's largest ethnic group-to have a state of their own. Pakistan's leaders understandably feared that a Pashtunistan, presumably to be carved from the country's North-West Frontier Province and portions of Baluchistan, would provide the instrument by which Pakistan's enemies would dismantle their ethnically and linguistically divided country. If the Afghan-backed Pathans succeeded in their efforts, the country's Bengalis, Sindhis, and Baluchis would surely, it was believed, seek greater autonomy if not separation from Pakistan's dominant Punjabis. Fears of continuing designs on the state's territorial integrity were validated for most Pakistanis with the Indian-assisted independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Still more, Pathan irredentism put at risk Pakistan's undiminished claims to Indian Kashmir. For the cause of Pashtunistan echoed the differences of Pathan leaders with Pakistan's founders at independence over the legitimacy of Pakistan's claims to govern Muslim majorities in a post-colonial India.

Although there was no evidence of Indian involvement in the propaganda offensive for Pashtunistan at its height in the early 1960s, there were many in Pakistan willing to believe that India had helped instigate the campaign against Pakistan, especially the agitation in the border areas. In fact, although India could take comfort in the tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, a Pashtun state could not be viewed with complete equanimity. After all, some of the same arguments for self-determination for the Pashtuns could be used to justify autonomy for ethnic minorities in India, most notably the Kashmiris, Sikhs, and Tamils.

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As Afghanistan-which by 1973 had bloodlessly thrown out the monarchy and brutally installed a communist regime in 1978-grew ever more dependent on the Soviet Union, it found itself increasingly in the company of India and its own expanded commercial and military ties to Moscow. Indian influences in Kabul had of course long been a reality. Indians living in the Afghan capital, many of them Sikhs, played an important economic role during the monarchy. Their business networks, mostly extending to India, had done much to help modernize Afghanistan's economy. Aside from the suspicions that these linkages raised, Pakistan's leaders resented the fact that Islamic ties seemed to be subordinated in Kabul to political expediency.

India served no less a important role politically and psychologically for the Afghans. The landlocked country was ever sensitive over the extent to which it depended on the port of Karachi and road links through Pakistan. Threats and the actual closing of the border in 1949 and 1961 were a continuing reminder of Afghanistan's vulnerability and strengthened the perception of a partronizing, often bullying Pakistan. India became a logical sought-after counterweight to what was judged to be an overbearing Pakistan. Afghan governments could feel a degree of security knowing that-even while no formal defense treaty tied them to India-Pakistan could not move aggressively without taking New Delhi's response into consideration.

Still, overlapping ethnic populations and common concerns as Muslims could also serve to bind Afghans and Pakistanis. The Afghan government adopted a neutral stance in Pakistan's 1965 war with India. Still more, King Zahir Shah is said to have assured his neighbour that his country would not take advantage of Pakistan's increased vulnerability. It was a popular position since it was thought that the Afghan public sympathized with the Pakistan which pictured itself in the conflict as thwarting Indian expansionism-conceivably up to the Hindu Kush.² Probably more important, Afghan policy reflected the fact that Daoud Khan, principal promoter of a Pashtunistan, had fallen from power. Zahir Shah had in 1963 wrested control of the country's policy from his Prime Minister (and cousin) in an effort to pave the way for a new constitution and Afghanistan's uncompleted, most serious experiment in parliamentary democracy.

STRATEGIC DEPTH

One antidote to the threat of potentially having to defend two hostile fronts was to find friends to offset the perceived Moscow-Kabul-Delhi axis. Sorely disappointed with its Western alliances, Pakistan by the 1970s had begun to place its hopes for assistance in times of conflict with the Islamic states to its east. This reorientation led to major initiatives under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto—an open courting of Arab benefactors.³ Cordial relations with several countries, most notably Saudi Arabia and Libya, promised not only the possibility of coaxing them away from their trade and political ties with India, but also a means of attracting badly needed economic and development assistance to Pakistan. Having succeeded in gaining Iran's cooperation in the repression of Pakistan's Baluch uprising (1973-78), Bhutto also sought to draw the Shah away from his country's growing economic entente with India. He responded positively to Iranian efforts to mediate the dispute with Afghanistan and sought to breathe life into the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) organisation that had been designed to profit from common regional economic and political interests among the northern tier Muslim states, including Turkey.

Afghanistan stood conspicuously outside the RCD. As already suggested, the leadership in Kabul instead saw their good relations with New Delhi as an insurance policy against what they saw as Pakistan's unfriendly policies. But Daoud—once again holding power in Afghanistan, now as president of a republic—dropped his championship of Pashtunistan after a short time in favour of policies designed to loosen the heavy Soviet grip on his country. Iran and the several wealthy pro-Western Arab countries were prepared through economic assistance to give the Afghans attractive alternatives to Moscow. Better relations with Pakistan was the obvious price for freeing up billions of dollars in development funds. By 1977, Bhutto and Afghan President Daoud were moving rapidly to resolve most of their differences.

The sequence of three leaders departing the political stage, Bhutto in 1977, Daoud in 1978, and the Iranian Shah in 1979, did not end Pakistan's quest for allies on whom it could rely in confronting India.

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Under Martial Law Administrator and then President Zia ul-Haq, the idea of finding “strategic depth” through ties with Islamic states became an even more explicit policy. In times of war these countries, most especially Iran, could be expected to provide safe bases for Pakistan’s armed forces as well as diplomatic support and financial help in purchasing weapons. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the importance of economic, political, and possibly military assistance from countries in Pakistan’s Near West took on particular urgency.

This strategy could not succeed, however, without Pakistan being able to weaken the ties of these same Islamic countries to India. Most Islamic states continued, however, to be unwilling to forfeit the advantages they perceived in their political and economic relations with India. When faced with having to choose between India and Pakistan, these Muslim countries have regularly backed off actions that would offend New Delhi. India’s leadership role earlier in the nonaligned movements and its continuing relatively greater economic presence have made it easier to disappoint Pakistan than to alienate India.

THE WAR AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS

The decision to join in the decade-long struggle against communism and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as a major protagonist was from the outset weighed in terms of its meaning for Pakistan’s defences against India. The likelihood of a Soviet military thrust into Pakistan, if it had ever been serious, passed quickly. What remained was the deep concern that a Soviet-backed Afghan state could intimidate Pakistani governments, compromising the country’s security against India. It was therefore necessary to support the resistance in the hope that the communist hold on Afghanistan would-if not immediately reversed, be prevented at least from consolidating U.S. assistance to Pakistan that brought with it advanced military hardware, economic aid, and funds to be funneled to the Afghan mujahidin not only strengthened the Zia regime against its domestic enemies, it gave the country an upgraded military capability against India. Purchase of F-16 fighter planes as well as the deployment of most of Pakistan’s military were more designed to withstand an attack by India than by the Soviets.

Pakistani leaders saw Indian policy toward the Soviet invasion as largely sympathetic to Moscow. Certainly, New Delhi's initial statement at the United Nations appeared both in Islamabad and Washington to be a wholesale acceptance of the Soviet line.⁴ Despite Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's modification of that policy with subsequent assertions that armed aggression in Afghanistan was unacceptable, it was clear that her government viewed the rearming of the Pakistan military by the United States as the real threat to the subcontinent and Indian security. The presence of the Soviet army at the Khyber Pass was disturbing to many in India, and Mrs. Gandhi was uneasy about her country's dependence on Moscow as an arms supplier. Yet with F-16s, Pakistan's capability-while still no match for India's far larger air force-had now to be taken seriously.

It was felt in Islamabad that if Mrs. Gandhi were really sincere about opposing the Soviet invasion, she had considerable leverage over Moscow owing to the close economic and military relations between the countries; if she could not have prevented the military intervention in Afghanistan, then at least she was thought to have been in a position to press for the Soviet's early withdrawal. Mrs. Gandhi's claims to be seeking the role of honest broker were not appreciated in Islamabad, especially given her public assertions that Pakistan was to blame for provoking Soviet action by its arming the Afghan insurgents after the Sour Revolution. Nor was a \$1.6 billion Indian arms deal with Moscow, coming just months after the Soviet invasion, seen as evidence of Indian evenhandedness. Although the Indian foreign office had by 1982 called for the withdrawal of foreign military forces, Pakistan could take little comfort in the apparently harder line toward Moscow since it was coupled with the demand that all outside interference be halted, meaning that Pakistan would be expected to cut off its aid to the Afghan resistance.⁵

It followed quite logically that Pakistan's Afghan policy should be left to the hands of its military-in particular the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) division. This authority involved the making of political decisions as well as support and management of the resistance forces. Under Zia and his military regime, there was little need or

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opportunity for distinctions. When Mohammad Khan Junejo, Prime Minister in a civilian government appointed by Zia, tried to put his individual stamp on negotiations with the Kabul government and the Soviet Union to end the conflict, he was sacked by President Zia. Even Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, heading subsequent elected governments, found it impossible to take the reins of Afghan policy. Because political decisions on Afghanistan-like those on Kashmir-were thought to impinge directly on Pakistan's defence readiness against India, they remained essentially in the province of the military establishment.

President Zia never gave up the hope that were communism defeated, an Islamic-oriented Afghan government could be installed. At a minimum that government was expected to show gratitude and friendship toward Pakistan and possibly be willing to join in an economic if not a more formal political federation. In fact, such an outcome was improbable. Zia had entirely underestimated the nationalist resolve of even those parties of the resistance that were heavily dependent on Pakistan and, through Pakistan, on the generous military and economic assistance of the United States and Saudi Arabia. Events following the Soviet pullout and the communist collapse in 1992 amply demonstrated that whatever the feelings of appreciation and however much Pakistan might try to continue to influence events in Afghanistan, no Afghan faction was prepared to be seen as bending to the dictates of Pakistan.

Pakistan felt confident that India's policies during the war with the communists, particularly its refusal to give up on the Najibullah government in Kabul after the Soviet departure in February 1989, had for the foreseeable future discredited New Delhi with the Afghans. The composition of mujahidin-led state should have assured that New Delhi would have little if any standing in Kabul. But the leadership in Pakistan under both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif underestimated India's renewed utility for the Afghans in curbing Pakistan's ambitions in Afghanistan. Specifically, they failed to appreciate how in the civil war among the victorious factions one or more might turn to India for assistance, especially when convinced that Pakistan was playing favourites among the contesting parties.

Close collaboration between India and the Kabul government is repeatedly alleged. Further accusations by some Islamic parties in Pakistan blame India for endeavouring to keep contesting Afghan factions away from the negotiating table. Two newspapers in Pakistan, the *Daily Jang* (in Urdu) and the English language *The Frontier Post* highlighted articles about arming the forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and the existence of a larger Delhi-Moscow axis backing the Kabul government.⁶ Many of the contacts between Kabul and New Delhi are probably exaggerated, intended to drive a wedge between those loyal to Rabbani and policymakers in Pakistan. Pro-Hekmatyar elements in Pakistan, including those in the ISI, found it a convenient way to discredit the weak Kabul government. What is undisputed is that India and Afghanistan had begun to engage in commercial activities—this despite the wholesale exodus of Indians from Kabul in 1992—and that some relief goods from India had reached the Afghans in 1994. Specifically, India is believed to have supplied military aid to the pro-Rabbani forces under Ahmad Masoud in the form of technicians at Bagram air base. Any assistance was justified by the government camp, convinced as it was that Pakistan was arming its enemies in Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami. Of course, for India, any chance to meddle in the civil war could be expected to come at the expense of Pakistan's influence. Most important, however, India was anxious that the most radical Islamic factions did not gain control of Afghanistan and conceivably export their ideas to the region.

For very different reasons, Iran has also been apprehensive about the outcome in Afghanistan. Through most of the decade of Iran's war with Iraq in the 1980s, it managed to absorb more than two million Afghans, while maintaining fairly cordial relations with Moscow. Over the course of the struggle against the communists, Iran and Pakistan gave different priority to ending the conflict, and each had its own clients among the ethnic-based resistance parties and commanders in the field. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the two countries have been anxious to have an end to the hostilities, though not necessarily with the same results in mind. They consulted regularly in trying to mediate among the warring factions. Pakistan and Iran also saw eye to eye on the need to insulate the conflict in Tajikistan and allay Russian fears in the region.

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Iran's relations with India present a serious challenge for Pakistan in the 1990s. While there is little likelihood of a revival of the idea floated in the 1970s of a far-reaching economic entente, Iran does nevertheless seem intent on opening lines of communication to the Indian government. Iran has often sought to play an evenhanded role between India and Pakistan. For example, acting as an intermediary, Iranian envoys tried, although without success, to gain Indian approval for an OIC fact-finding mission to Kashmir; they did succeed, however, in gaining permission for an OIC representative in India. India's Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, visited Tehran in January 1995 and was offered several areas of economic cooperation. A sugar refinery to be located in Iran is under serious consideration. Tehran and New Delhi governments have also talked about building a submerged gas pipeline from Iran to fuel Indian industries. In turn, by bypassing Pakistan and Afghanistan, Iran could provide India with a land bridge to Central Asia where there is little concern-by contrast to Iran and Pakistan-that it would try to market religious or political causes.

Without some resolution of the Kashmir issue, the potential for full cooperation between Iran and India will be difficult to realize. Yet highly revealing was Tehran's handling of Pakistan's attempts to bring the Kashmir issue before the Geneva-based UN Commission on Human Rights in March 1994. Fearing criticism of its own domestic rights policies, Iran convinced Pakistan's representatives to withdraw the resolution-which had no chance of passage anyway. On Kashmir, the Islamic states and others may also be reticent to push the principle of self-determination too far, lest it set an unwanted precedent for their own ethnic minorities and regional groups.

KASHMIR AND THE AFGHANS

Afghanistan has increasingly figured in the Kashmir conflict. It is a poorly disguised fact that from an early point in the insurgency, the fighters were receiving training in many of the same camps where Arab volunteers in the Afghan conflict were gaining indoctrination and familiarity with the use of weapons. And like the Arabs, some of these outsiders were seeing limited combat in the war against the

communists. There is little evidence of actual transfer of Afghan mujahidin to the Kashmir front but much reason to believe that Pakistani government policies ignoring the activities of the country's Jama'at-i-Islami and ISI officials have condoned if not officially supported the transfer of weapons and the training of Kashmiri fighters.

To some observers, Islamabad's India policy directly converges with its Afghan policy, namely that a *jihad* shifted to the Kashmir Valley furthers Pakistan's objective to gain control over Afghan factions.⁷ At the same time, according to this view, Pakistan seeks to "balkanize" India by promoting a Kashmiri defection and other secessions from the Indian state-this in revenge for New Delhi's role in severing Bangladesh from Pakistan.⁸ However attractive a theory, there is a wide gap between wishful thinking about breaking up or "cutting India down to size" and a calculated strategy devised by Pakistan's policy elites. Moreover, the desire to see a more compliant Afghanistan politically has ample rationale without its being tied to the pursuit of a policy to dismember India. It would also be difficult to show that Kashmiri Muslims-whatever help they have had from Pakistan-are not motivated and capable of carrying on their resistance. At least some reports of infiltration and external assistance are not a serious effort to weigh their contribution but are intended to discredit the Kashmiri resistance movement.

On a rhetorical level, most Islamic states have remained supportive of Pakistan in its diplomatic efforts to see justice and human rights realized in Indian Kashmir. In recent years, Pakistan's leaders have worked hard to cultivate this support. As one editorial writer put it the job was to convince others that "India is not a country with which (Islamic countries) should develop trade ties because India spends the money which it earns from these transactions on armaments and with these arms it massacres Kashmiris." By itself taking a consistent and hard line with India on Kashmir, Pakistan has tried to set a good example for other Islamic states. While Islamabad cannot expect Muslim governments to cut trade and diplomatic relations over the Kashmir dispute, it has hoped that they would at least apply pressure greater on India. But public statements from official

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Arab sources favouring Pakistan on the issue are usually seen in Delhi as merely paying their dues to the Islamic cause, not grounds for souring relations with India.

Even while the business of mobilizing support on the Kashmir issue often seems to drive Pakistan's involvement with other Muslim countries, it also distracts Pakistan from many of its opportunities in its Near West. To be sure, Kashmir succeeds as an issue where few others do in solidifying opinion inside Pakistan. Yet continuing preoccupation with Kashmir diminishes or can even deny Pakistan its larger geostrategic role. The cost for Pakistan for its absorption with Kashmir is that the issue necessarily diverts attention from accepting the broader regional and global challenges and opportunities that exist. Pakistan's will and capacity to provide a peacekeeping role in international affairs and serve as a potential mediator among Islamic states is surely affected. Even should Pakistan avoid armed confrontation over Kashmir, the country is captive to an issue that draws off scarce resources, uses up political capital, distorts domestic priorities, and puts critical alliances under some strain.

CONCLUSION

As the confrontation between India and Pakistan takes on a nuclear dimension, Afghanistan could recede as a factor in the new strategic equation. To be sure, given Afghanistan's possible role as a land bridge to Central Asia and the always potential revival of Pashtun irredentism, Pakistan's policy makers can hardly afford to be indifferent to the outcome of power struggles in Kabul. Concerns in Islamabad deepened during 1995 with the sharp deterioration of relations between the Rabbani government and Islamabad. Nonetheless, the presence of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of Pakistan and India makes a conventional ground war featuring a pincer movement against Pakistan from the East and West an improbable scenario.

While some of grander ideas of an Islamic military alliance incorporating Afghanistan may be out of fashion with Zia's death in August 1988, many in Pakistan remain convinced that strategic depth

can contribute to the country's security-that Pakistan can be made safer by its inclusion in a Muslim bloc. With the fall of the communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, religious parties in Pakistan are the most vocal in arguing for greater Muslim solidarity against India based on broad collaboration with Islamic regimes in Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia. The religious opposition has long contended that governments in Islamabad have not done enough to protect the country's national interests against the hegemonic designs of India and other anti-Islamic states, meaning, most of all, Israel.⁹

Plainly, a successful Afghan policy for Pakistan will be critical to the formation of a regional Islamic front for economic and political cooperation that is suggested by membership in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Until now, despite all the ambitious ideas for a regional organization, little in the way of integration of the Muslim states has occurred. The organization has greatly expanded with the addition of five Central Asian republics, Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan. But with great differences in the several economies and political regimes, the ECO's potential may have been oversold. Certainly, it will fall far short of expectations in the presence of a civil war in Afghanistan that threatens to export its ethnic turmoil and leave the country without a strong central government.

Pakistan's plans for developing far-reaching arrangements with Central Asian states are bound to be delayed, if not derailed, by continuing civil conflict. The most obvious exchanges of goods and services with these new republics are through road links in Afghanistan. There is little thought that the new republics would be of any military value in the struggle with India-indeed, there is no evidence of their interest, but they might strengthen Pakistan's economy as Afghanistan provides the gateway for goods entering and leaving Central Asia, especially in movement of trade to Southeast Asia. India, too, has aspirations for developing a strong economic relationship with the formerly Soviet Muslim republics. Whatever the physical barriers, India does have the advantage of a far more advanced consumer goods industry, one known to the Central Asians when they were still

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incorporated in a Soviet state. Pakistan's advantage is of course that through Afghanistan it has more direct land links to Central Asia.

A resolution of the Afghan conflict has taken precedence over an earlier preference among many in the Pakistan leadership to have Afghanistan remain fragmented and distracted-if it cannot be dominated. Most policy makers in Pakistan no longer believe that they can firmly orchestrate a government in Afghanistan, one that guarantees them a close ally. Civil turmoil that leads to either de jure or de facto divisions of the country carries security risks for Pakistan. An Afghan state that is weak will be more open to external influences. Pakistan has reason to worry that the fighting of ethnic and sectarian militias could give other outside forces opportunities for manipulation of the contending parties, and conceivably the reemergence of the Pashtunistan issue. The most likely manipulators would of course be Iran and Saudi Arabia, and also Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. But most feared in Pakistan is India's ability to capitalize on the factional fighting. Afghan nationalists, Pashtuns, or others, looking for allies and material support may indeed find India a willing partner.

As this paper has argued, Pakistan, like most of Afghanistan's neighbours, finds itself better able to profit economically and politically from greater stability and the revival of a viable Afghan state. Pakistan's current, poorly disguised backing for the Taliban movement comes only after having previously supported several factions, including Rabbani and Hekmatyar, and finding none that could unite the country. Yet, like Iran and the nearby Muslim states of Central Asia, Pakistan continues to meddle in Afghan affairs in an effort to prevent a regime seen as hostile from coming to power.

Pakistan's backing for the Taliban militias carries potential problems as well as opportunities that were broadly overlooked until recently. The success of the student movement-which eventually attracted broader dissident participation-in occupying large areas of Afghanistan raises questions about Pakistan's longer term national interest and security. It also underscores differences among policy

makers in Pakistan. For along with those in Pakistan who have cheered on the Taliban are others who worry about the full ascendance of an independent-minded Islamic government in Afghanistan, one that could spill over into the domestic politics of Pakistan. Moreover, the Pashtun-dominated movement, were it only to succeed in bringing about a truncated Afghanistan, might look covetously at Pakistan's northwest in hopes of building a more viable state. Some Pakistani observers also fear that too deep involvement in Afghanistan is likely to complicate the country's relations with other interested players in the region, notably Iran. Still more, farsighted observers in Pakistan recognize that every time they overplay their hand in Afghanistan, Indian influence in Kabul reasserts itself.

As Pakistan focusses on uncertainties involving Afghanistan and allows tensions to rise with India over Kashmir, there are questions about how well it has assessed its real security interests. For, in the end, national security for Pakistan is not just military and political but increasingly involves economic strength, which is undermined by the country's inability to deliver adequately on the welfare and enlightenment of its citizens. Some project that India, but also Bangladesh and Pakistan, are on the verge of an economic spurt that will mirror much of the boom in East Asia. This growth assumes continuing economic reforms that will unshackle entrepreneurial energies, just as it does the need to provide greater political order and stability. But for Pakistan to participate-attracting foreign investment on a scale that has already begun in India-it will also have to make progress in building its technological and human capital as well as its physical infrastructure. It may also have to smooth out the inconsistencies of trying to pursue an Islamic economy and the requirements of competing for investment in the global market. Greater cooperation among South Asian states leading to increased intra-regional trading and investment should enhance growth and improve economic equity in Pakistan. But opportunities for security and prosperity lying beyond the subcontinent may look more promising to Pakistan's leaders. The most attractive of these are found in the country's Near West where, as we have seen, significant political,

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cultural, and economic links have already been forged. In exchange, Pakistan may choose-unannounced assuredly-to discount its role in South Asia and, in effect, concede India's ascendant economic and political position.

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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

*(Excerpts from the Report submitted by Choong - Hyun Paik,
Special Rapporteur, in accordance with the UN Commission
on Human Rights Resolution 1996/75)**

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan continues not to have a legitimate, effective and functioning central government; a functioning independent, impartial and unified judicial system; a constitution; institutions of civil society; rule of law; accountability for human rights violations and mechanisms to provide redress to the victims. The country is in a state of civil war. Local, especially tribal customs appear to prevail and the movement which controls the greater part of the territory does not appear to see itself bound by international standards of human rights to which Afghanistan is a party. The enjoyment of a number of fundamental human rights and freedoms is severely curtailed throughout the country.

The Economy is virtually non-existent and unemployment has been rising steadily. The predominant economic activity is agriculture, with a very large portion of the territory under opium poppy. Inflation has been soaring, reportedly reaching 560 per cent in the north of the country. Almost half of Afghanistan's housing stock has been damaged or destroyed as has the economic infrastructure. The economic and social crises both appear to be deepening.

A general feeling of hopelessness, despondency and fear appeared to characterize in particular the inhabitants of Kabul and Herat. In Herat, the Special Rapporteur was told by a number of interlocutors

* *For full text see UN ECOSOC document No.E/CN.4/1997/59 dated 20 February 1997.*

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that the population perceived the rule by the Taliban as a form of occupation. United Nations bodies dealing with human rights have expressed the view that occupation in itself constitutes a violation of human rights. The situation of human rights does not, of course, concern only city dwellers. The rural population, especially in and around the areas of the two principal front lines, has experienced numerous and severe hardships as a result of the fighting which were often compounded by inclement weather. On the basis of observations and discussions as well as the written material received prior to and during the visit, it would appear that the situation of human rights in Afghanistan has deteriorated to a certain extent in some parts of the country since the Special Rapporteur's previous visit in July 1996.

The degree of enjoyment of both civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights has altered significantly among the various segments of the Afghan population; gender and ethnic origin have become important determining factors regarding the degree of enjoyment of human rights in certain parts of the country. The increasingly ethnic nature of the conflict shows a polarization between Pashtoons and non-Pashtoons (Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Panjshiris, Turkmens). There also appears to be a division between the educated urban and relatively uneducated rural segments of the population.

The *Taliban* authorities issued a number of decrees when they took over Kabul, banning, *inter alia*, music, television, cinemas, chess and kite-flying. Women were discouraged from leaving their homes and were prohibited from going to work and receiving education. Outside their homes, women were obliged to wear veils covering them from head to toe, including the face, and were to be accompanied by a legally recognized close male relative. Clean-shaven men were given six weeks to grow beards. These repressive measures, at times enforced harshly by *Taliban* forces and in particular by the representatives of the department of religious police, have had a considerable negative impact on the lives of the population, in particular women.

During the period under review, it is reported that citizens were expected to attend prayers in mosques five times a day and efforts to

force the residents of Kabul off the streets and from vehicles into mosques, especially for Friday prayers, were intensified in November. The use of paper bags was banned in December for fear that Arabic script, which is also used in the Koran, might be written on them and that they might be thrown away which would constitute an insult to Islam. Television broadcasts from Iran and Iranian products were prohibited in Herat and houses were searched for such products. Civilians fleeing Qarabagh district north of Kabul were searched at checkpoints by the *Taliban* forces for music cassettes which were subsequently destroyed as un-Islamic. In December, women were warned to observe the veil more strictly and 225 women were reportedly beaten behind the closed gates of the presidential palace compound in Kabul while their husbands and relatives waited outside. A number of civil servants were fired for not having beards. Women's bathhouses (*hammams*) were closed. Restrictions were placed on the medical treatment of women (see appendix II) and it was announced that only fully covered women would be allowed to shop in the marketplace.

THE RULE OF LAW AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

During his visit to Kabul, the Special Rapporteur asked the Attorney-General of the *Taliban* authorities how they intended to deal with obligations stemming from international human rights treaties. He indicated that if a promise, convention, treaty or other instrument, even if it was in the Charter of the United Nations, was contrary to Shariah, they would not fulfil it or act on it. The Attorney-General added that, "If someone is drinking in public, even if the Covenant or the United Nations Charter says they should not be punished, we will. The core of our action and our policy is the law of God, as contained in the Koran. We do not follow individuals, or people or other countries. We follow the law of God. We adhere strictly to what the Koran is telling us. Therefore, we invite all people in the world to follow the Koran. Any laws that negate the Koran or the law of God, we don't accept that."

**TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN
OR DEGRADING TREATMENT**

A number of women in Kabul whose veils were deemed insufficiently long were reportedly beaten on the street with chains. During his visit to Herat, the Special Rapporteur was informed that a woman's arm was broken in two places for no apparent reason while she was shopping in a marketplace. He was also informed about the women who participated in the peaceful demonstration in Herat to protest against the closing of female bathhouses who were severely beaten and doused with water from a fire hose. In addition to chains and whips, people were allegedly also beaten with water hoses filled with pebbles. It was reported that entire busloads of men in Herat, selected completely at random, had their hair cut in public by the *Taliban* who sometimes had long hair themselves. When embroidery on men's garments was outlawed in Herat, some men were stopped at random on the street and the embroidery on their clothes cut out.

Capital punishment

Executions in all parts of the country are said to be carried out in accordance with Islamic law. It has been alleged that summary trials, some lasting only a few minutes, have been conducted in areas under the control of the *Taliban* which have resulted in capital punishment.

Corporal punishment

The Shariah courts established by the *Taliban* have continued to pronounce sentences of amputation of the hand or foot for theft, reportedly often after summary trials. Opinions continue to be expressed that such practices are incompatible with the provisions of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which has been ratified by Afghanistan.

In Kandahar, the Special Rapporteur was told by the governor that the punishments to prevent theft such as the cutting off of hands were to prevent the recurrence of such crimes and to preserve the property and well-being of people. Stonings and amputations were carried out in order to protect the human rights and larger interests of the population in

accordance with Islamic principles and hundreds of thousands of people benefited.

THE FREEDOMS OF THOUGHT, EXPRESSION, PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

The Special Rapporteur was informed that when they took over Kabul at the end of September 1996, the *Taliban* authorities banned all social institutions. He regretted that the Lawyers' Association of Afghanistan no longer existed. The only radio station broadcasting in Kabul is reportedly Radio Shariat which is operated by the *Taliban* authorities. The Special Rapporteur was informed that there was only one newspaper in Herat, published by the *Taliban*. Libraries were only allowed to keep Islamic literature. The painting of portraits at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Herat had been banned. In addition, portraits were not allowed to be displayed in public, including in photographers' shops. Pictures of women were not allowed to be taken, including by professional photographers. Films, music and television have been banned.

The restrictions placed by the *Taliban* movement on the appearance of women have been enforced very strictly, in particular in Kabul and Herat. This was also the case for men with respect to beards, the length and style of hair and, occasionally, embroidery on their garments.

On 21 December 1996, some 150 women are reported to have staged a peaceful demonstration in Herat to protest the closing of bathhouses for women. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, the women were severely beaten by the *Taliban* forces, doused with a fire hose and told that was their bathhouse. Several women had to be taken to hospitals while some 20 were arrested.

RESPECT FOR PRIVACY AND PROPERTY

After taking over Kabul, the *Taliban* reportedly carried out house searches looking for weapons, audio and video cassettes, televisions and sound equipment. Contrary to the affirmations of the *Taliban* that they had brought complete peace and security to the areas under their control, the inhabitants of Herat informed the Special Rapporteur that

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stealing continued and that people did not feel safe. Houses were also searched in Herat for Iranian products, which were banned. The house of a foreign member of a non-governmental organization was robbed in Kabul.

Taliban fighters showed flagrant disregard for property in October 1996 when they reportedly burned to the ground some 120 houses in Sar Chesma village north of Kabul, in retaliation against the mostly ethnic Tajik population for reportedly allowing opposition forces to launch attacks from the village.

The 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations has been violated a number of times since September 1996 : armed men entered the UNHCR offices in Kabul on 5 and 12 November. In addition, a large group of armed men entered the home of the expatriate head of the UNHCR office. *Taliban* forces reportedly also entered the United Nations staff house in search of Afghan staff members.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The right to work

Economic activity in Afghanistan has come almost to a standstill. Employment opportunities are scarce in the whole country. Women currently can work only in the north. The prohibition on the employment of women, who make up at least half of the country's population, has had far-reaching negative consequences on life in Afghanistan in general. It is estimated that there were some 40,000 women in public service in Kabul where the already serious economic situation has deteriorated even further. Women accounted for 70 per cent of all teachers, about 50 per cent of civil servants and an estimated 40 per cent of medical doctors. It is estimated that there are some 45,000 war widows in Kabul, each supporting an average of six dependants. More than 30,000 widows in the city are able to survive only thanks to humanitarian assistance provided by the international community.

Right to education

Afghanistan has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world, amounting to more than 75 per cent. Female literacy is the lowest in Asia. As was the case in Kandahar and Herat, all girls' schools were closed in Kabul in September 1996 after the arrival of the *Taliban*. It has been reported that 63 schools were closed in Kabul and that more than 103,000 girls, 148,000 boys and almost 8,000 female teachers were affected. The remaining schools for boys allegedly offer mostly Koranic studies. In Jalalabad, the authorities announced in January that the Medical College would be reopened only for male students. In February, it was announced that the University of Kabul, where half the student body used to be female, would reopen in March only for male students.

Gender-based discrimination

Among the most serious consequences of gender-based discrimination in the parts of the country under *Taliban* control is a severe restriction of the freedom of movement of women. Afghan women described it as virtual imprisonment. Women were asked by the religious police department not to leave their homes without a legal excuse during Ramadan. They have encountered problems moving outside their homes without close male relatives and are also facing restrictions regarding transportation (see appendix I). Women have been banned from going to hotels, including for weddings.

The mandatory wearing of the veil has been compounded by the price of *burqas* which reportedly cost the equivalent of a civil servant's monthly salary. Mobile *Taliban* units were reportedly patrolling the streets to control the observance of the prescribed dress code. Educated women in the urban areas of northern Afghanistan expressed grave concern over the restrictive measures imposed on women by the *Taliban* movement, especially in large urban centres which had achieved a certain level of sophistication such as Kabul and Herat, where women have played a prominent role in the culture for centuries. Women in Herat were completely demoralized and indicated that their situation had become worse since the *Taliban* takeover of Kabul.

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During his visit to the city of Kandahar in January 1997, the Special Rapporteur met with the chairman of the Council of Religious Scholars in Kandahar. He told the Special Rapporteur that “the Holy Koran teaches us that women should stay at home. If they happen to come out, they should be fully covered.” The chairman indicated that basic education was provided to women at home and that males were taking care of women who did not need employment and higher education. He added, “If we ask them to come out for work, then this is a violation of women’s rights. God has limited their right to stay at home” and “If education is required by women, then women can get this education from their brothers and fathers. Female expatriates are not allowed to teach Muslim women. A non-Muslim women is not allowed to teach or see a Muslim woman.” The chairman stated, “Our stand is clear that women should not go out of the house for education and employment.”

Cultural issues

During his visit to Herat, the Special Rapporteur was informed that a *Taliban* leader had the habit of shooting for recreation at an 800-year-old fortress with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

The Special Rapporteur visited several important cultural monuments in Balkh province, a center of Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Islamic culture, and was informed that a special commission for the preservation of the cultural heritage had been established, counting among its members representatives of the security and law enforcement authorities, in order to prevent illegal excavation and looting. He was informed that the cultural heritage had suffered from the absence of a central government and that one of the most urgent needs was the protection of a number of monuments from the elements.

HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

Afghanistan is ranked 170th of 174 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index. Many Afghans live in absolute poverty without clean water, shelter and basic health services. Almost half the housing stock has been destroyed or damaged during the 18 years of

war. The production of agricultural land has decreased by up to 50 per cent. An estimated 57 per cent of the Afghan population suffers from malnutrition and long-term chronic malnutrition is a likely prospect.

The *Taliban* authorities were reportedly not taking any measures to improve the economy. In addition to the restrictions imposed on the employment of women, men are reported to have been paid irregularly and most people are said to barely be able to afford food despite the fact that prices initially fell after checkpoints giving access to Kabul were removed. Numerous children are forced to work to supplement the income of their parents or to survive on their own, including by gathering bones for sale abroad to be made into soap. Most people currently live on bread and tea. Many men, women and children were observed begging throughout the city. Some 80 per cent of Kabulis live in poverty, with half receiving food aid. Thirty thousand of some 45,000 widows in the city depend on international assistance for survival. Assistance is also provided to a new category of citizen : women whose husbands have had to escape from the city.

Health care

The access of the female population of Afghanistan to health facilities decreased after the issuing of decrees concerning the employment and movement of women and the dress code. Afghanistan has one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

On the basis of his observations and the written and oral information he has received, it does not appear to the Special Rapporteur that the *Taliban* are at present genuinely interested in arriving at a negotiated political solution to the civil war in Afghanistan. They have shown little willingness to compromise, stating that the precondition for the cessation of hostilities is the acceptance of their version of Islam. A military solution to the conflict aimed at conquering the totality of the territory, on occasion voiced by certain *Taliban*

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leaders, appears to be their chosen course of action. They have forced entire populations of localities north of Kabul to leave their homes in order to preclude rebellion. The Special Rapporteur expresses concern over the banning by the *Taliban* of all social institutions whose beneficial role he had come to appreciate during his previous visits to Afghanistan. The case, for example, with the Afghan Lawyers' Association which provided citizens with legal advice free of charge and produced many useful publications, including translations of the principal international human rights instruments.

In view of the fact that women are at present barred from education in parts of the country under the control of the *Taliban* movement, the Special Rapporteur voice his fear that once the current generation of female medical workers in the country retires, there will be a serious shortage of female doctors to treat women. The most serious problem regarding the protection of women's rights in regions under the control of the *Taliban* movement is the deprivation of the fundamental human rights to education and to employment. Chairman of the Council of Religious Scholars in Kandahar responded in a clear and succinct manner that any kind of education or jobs for girls and women will not be allowed any time at present or in the future.

The Special Rapporteur has the impression that the *Taliban* authorities are concerned more with military operations than rehabilitation and social development and that the welfare of the Afghan population in areas under their control is left almost entirely to international humanitarian assistance. Acts of looting of the Afghan cultural heritage constitute a clear violation of the laws of war. The trafficking of such artifacts is a legal violation of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and of domestic laws of the countries concerned. The legal responsibility lies with States, museums, and all individuals involved in such activities, by action or omission.

APPENDIX I

**NOTICE OF DEPARTMENT FOR ENFORCEMENT OF RIGHT
ISLAMIC WAY AND PREVENTION OF EVILS :**

The Department for enforcement of right Islamic way and prevention of evils for the implementation of legal Islamic orders and Prophet Mohamad tradition in order to prevent evils which cause serious dangers and problems for Islamic society requests from all pious sisters and brothers to seriously follow 8 articles mentioned below to prevent occurrence of evils :

1. No exit and travelling of sisters without escort of legal close relative (Mahram).
2. Those sisters are coming out to their homes with legal escort should use veil (burqa) or similar things to cover the face.
3. Sitting of sisters in the front seat of cart (gadi) and Jeep (vehicle) without legal relative is forbidden. In the case of appearance serious measures will be carried out against the vehicle and cart rider/driver.
4. Shopkeepers do not have right to buy or sell things with those women without covered face, otherwise the shopkeeper is guilty and has no right to complain.
5. Cars are strictly forbidden to be covered with flowers for wedding ceremony and also is not allowed to drive around the city.
6. Women's invitations in hotels and wedding party in hotels are forbidden.
7. Sisters without legal close relative with them can not use taxis, otherwise the taxi driver is responsible.
8. The person who is in charge of collecting fares (money) for sisters in buses, minibuses and jeeps should be under 10 years old.

The professional delegates of this department are in charge to punish violators according to Islamic principles.

APPENDIX II

(Translation of Order)

**TALIBAN ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF AFGHANISTAN RULES
OF WORK FOR THE STATE HOSPITALS AND PRIVATE
CLINICS BASED ON SHARIA PRINCIPLES**

1. Female patients should go to female physicians. In case a male physician is needed, the female patient should be accompanied by her close relatives (Mahram).
2. During examination, the female patients and male physicians both should be dressed with Islamic hejab.
3. Male physicians should not touch or see the other parts of female patients except the affected part.
4. Waiting rooms for female patients should be safely covered.
5. The person who regulates turns for female patients should be a female.
6. During night duty, in the rooms where female patients are hospitalized, a male doctor without the call of patient is not allowed to enter the room.
7. Sitting and speaking between male and female doctors are not allowed. If there be need for discussion, it should be done with hejab.
8. Female doctors should wear simple clothes, they are not allowed to wear stylish clothes or use cosmetics and makeup.
9. Female doctors and nurses are not allowed to enter the rooms where male patients are hospitalized.
10. Hospital staff should pray in the mosque on time. The director of hospital is bound to assign a place and appoint a priest (mullah) for prayer.
11. Staff of (Amri Bel Maroof Wa Nai Az Munkar) Department are allowed to go for control at any time and nobody can prevent them. Anybody who violates the order will be punished as per Islamic regulations.

-Amirul-Mominin Mullah Mohammad Omar Mujahed

-Mofti Mohammad Masoom Afghani

Acting Minister of Public Health

APPENDIX III
ISLAMIC STATE OF AFGHANISTAN
GENERAL PRESIDENCY OF AMR BIL MAROF WA NAI AZ MUNKIR
(RELIGIOUS POLICE)
ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

TO : The received letter from the Cultural and Social Affairs Department of General Presidency of Islamic State of Afghanistan No. 6240 dated 26.09.1375 states that :

The role and regulation of Amr Bil Marof Wa Nai Az Munkir is to be distributed via your office to all whom it may concern for implementation.

1. To prevent sedition and uncovered female (be hejab) : No drivers are allowed to pick up female who are using Iranian burqa. In the case of violation the driver will be imprisoned. If such kinds of female are observed in the street, their houses will be found and their husbands punished. If the women use stimulating and attractive cloth and there is no close male relative with them, the drivers should not pick them up.
2. To prevent music : To be broadcasted by the public information resources. In shops, hotels, vehicles and rickshaws cassettes and music are prohibited. This matter should be monitored within five days. If any music cassette is found in a shop, the shopkeeper should be imprisoned and the shop locked. If five people guarantee, the shop could be opened and the criminal released later. If a cassette is found in a vehicle, the vehicle and the driver will be imprisoned. If five people guarantee, the vehicle will be released and the criminal released later.
3. To prevent beard shaving and its cutting : To be broadcasted by the public information resources. After one and a half months if any one is observed who has shaved and/or cut his beard, he should be arrested and imprisoned until his beard gets bushy.
4. To prevent not praying and order gathering prayer at the bazaar : To be broadcasted by the public information resources that the prayers should be done on their due times in all districts. The exact prayer time will be announced by the Amr Bil Marof Wa Nai Az Munkir department. Fifteen minutes prior to prayer time the front of the mosque, where the water facilities and possibilities are available, should be blocked and transportation

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should be strictly prohibited and all people are obliged to go to the mosque. At the prayer time this matter should be monitored. If young people are seen in the shops they will be immediately imprisoned. If five people guarantee, the person should be released, otherwise the criminal will be imprisoned for ten days.

5. To prevent keeping pigeons and playing with birds : To be broadcasted by the public information resources that within ten days this habit/hobby should stop. After ten days this matter should be monitored and the pigeons and any other playing birds should be killed.
6. To eradicate the use of addiction and its users : Addicts should be imprisoned and investigation made to find the supplier and the shop. The shop should be locked and both criminals (the owner and the user) should be imprisoned and punished.
7. To prevent kite flying : First should be broadcasted by the public information resources advising the people of its useless consequences such as betting, death of children and their deprivation from education. The kite shops in the city should be abolished.
8. To prevent idolatry : To be broadcasted by the public information resources that in vehicles, shops, room, hotels and any other places pictures/portraits should be abolished. The monitors should tear up all pictures in the above places. This matter should be announced to all transport representatives. The vehicle will be stopped if any idol is found in the vehicle.
9. To prevent gambling : In collaboration with the security police the main centres should be found and the gamblers imprisoned for one month.
10. To prevent British and American hairstyles : To be broadcasted by the public information resources that people with long hair should be arrested and taken to the Amr Bil Marof Wa Nai Az Munkir department to shave their hair. The criminal has to pay the barber.
11. To prevent interest charges on loans, charges on changing small denomination notes and charges on money orders : All money exchangers should be informed that the above three types of exchanging money are prohibited in Islam. In the case of violation the criminal will be imprisoned for a long time.

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12. To prevent washing clothes by young ladies along the water streams in the city: It should be announced in all mosques and the matter should be monitored. Violator ladies should be picked up with respectful Islamic manner, taken to their houses and their husbands severely punished.
13. To prevent music and dances in wedding parties : To be broadcasted by the public information resources that the above two things should be prevented. In the case of violation the head of the family will be arrested and punished.
14. To prevent the playing of music drums : First the prohibition of this action to be announced to the people. If anybody does this then the religious elders can decide about it.
15. To prevent sewing ladies' cloth and taking female body measures by tailors : If women or fashion magazines are seen in the shop the tailor should be imprisoned.
16. To prevent sorcery : All the related books should be burnt and the magician should be imprisoned until his repentance.

The above issues are stated and you are requested, according to your job responsibilities, to implement and inform your related organizations and units.

Regards,

Mawlavi Enayatullah Baligh

Deputy Minister

General Presidency of Amr Bil Marof Wa Nai Az Munkir

PAKISTAN'S GEOPOLITICAL GAME PLAN IN AFGHANISTAN

*Jyotsna Bakshi**

It has been the traditional wisdom in India, even preceding the attainment of independence, that the security parameters of the Indian subcontinent lie along the river Oxus which constitutes the northern boundary of Afghanistan. Lying across the strategic Khyber pass, Afghanistan is situated on the traditional invading route to India from the north-west. The British feared a threat to their prized Indian possession from another expanding imperialist power in Eurasia - the Tsarist Russia. By 1907 an agreement was reached between Tsarist Russia and the British according to which the two agreed to respect each other's imperial possessions and accepted the state of Afghanistan as a buffer state between the two.

Following the attainment of independence India has maintained very friendly and close relations with Afghanistan. Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, on the other hand, have remained tense from the day one of the former coming into existence because of Afghanistan's refusal to recognize the British drawn Durand Line (1893) as the border between the two. The Durand line divides Pashtun tribes that live on both sides of the border. Constituting more than half of Afghanistan's population, the Pashtuns have ruled over Afghanistan during past two hundred years of its chequered history. A large number of pashtuns - in fact, more than in Afghanistan itself-live in the adjoining North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P.) of Pakistan. Afghanistan claims that the Pashtun and Baluch areas of Pakistan historically constitute a part of the Afghan state. Various successive Afghan regimes have supported the demand for Pashtun self-determination or 'Pashtunistan' in Pakistan to much chagrin of the Punjabi- dominated ruling elite in Islamabad.

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Afghanistan is a land-locked country and depends on its southern neighbour for access to the Arabian sea port of Karachi. Pakistani refusal at times to allow unhindered trade and transit to Afghanistan across its territory also strained relations between the two and made Afghanistan more and more dependent on its northern great power neighbour - the former Soviet Union. During early fifties Pakistan joined the Western military alliances viz., SEATO and CENTO and became the 'much aligned ally of the West'. Afghanistan, like India and the majority of Afro-Asian countries, followed the policy of non-alignment or 'Betarfi'. It was natural that Kabul moved closer to both New Delhi and Moscow.

In 1973 Sardar Mohammad Daoud, who was the first cousin and brother-in-law of King Zahir Shah and Prime Minister of Afghanistan under the king from 1953 to 1963, deposed the king and declared Afghanistan a republic with himself as the all powerful President. The king sought refuge in Italy. Initially Daoud was very close to Moscow. Soviet Union was the biggest trade partner of Afghanistan and aid donor to it. What was more, Moscow trained and equipped Afghanistan's army and air force. During the last couple of years of his rule Daoud was reported to be trying to wriggle out of over-dependence on Moscow. He got encouragement and support in his attempts from the Shah of Iran. The Shah also tried to bring about a rapprochement between Kabul and Islamabad.¹ These attempts were scuttled in April 1978 by the leftist 'Saur Revolution' or the 'coup' as it was variously called. The leftist regime in Kabul faced intense hostility and insurgency from the very beginning. In the closing days of December 1979 the ill-fated and ill-conceived Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan took place with the aim of protecting the tottering Marxist regime there.

The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan overnight catapulted neighbouring Pakistan into a 'frontline' state in the Western world's attempts to counter and contain Soviet communism. Pakistan also became the conduit of international aid for the Afghan rebels or the *Mujahideen* (holy fighters) against the infidel communist government in Kabul. Ever since then the unfortunate land of the

Afghans has not had peace or respite from the continued bloodshed that has thoroughly devastated the country.

GENERAL ZIA UL-HAQ'S AFGHAN STRATEGY

The basic contours of Pakistan's current Afghan strategy were shaped during the rule of General Zia ul-Haq (1977-1988). The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan came almost like a godsend for the wily General. It gave him an opportunity to shed the image of an usurper and a hangman and acquire legitimacy domestically and overcome the country's international isolation and find powerful friends abroad.

Pakistan's relations with its erstwhile superpower mentor and ally - the USA, had reached a low ebb in 1979 when the USA stopped all aid to the country because of Pakistan's nuclear ambition and clandestine nuclear programme. However, the Soviet military presence in neighbouring Afghanistan made Pakistan's geopolitical and geostrategic importance the focus of the Western world's attention. In January 1980 President Carter of the USA offered 400 million dollars to Pakistan in economic aid. But the shrewd General made most of his country's enhanced geopolitical importance and rejected President Carter's offer as 'peanuts' claiming that it would only invoke Soviet wrath without really bolstering the country's defence. But he accepted the hefty 3.2 billion dollar aid package offered by President Reagan the next year. Although Pakistan continued to deny it, in reality the country became the conduit for large-scale military aid to the Afghan rebels from the West, some of the West Asian countries and China. Pakistan also provided sanctuary and training to Afghan *Mujahideen* against Moscow-backed Kabul regime.

General Zia's Islamization policy at home became closely enmeshed with his Afghan policy. It won him the support and admiration of such Islamic fundamentalist parties like the *Jamaat-i-Islami*.² Soviet military action against Afghanistan-a non-aligned Muslim country-became the rallying point for the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). In October 1980 General Zia addressed the UN General Assembly as the Chairman of the OIC countries representing 900 million Muslims of the world. The high point of his

speech, no doubt, was the condemnation of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. General Zia had been repeatedly postponing elections (promised initially within ninety days of the imposition of Martial Law) on one pretext or the other. On his return after addressing the UN General Assembly, he declared with impunity that there would be no restoration of democracy “unless Islam is enforced in all aspects in Pakistan”. “I shall continue to serve the country”, he added, “as a humble servant of Islam”.

During the course of Afghan crisis the powerful Intelligence Directorate of Pakistani army - the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) developed close and intricate links with the US intelligence agency, the CIA. The US aid to the Afghan *Mujahideen* was funneled through the ISI. The ISI gave clear preference to the more fundamentalist Islamic parties among the Afghan exile parties based in Peshawar over the more moderate ones in distribution of aid. Thus, *Hezb-i-Islami* led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the most hard-line fundamentalist of these parties, received the largest share of the aid.³ Pakistan's *Jamaat-i-Islami* party that worked in close tandem with Zia regime, was also involved in the distribution of relief to the Afghan refugees. Hekmatyar was the favourite of both the ISI and the *Jamaat*. *Jamaat* made use of the opportunity for increasing its own political and ideological influence among the refugees. Along with *Jamaat*, *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam* of Pakistan headed by Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Saudi-backed radical Islamic faction called *Ahl al-Hadith*, opened hundreds of *Madrassas* (Islamic religious schools) for the refugee children.⁴ Thus, there existed a marked commonality of interests between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Afghanistan. The biggest recipient of Saudi aid among the Afghan exile parties was *Ittehad-i-Islami* led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf.⁵ The West, on the other hand, had reasons to have reservations regarding the preferential treatment given to the Islamic fundamentalist factions by the Zia regime. However, in view of the importance attached to the task of countering Soviet communism, the West chose to go along with the General. In the circumstances the distinction between who was using whom became somewhat obliterated.

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Simultaneously with giving aid to the Afghan *Mujahideen*, ISI began to divert a part of plentiful arms at its disposal and make available military training facilities for fomenting trouble in the Indian border states of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

The price that General Zia paid for his Afghan strategy was the presence of around 3.5 million Afghan refugees in the country. There was an unprecedented arms proliferation which resulted in gravely deteriorated law and order situation and increased crime rate. Karachi, the biggest port city and major commercial centre of Pakistan, became a deeply divided and violence-ridden city. Pakistan-Afghanistan border region became a major opium-producing area. It was widely believed that the booming drug business was carried on with the connivance and involvement of Pakistani civil and military officials. General Zia chose to turn a blind eye to it as also his Western benefactors. The number of drug-addicts dramatically escalated within Pakistan. Large-scale influx of arms and drugs led to militarization of civil society in Pakistan. Pakistan also became a target of destabilization campaign by Afghan secret service. There were numerous bomb blasts and explosions in various parts of the country.⁶

INDIAN POLICY

Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, a friendly non-aligned country, upset the geopolitical balance in the region. It traversed on India's security parameters. Chowdhury Charan Singh, the caretaker Prime Minister at the time, clearly and strongly criticized the Soviet action and called for immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops.⁷ However, Mrs. Gandhi on her return to power in January 1980 reacted on Afghan issue with greater circumspection and caution. Soviet action was seen as the outcome of growing insecurity and feeling of encirclement because of strategic link-up between Washington and Beijing coupled with an unfriendly Japan. New Delhi recognized the fact that the Soviet intervention was not the only outside interference in Afghanistan. The Afghan rebels were also getting arms aid from Pakistan, the West, some West Asian countries and China. But New

Delhi strongly disapproved of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan both on grounds of principles and considerations of its geopolitical interests. Indeed, Pakistan had now become a buffer state between India and the Soviet-dominated Afghanistan. No doubt, New Delhi expressed support for stability and security of Pakistan. Mrs. Gandhi told *New York Times* (2 August 1982), "We want our neighbours to be stable and strong. Nothing is so dangerous as a weak neighbour".⁸ Faced with security threat from two sides, Pakistan also tried to improve relations with India and General Zia offered India a 'no war pact'. India made a counter offer of a friendship treaty. However, not much headway could be made in resolving Indo-Pak disputes and mutual antagonism. Pakistan's support for the secessionist and terrorist elements in India (Punjab, Kashmir and north-east) further vitiated the climate.

Moreover, 3.2 billion dollar US aid to Pakistan in economic and military aid along with the delivery of state-of-art military equipment aroused great concern in this country. It fuelled a new arms race in the subcontinent. New Delhi's need for comparable Soviet weapons systems further increased. In the circumstances, India did not want to antagonize the Soviet Union that had stood by India in times of need and had consistently supported her unity and integrity. New Delhi strove to bring about the withdrawal of Soviet troops through 'quiet diplomacy' by persistently raising the issue with Moscow. In public India avoided to embarrass Moscow by adopting a denunciatory attitude. India abstained from voting on the UN resolutions condemning the Soviet Union. In the new geopolitical scenario, Moscow's need for Indian friendship and goodwill had increased than *vice versa*. India moved with greater urgency to impart greater flexibility to her foreign policy by improving relations with both Washington and Beijing.

PROXIMITY TALKS AT GENEVA

Despite mutual recrimination on Afghan issue, both Moscow and Islamabad treaded rather cautiously in relation to each other. Their communication channel remained open and Soviet economic assistance to Pakistan continued. In late 1981 Moscow, Kabul and

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Islamabad devised a mechanism where by Kabul and Islamabad agreed to hold indirect proximity talks at Geneva with the mediation of the special representative of the UN Secretary General without the compulsion of formal recognition. Islamabad had categorically refused to recognize the Soviet-backed Kabul regime.

It seemed Moscow was looking for an honorable way out of Afghan imbroglio. Its hopes of an easy and early victory in Afghanistan had failed. It had found itself bogged down in an unwinnable guerrilla war in the inhospitable mountainous terrain with the forces of Afghan nationalism pitted against it. The Soviet action was condemned the world over. Moscow lost face among the non-aligned countries as well as the Muslim countries. It had been assiduously cultivating both these groups for past more than two decades. No wonder, Moscow was prepared for a compromise including perhaps a change of regime in Afghanistan as the Western sources also reported. But Moscow wanted the new regime to be 'nationalistic' and not Islamic fundamentalist and hostile to the Soviet Union.⁹ Thus, General Zia was received by the newly-appointed General Secretary of the CPSU, Yuri Andropov, when the former went to Moscow to attend Brezhnev's funeral in November 1982. Earlier, in October 1982 in an exclusive interview to the *Guardian* General Zia made a sensational disclosure. He said that Kremlin and Afghan government were willing to recognize the Durand line. But he had turned down the offer, he boasted, for he was not ready to pay the price for it, which he did not specify. He added confidently, "I will make them recognize the Durand line in my own way and, God willing, that day is not far off".¹⁰ If indeed such an offer was made in 1982 as claimed by General Zia, it was apparently on the condition of Pakistan recognizing the Soviet-backed Kabul regime and undertaking to abstain from interference in Afghan affairs. The Pakistani General refused to do so.

The first round of the proximity talks took place at Geneva in June 1982, when an agreement was reached on four-point agenda. Considerable optimism was generated at the second round of talks in Geneva in April 1983. It was reported that a draft settlement was

ready.¹¹ However, no agreement could be reached when the talks resumed in June 1983. Moscow blamed Pakistan for the impasse. It accused Pakistan of acting “at the promptings of its American and Chinese friends”.¹² A section of opinion in the West also believed that the USA and its allies did not want a negotiated political settlement at that time.¹³ Selig Harrison, for instance, expressed the view that no accord could be reached at Geneva in June 1983 because the USA wanted to “keep the pot boiling” so that the Russians were militarily bogged down and politically embarrassed in Afghanistan.¹⁴ It was argued that the USA wanted the Soviets to “bleed white” in Afghanistan. If there is some truth in this argument then General Zia seemed only too willing to serve the larger Western designs in the region.

Following the failure of Geneva talks there was a noticeable hardening of the Soviet attitude towards Zia regime. Moscow thereafter made its sympathy for the opposition-led Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) that rocked Pakistan in the second half of 1983 loud and clear. MRD parties were demanding an end to military relationship with the USA, an independent foreign policy, recognition of Babrak Karmal regime in Afghanistan and eschewing of all aid to Afghan rebels.¹⁵

As a sign of the hardening of Soviet stance towards General Zia, the Soviet officials did not respond to his request for an interview with Konstantin Chernenko, the successor of Yuri Andropov when he went to Moscow in February 1984 to attend the latter’s funeral.¹⁶

GENEVA AGREEMENTS

The young and dynamic General Secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-1991) brought about a paradigm shift in super power relations. Instead of confrontation and rivalry he sought understanding and partnership with the West. In order to make his *perestroika* (restructuring of Soviet economy and politics) a success, he was keen to put an end to the costly arms race, extricate Soviet Union from expensive commitments abroad and above all, withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan, which he described as a ‘bleeding wound’.

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Having made up its mind to withdraw troops, Moscow acted with speed and determination. Babrak Karmal, who had become closely associated with the introduction of Soviet troops was replaced by Najibullah. Najibullah adopted a new policy framework with emphasis on forming a broad-based government of 'national reconciliation' with elements of pluralism in both politics and economy in place of a Marxist government. The initiative in Afghanistan, thereafter, passed into the hands of the Soviet Union and Afghan government, the sides that had been on the defensive so far. Peshawar-based seven parties of Afghan *Mujahideen* were suddenly caught unawares. They became the irreconcilables that were now obstructing Geneva agreements. General Zia pressed for an interim government in Kabul comprising of these elements as a precondition for Geneva agreements, but did not succeed. Moscow argued that the main concern of Geneva talks was with the international aspects of the conflict while it was for the Afghans themselves to decide the future character of the government. USA also did not stand by General Zia on this issue. On 15 April 1988 Geneva agreements were signed, under which the Soviet troops were to be withdrawn from Afghanistan by February 1989. Pakistan and Afghanistan undertook not to interfere in each other's affairs. USA and the Soviet Union were the joint guarantors of the agreement. As Moscow was not prepared to stop arms supply to the beleaguered Kabul government, the two super powers agreed on the 'positive symmetry' of continuing to supply arms to their respective sides. The decision militated against the very spirit of Geneva agreement. Even after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops the civil war in Afghanistan continued.

PAKISTAN'S AMBITION

Following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops began the unfolding of Pakistan's own ambition with regard to Afghanistan. In early July 1988 in an interview to the noted American scholar, Selig Harrison, General Zia made it clear that he wanted to eliminate Indian and Soviet influence in Afghanistan. he said :

We have earned the right to have a very friendly regime there.

We took risks as a frontline state, and we won't permit it to be like it was before, with Indian and Soviet influence there and claim on our territory. It will be a real Islamic state, part of a Pan Islamic revival that will one day win over the Muslims in the Soviet Union. You will see.¹⁷

General Zia, thus, did not hide his ambition to instal a satellite Islamic government in Kabul that would serve Pakistan's larger interests in the region. This he claimed as a reward for Pakistani aid to the *Mujahideen* and shelter to the Afghan refugees for so long.

Denying India any say in Afghan affairs became an important theme in Pakistan's Afghan strategy. General Zia told the editors of Pakistan's state owned dailies in August 1988 that India has "no business" to interfere with the efforts on the Afghan issue. He insisted that there were only four parties to the Afghan issue - Afghanistan, Pakistan, the USA and the Soviet Union. India's efforts to align itself with this group, he added, would not be tolerated as it had remained a "silent spectator" and had refused to condemn the Soviet presence there. India, he said, was now "out of the game".¹⁸

India and the Soviet Union shared one common vital concern regarding Afghanistan - their antipathy to an Islamic fundamentalist government in Kabul which General Zia wanted to instal there.

It would seem that from its very inception Pakistan was driven by a desire to become an alternative and a rival model to that of India. Democratic and secular India had emerged as a prominent spokesman of the non-aligned Afro-Asian countries. Pakistan sought to project itself as an energetic and leading Islamic country with special ties with the Muslim countries of the region. Strategic relationship with the West and subsequently with China also, was forged with a view to making good Pakistan's relative weakness *vis-a-vis* India.

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Pakistan wanted to instal a compliant pro-Pakistan government in Kabul and thus gain crucial geopolitical advantage. Also, Pakistan wanted to put

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together a group of friendly Islamic countries in the entire arch bordering on the sensitive southern border of the Soviet Union. Pakistan already shared specially close ties with Iran and Turkey through common membership of the Western alliance system.¹⁹

In August 1988 General Zia suddenly died in a mysterious plane crash. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Chairman of Pakistani Senate succeeded him as the country's President. General Mirza Aslam Beg became the new Army Chief. It became clear very soon that the basic Afghan strategy evolved under General Zia ul-Haq did not change. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, thus, proposed a confederation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was widely seen as the Pakistani attempt to dominate Afghanistan and deprive it of its independence. President Ishaq Khan's confederation proposal was seen in line with the thinking of General Zia. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who was ready to oblige General Zia in return for the special favour shown to him, also talked about it. It was pointed out that Pakistan had its eyes on the natural resources of Afghanistan, including vast reserves of nuclear minerals.²⁰ The proposal created a furore in Kabul under Najib and evoked an adverse reaction in India and the Soviet Union.

Pakistan's new Army Chief, General Aslam Beg also spoke of forging together an Islamic bloc in the region by including in it Turkey and Iran and Afghanistan along with Pakistan. It was hoped that it would give Pakistan the much-needed 'strategic depth'. No wonder, Soviet newsmagazine *New Times* lent credence to the reports published in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* on the basis of a 'secret document of the ISI'. According to these reports, "Pakistani military circles" were aiming at setting up a "strategic consensus" in West Asia. Its purpose was to "allow Islamabad to dominate the future government in Kabul and help Pakistan build up its weak indigenous arms industry". Iran, Turkey and Pakistan were to be the participants in this grouping which was to be bound by "Muslim solidarity". In future Saudi Arabia and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council could also join the 'strategic consensus'. Pakistan aspired to play a leading role in the grouping. A pro-Pakistan government in Kabul was regarded to be crucial for the success of this plan.²¹

Following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan it was hoped in Pakistan and the Western circles that Najibullah government would fall within months if not within weeks and days. It seemed that even the departing Soviets did not expect Najib government to last long. However, Najib government displayed unusual grit and determination against repeated *Mujahideen* onslaughts. The latter did not succeed in taking even a single city from the government control.

With the departure of the Soviet troops the major hitch in New Delhi establishing close and friendly ties with Kabul was removed. New Delhi warmed up towards Najib government. In the changed geopolitical scenario Najib government emerged as an area of 'strategic understanding' between Moscow and New Delhi. Moscow continued to give it crucial economic and military assistance. India expanded political and diplomatic ties with it. Najib government was following the policy of national reconciliation and permitting pluralist elements both in economy and politics. Such a policy evoked sympathetic response in New Delhi. The spectre of an Islamic fundamentalist regime in Kabul was an anathema to both Moscow and New Delhi.

ZIA'S AFGHAN STRATEGY CONTINUES UNDER BENAZIR BHUTTO

In the elections held in Pakistan following the death of General Zia, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) came to power. Before coming to power Benazir Bhutto had been favouring the policy of making peace with Kabul government and ensuring early return of the refugees. It was widely believed that Pakistan's powerful army had agreed to relinquish power to a civilian government only on the condition that the army would be given a free hand in the country's Afghan policy.²² Therefore, Benazir Bhutto had to go along with the Afghan strategy which was evolved under General Zia and which had the backing of the military establishment and powerful military directorate-the ISI. Thus, Pakistan continued to back *Mujahideen* onslaught against Najibullah regime. On 23 February 1989 the seven

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Mujahideen parties based in Peshawar formed an interim Afghan government. Mojaddidi, a moderate Afghan leader, was elected the President of the interim government and Sayyaf, the leader of Saudi-backed faction of *Hezb-i-Islami*, was appointed the Prime Minister. Pakistan and the USA, however, made it clear that they would recognize the *Mujahideen* government only if it was formed inside Afghan territory freed by the *Mujahideen*. However, repeated *Mujahideen* attempts to take over Jalalabad or any other Afghan city failed. Major Afghan cities and the communication lines linking them remained firmly in the hands of Najib government. It brought bad publicity to Peshawar based *Mujahideen* factions and to their patron - the ISI. This, in fact, gave an opportunity to Benazir Bhutto to try to clip the wings of the ISI. She replaced Lt. General Hamid Gul, the Director General of ISI by Shamsul Rehman Kallu.²³

THE FALL OF NAJIBULLAH

As the Soviet Union inexorably moved towards its final collapse, the opposition was growing within Russia to large-scale Soviet military and economic aid to Afghanistan under Najib. Russia at this time was more concerned with the release of its POWs from the hands of various *Mujahideen* factions rather than the survival of Najib government. A weakened Gorbachev after the aborted hard-liner coup in August 1991 could no longer resist this opinion. In September 1991 the Soviet Union and the USA agreed to stop supplying arms to the warring sides in Afghanistan. It was a bigger blow to Kabul regime, as the *Mujahideen* could still get arms from Pakistan and other countries. Moreover, the drug money was also at the disposal of the *Mujahideen*.²⁴ The besieged Afghan cities were facing shortages of every kind.

In mid-November 1991 when the Soviet Union was breathing its last, a delegation of Afghan *Mujahideen* led by Burhanuddin Rabbani was received in Moscow. In a surprise new development Moscow agreed to the “necessity of the transfer of all state power in Afghanistan to a transitional Islamic government”, which was to oversee elections in the country within two years. Significantly even the five-point peace

plan proposed by the UN Secretary General for bringing peace to war-torn Afghanistan only talked of a “broad-based transitional government” and not an “Islamic government”. Moscow also agreed to cut all military supplies and fuel for military transport to Kabul government by January 1, 1992. This spelt doom for Najibullah government. A similar commitment was not extracted from Pakistan to stop support to the *Mujahideen*. Moscow, thus, gave so much in return for a rather vague *Mujahideen* promise to return the POWs.²⁵ It was, indeed, a favourable development for Pakistan. India felt deeply let down. Support for Najibullah government in Afghanistan as a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalist forces had become an area of Indo-Soviet understanding.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Muslim-majority independent republics in Central Asia and Azerbaijan changed the entire geopolitical scenario. Pakistan now began to entertain hopes and ambition of expanding economic and political ties with the Central Asian Republics and emerge as the main gateway to Central Asia across Afghanistan. Also, Pakistan wanted that an extended Islamic bloc should come into existence in the region with the participation of the Central Asian Republics. In such an Islamic bloc Pakistan hoped to play a ‘leading role’ and hoped that it would provide it the much-needed ‘strategic depth’ in its unending rivalry with India. Pakistan now favoured peace and a broad-based moderate government in Afghanistan that would also be acceptable to the ex-communist ruling elites of Central Asia. So far Pakistan was pursuing a policy of seeking military victory of the *Mujahideen* and the installation of a fundamentalist Islamic government in Kabul that would be especially friendly and beholden to Pakistan. However, in a significant departure from this policy Pakistan announced on 27 January the acceptance of the UN proposal for convening an Afghan Assembly to decide the shape of the interim government acceptable to all. Consequently, Pakistan urged *Mujahideen* groups to join the peace process and support the five-point UN peace plan.²⁶

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In April 1992 Najib government suddenly fell. On 16 April Najib was deposed and took refuge in the UN office in Kabul. On 25 April the ruling Watan Party government gave way to a *Mujahideen* government. Najib's fall was triggered by the shifting of allegiance by his powerful Uzbek commander General Rashid Dostum. Power in Kabul came in the hands of the 'northern alliance' which included, besides General Dostum, Tajik leader of *Jamiat-i-Islami* party Ahmed Shah Masoud, Ismaili Shiite commander, Jaffer Naderi and Abdul Ali Mazari, the leader of Hazara *Hizb-i-Wahdat*.

PEACE ELUDES AFGHANISTAN

Soviet troops were gone. Najib government also fell. The *Mujahideen* came into power in Kabul. Afghanistan became an Islamic Republic. Peace, however, eluded the unfortunate land of the Afghans. The country's ethnic divide and clash of personalities and ambitions among various *Mujahideen* commanders came to fore with greater fury. The surfeit of arms available only made the matters worse.

Although the Pashtuns had traditionally ruled Afghanistan, but following the fall of Najib the 'northern alliance' of non-Pashtun minorities became very powerful. Iran, which was the host of nearly 1.5 million Shiite refugees during the Soviet occupation, and had played a rather low-key role during the war against the Soviets because of its own preoccupation with the war with Iraq, had particularly close relations with the leaders of the northern alliance.

After the fall of Najib government, a tenuous compromise was reached among various *Mujahideen* factions in Peshawar to share power. Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, played an important role in reaching this agreement. According to the agreement a 51-member *Mujahideen* Council was to be formed to run Afghanistan. Moderate resistance leader Sibgatullah Mojaddidi was to become the first President of the country for two months. Nawaz Sharif succeeded in getting the post of Prime Minister for Hekmatyar. Masoud was to become the Defence Minister. After two months Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of *Jamiat-i-Islami* and also a Tajik was to become

the country's President for four months. Then the council was to choose an interim government that was to oversee elections expected within two years.

On 29 April 1992 Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif paid a high profile visit to Kabul. Sharif's statements during the visit made it clear that the basic elements of Pakistan's Afghan policy broadly remained the same, namely (a) getting easier access to Central Asia, (b) creating a regional bloc of Muslim countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia. In his reply President Mojaddidi thanked those who had helped in the *Jehad* against Najib regime. He stressed that Afghan foreign policy would be governed by the principle of "mutual non-interference in each other's affairs".²⁷

The involvement of senior Pakistani officials and politicians in Afghanistan at that time was visibly high. The Director General of Pakistan's ISI, Javed Nasir flew into Kabul on 18 May 1992 accompanied by other officials and a Saudi official. The constant movement of peoples across Pakistan-Afghanistan border made it seem as if there was no border. PPP leader Benazir Bhutto, in fact, urged the government of Pakistan on 24 May 1992 to resolve the border question with the new Afghan government at the earliest.

The installation of *Mujahideen* government in Kabul was distinctly an adverse development for India. All the previous governments in Kabul were friendly towards India, while their relations with Islamabad had remained troubled. Now Mojaddidi, the country's new President, said that the foreign policy of Afghanistan would be shaped within the Islamic framework. He made it clear that the quality of Afghanistan's relations with India and Pakistan had now reversed. A member of Mojaddidi government, in fact, was reported to have said that there were senior ministers in the government who were advocating a harder line towards India than the one favoured by Mojaddidi and the President - designate, Rabbani. The Minister of Education, Abdul Quayuum, for instance, was reported to have spoken of Afghan *Mujahideen* now

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being pressed into service in Kashmir and Punjab on behalf of Pakistan. It was pointed out that after 14 years of Pakistani protection in Peshawar this was how the new Afghan government would now repay its debt to that country.²⁸ What was worse, following *Mujahideen* takeover of Kabul, thousands of Hindus and Sikhs who were living for generations in Afghanistan were forced to leave that country and take refuge in India. Having no borders with Afghanistan is of crucial geopolitical importance for India as it falls within India's security parameters. India cannot afford to be completely sidelined or ignored on Afghanistan issue. In the turbulent Afghan situation following the fall of Najibullah, the only thing possible for India was to keep in touch with various Afghan factions as well as the deposed king Zahir Shah in Rome. India was also ready to render humanitarian and economic aid to the war-torn country.

The formation of the *Mujahideen* government in Kabul did not lead to the fulfilment of Pakistan's overall objectives also. Although Nawaz Sharif succeeded in getting the Prime Minister's position for Hekmatyar, but the latter was not ready to share power with Masoud, his arch rival. Soon fighting broke out between the forces of Masoud and Hekmatyar. Initially, Hekmatyar struck at the alliance between Masoud and Uzbek General Dostum. He demanded the ouster of Dostum's forces from Kabul. The factional fights between various Afghan factions were further complicated because of the involvement of outside powers and their conflicting ambitions and interests. Pakistan dismally failed in bringing all the factions into a government of national reconciliation. The nascent rivalry between Iran and Pakistan also came into open. Iranian press repeatedly criticized Pakistan for helping Hekmatyar's forces. The Afghan President Rabbani and his Defence Minister Masoud also openly criticized Pakistan for helping Hekmatyar and thus allowing the bloody civil war to continue.²⁹ The UNO also urged the government of Nawaz Sahrif to restrain Hekmatyar. On the other hand, its own IDA partner *Jamaat-i-Islami* criticized Sharif government for 'betraying Hekmatyar'.³⁰ *Jamaat-i-Islami* was reported to be sending volunteers and supplies to Hekmatyar.³¹

The civil war in Afghanistan soon deteriorated into a situation of shifting alliances and opportunism on the part of all the participants. The situation in the country became like the Hobbesian state of nature in which every one seemed to be at war with every one else. Thus, initially shiite Hazaras and Dari-speaking (close to Persian) Masoud both were a part of the northern alliance and had the backing of Tehran. But Masoud was prepared to allow only limited role to Hazaras. In late July fierce fighting broke out between Hazaras and the forces of Masoud over the control of Western Kabul. It brought the Hazaras and Iran closer to Hekmatyar. In the meanwhile cracks appeared in Masoud-Dostum alliance also. The forces of the two clashed in the fall of 1993. In January 1994 Dostum formed an alliance with Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar devastated the capital Kabul with rocket attacks from his entrenched positions in the south of the city. Hekmatyar was suspected of trying to establish a Pashtun state in the southern Afghanistan, which, he was reported to have boasted, would eventually impose its will on the rest of the country. This idea did not appeal to Pakistan, which has a 12 million-strong Pashtun minority of its own in the NWFP and regards the idea as a potentially destabilizing factor.³²

PAKISTAN'S FRUSTRATION

Continued bloodshed and fighting among various factions in Afghanistan resulted in deadlock and frustration for Pakistan. It remained burdened with millions of Afghan refugees, while international aid for refugee upkeep tended to decline. Pakistani ambition to emerge as the most important gateway to Central Asia across a pliant and peaceful Afghanistan remained unfulfilled.

Pakistan's involvement in Afghan crisis resulted in a phenomenal rise in drug-peddling and gun-running in the country. Many influential people in Pakistan, including army officers and the powerful ISI, are believed to be involved in the drug trade. It is not easy to control the drug mafias in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

During Benazir Bhutto's second term, attempt was made to stop the free flow of Afghan refugees to Pakistan. The gates of Torkham

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were closed. It hurt Hekmatyar whose strategic reserves were in the NWFP. He did not allow food cargoes to move from Peshawar to Kabul. Subsequently, frustrated Afghans hijacked a school bus in Peshawar, which resulted in the killing of the hijackers. It generated a strong anti-Pakistan sentiment in the Afghan capital. Three hundred men stormed the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul.³³ Pakistani interference in Afghanistan seemed to be like the proverbial sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind.

From the very beginning of the emergence of independent Central Asian Republics numerous plans have been discussed and chalked out in Pakistan about opening the land routes to Central Asia from Pakistan. In the Summer of 1992 it was believed to have been stated in Pakistani circles that if Afghanistan was an obstacle, borders should be changed to link Pakistan directly with Central Asia. The specific issue reported to have been raised at a Lahore Conference in August 1992 was the barrier of Wakhan corridor established in 1895 to separate the two big imperialist powers of the time-Great Britain and the Tsarist Russia, which, it was proposed, should be done away with.³⁴

Of late there has been an increase in the US interest in Central Asia both because of its immense oil and gas reserves and its strategic location in Inner Asia as the meeting point of the borders of great Asian powers.³⁵ The region has so far been a traditional Russian preserve. The West, mainly the USA, is keen to establish direct access to Central Asia from the south bypassing Russia. The USA also wants to avoid the Iranian route to Central Asia as its relations with Tehran are not cordial. Hence the great US interest in opening the route across Pakistan and Afghanistan. In October 1995 a California-based US oil corporate UNOCAL and Delta Oil of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with Turkmenistan for laying a gas pipeline across West Afghanistan to southern Pakistan.³⁶ Thus the interests of the USA and Pakistan tally. The powerful military establishment of Pakistan and the ISI are keen to renew the US connection and become partners in the larger US designs in the region. Reflecting the new US-Pakistan strategic understanding in the post-cold war scenario, Washington gave 368

million dollar worth of arms to Pakistan under Hank Brown Amendment. The biggest achievement of recent US-Pakistan joint strategy in Central Asia was making a dent in the policy of Tashkent. President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan showed interest in the opening of the southern route across Afghanistan with a view to gaining greater independence from Russia.³⁷

Pakistan also tried to encourage an understanding between Hekmatyar and the Uzbek General Dostum in the north in the hope that the former would ensure safe passage of goods in the south and Dostum in the northern areas. In December 1994 Dostum was reported to have held secret talks with Pakistan.³⁸ However, the majority of original seven *Mujahideen* factions were opposed to a role for General Dostum in any coalition government. They also feared Hekmatyar.³⁹ Because of his failure to wrest control of Kabul, Hekmatyar became an expendable commodity for Pakistan.

Rabbani-Masoud team in control of Kabul displayed a propensity for upholding the independence of the country from external interference and pressures. However, they failed to either militarily win over other major ethnic groups and unite the country behind them or gain the confidence of other factional leaders and forge together a stable coalition government in Kabul.

Amidst all this the basic geopolitical fact became very clear that any government that wants to retain its independence, particularly from interference and pressures from its overbearing southern neighbour, Pakistan, must of necessity maintain close and friendly relations with New Delhi as well as countries towards its west, north and east.

THE RISE OF THE TALIBAN

It is obvious that the basic policy objectives of Pakistan regarding Afghanistan continued to be the same under successive regimes following the demise of General Zia. Since Hekmatyar had failed to unite Afghanistan under a pro-Pakistan government and open trade routes to Central Asia he was replaced by a new force-the *Taliban* or Islamic students, created by apparent Pakistani involvement and covert

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US and Saudi funding and backing. The *Taliban* first appeared in November 1994 in Kandahar area. Most of them were recruits of Islamic theology schools - *Madrassas* run by *Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam* of Pakistan headed by Maulana Fazlur Rahman. Interior Minister of Pakistan under Benazir Bhutto, Naseerullah Babar also played a significant role in the creation of *Taliban* militia. The *Taliban* are mostly ethnic Pashtuns and profess extremely orthodox and puritanical version of Sunni Wahabi Islam promoted by Saudi Arabia. One-eyed Mullah Omar is the leader of the *Taliban*.⁴⁰ The *Taliban* claim to be true and pious Muslims seeking to bring “peace and unity to Afghanistan divided among corrupt and greedy war lords”.⁴¹ In September 1995 the *Taliban* registered a major victory when they got control of the western city of Herat. The city’s Governor, Ismail Khan, a close ally of Masoud, fled to Iran along with his troops. The fall of Herat was a major set-back to Rabbani government as it cut oil and gas supply from Turkmenistan to Kabul. The *Taliban* victory over Herat opened up the possibility of Pakistan securing control over the route passing through western Afghanistan to southern Turkmenistan-the Quetta-Kandahar-Herat-Kushka road. Western Afghanistan was traditionally under Iranian influence. The fall of Herat aggravated Iranian-Pakistani rivalry in the region. Iran moved closer to India. Both India and Iran supported the Rabbani government. Iran had already offered India access to the Central Asian Republic of Turkmenistan across its territory. A view was expressed that if Afghanistan could also use the Iranian opening to the Indian Ocean, it would reduce the former’s dependence on Pakistan.⁴²

Earlier *Taliban* attacks on Kabul failed, but the *Taliban* succeeded in dislodging Hekmatyar, who joined hands with his arch rivals, Rabbani and Masoud. On 26 June 1996 Hekmatyar took oath as the Prime Minister of a new coalition government. The power-sharing agreement between Rabbani and Hekmatyar was believed to have been mediated by Iran. India also welcomed the arrangement. Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda sent a congratulatory message to Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar, who had been a strong critic of India in the past, was reported to have attended a reception at the Indian Embassy in Kabul on the occasion of Indian independence on 15 August.⁴³

On 27 September 1996, *Taliban* succeeded in wresting control over Kabul. Rabbani-Masoud forces had to retreat northwards to the stronghold of Masoud in the Panjshir valley. Pakistan denied having supported the *Taliban*, but it is clear that without substantial strategic and logistical support from it, a mere students' militia could not have achieved such a feat. Hard proof of Pakistani backing of *Taliban* militia was brought to light when Masoud produced captured Pakistani POWs before the Western Media.⁴⁴

The installation of *Taliban* regime in Kabul appeared to be the fulfilment of the old Pakistani objective of having a compliant and a pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul which could provide much-needed 'strategic depth' to it. Pakistan hoped to get the support of well-armed and battle-hardened Afghans in the event of any 'attack'.⁴⁵ They could also be pressed into service in Pakistan's proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir. Particularly elated were the executives of US oil corporation UNOCAL that had concluded an agreement with Turkmenistan for laying a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to southern Pakistan across western Afghanistan.⁴⁶ Zalmay Khalilzad, a strategist at the Rand Corporation who had been associated with the formulation of US Afghan policy earlier, seemed eager to believe in the statements of *Taliban* spokesmen that they would not export revolution, and also that they were not hostile to the USA.⁴⁷

However, the actions of the *Taliban* after getting control of Kabul shook the conscience of the world. The very first act of the *Taliban* warriors was to drag out the former President Najibullah from the UN office where he had taken refuge all these years and publicly hang him from a lamp post in the heart of the city along with his brother. The UN Security Council deplored the brutal execution of Najibullah. India too expressed anguish over this. The *Taliban* imposed stringent laws like putting women behind the veil, confining them to the four-walls of the house, prohibiting girls' education and preventing women from working, despite the fact that Kabul alone has thousands of widows who are the only bread-winners of the family. A medieval legal code was imposed with summary trials and public executions.

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The *Taliban* government in Kabul did not get immediate recognition from international community. Even the USA that had initially shown enthusiasm for it thought it prudent to abstain from recognizing it. The USA was reported to have restrained Pakistan also from doing so.⁴⁸

Pakistan had supported the Islamic fundamentalist *Taliban* forces in the hope that Islam would act as the uniting factor in Afghanistan and that the overriding Islamic loyalty would subsume ethnic Pashtun loyalty. Pakistan has much to fear from Pashtunistan becoming a rallying point for the Pashtuns on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. However, the ethnic divide in Afghanistan has further aggravated following *Taliban's* victory over Kabul. The *Taliban* are predominantly Pashtuns. The non-Pashtun minorities in the north are no longer willing to accept Pashtun domination. What is more, they are well armed and organized. Following *Taliban* takeover of Kabul, Benazir Bhutto's Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar undertook a frantic shuttle diplomacy to bring about an understanding between Uzbek General Dostum and the *Taliban* in order to secure control of both the southern and northern Afghanistan. However, his efforts miserably failed. Uzbek general Dostum, Tajik Military chief Ahmed Shah Masoud and Karim Khalili of Hazara *Hezb-e-Wahdat* signed a military alliance and established a 'Supreme Defence Council of Afghanistan' in a bid to protect their areas from *Taliban* onslaught. Dostum's troop strength was estimated at 50,000, that of Masoud at 50,000 to 70,000 and that of *Hezb-e-Wahdat* at around 10,000.⁴⁹ Together it is a significant force. It is hypothesized in this paper that despite victories here and there, it would not be easy for the *Taliban* to have an easy and undisputed sweep over the whole of the northern Afghanistan and consolidate and sustain its hold over a sullen and hostile population there. Subsequent events of failure and reverses of *Taliban* in their bid to capture the northern Afghanistan have proved it.

Having lost Kabul, Masoud threatened a guerrilla war throughout Afghanistan. He warned that no transit routes to Central Asia and no gas and oil pipelines would be permitted across Afghanistan.⁵⁰

If Pakistan wants to open trade routes to Central Asia via Afghanistan, the Islamic fundamentalist *Taliban* forces are not the ideal tool to achieve this objective. The *Taliban* victory only tended to scare away the ex-communist ruling elites in Central Asia. The heads of four Central Asian Republics as well as the Prime Minister of Russia met in Almaty in early October last year to coordinate efforts and chalk out joint strategies to meet the threats posed by the *Taliban*. The Central Asian Republics and Russia would not welcome the loss of northern Afghanistan as a small buffer zone between the CIS borders and the *Taliban*-controlled Afghanistan. Any move of the *Taliban* beyond the Salang pass is regarded as a threat to their own security.

Special note may be taken of the stand taken by Turkmenistan from where the US oil and gas corporate UNOCAL is planning a gas pipeline across western Afghanistan to southern Pakistan. Turkmenistan has consistently abstained from all collective security efforts of the Central Asian Republics and Russia. It has demonstratively followed a policy of 'positive neutrality' maintaining amicable relations with all the Afghan factions. Amidst all this the Turkmen supremo, Saparmurad Niyazov, however, has thought it necessary to maintain close bilateral security ties with Russia.

Pakistan's desire to exclusively control and dominate Afghanistan by installing a Pakistan-backed government in Kabul has, in fact, resulted in its isolation in the region. The first casualty has been Pakistan's objective of forging together a bloc of Islamic countries of the region with the participation of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics and itself. Iran, for decades a close Pakistani ally, has become antagonized at Pakistani attempts to dominate neighbouring Afghanistan to the detriment of Iranian interests there. Thus, Iran took a major initiative by holding a two-day regional conference (29-30 October 1996) at Tehran with a view to voice the concern of the countries of the region at the developments in Afghanistan. The Foreign Ministers and special envoys of India, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as well as the special representatives of the Secretary-General of the

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United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Conference and observers from Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union participated in the conference. Pakistan did not take part in the Tehran conference owing to, inter alia, its opposition to the Indian presence there. The conference called for maintaining peace, sovereignty, territorial unity and integrity of Afghanistan. The flagrant violation of human rights, particularly the rights of women by the *Taliban* regime was deplored. By choosing to abstain from taking part in the conference, Pakistan became further isolated in the region.

Because of continued fighting in Afghanistan between the forces of the northern alliance and the *Taliban* militia, Pakistani objective of opening trade routes to Central Asia and laying down gas and oil pipelines has remained unfulfilled.

In May-end this year in a dramatic new development, General Dostum was ousted and he took refuge in Turkey due to the defection of his top generals to the *Taliban* side. It was widely reported that money played a big role in bringing it about and that the *Taliban* paid around 200 million US dollars to the top generals of Dostum.⁵¹ The Uzbek provincial capital, Mazar-i-Sharif, which had emerged as centre of the northern alliance, fell to the *Taliban*. The *Taliban* victory over Afghanistan appeared to be almost complete with only the Panjshir valley of Masoud remaining as the last pocket of resistance. Pakistan immediately recognized the *Taliban* government and so did Saudi Arabia (known to be covertly funding Sunni fundamentalist *Taliban* force) and the UAE. It appeared that Pakistan succeeded after all in its design of installing a compliant pro-Pakistan Islamic regime in Kabul. There was a sudden increase in the enthusiasm and activities of oil and gas multinationals in the hope of opening of southern access to the oil and gas wealth of Central Asia.⁵² Russia and the Central Asian Republics issued a grim warning that any violation of CIS borders would invoke their collective response. At the same time, Russia was reported to have thought it fit to keep channels of communication open with the *Taliban* just with a view to make the best out of a bad situation. There existed an opinion in India also favouring an opening

with the *Taliban* if only with the help of Pakistan with whom it has entered into a dialogue for improving bilateral ties⁵³ and has taken a number of unilateral measures for the purpose in keeping with the 'Gujral Doctrine' aimed at promoting peace and cooperation in the region.

Taliban victory over northern Afghanistan proved to be just a three-day wonder. The *Taliban* attempt to disarm the Uzbek soldiers and impose its own diehard brand of Islam over the northern people invoked the wrath of the Uzbek army and the people, who turned against them. The *Taliban* troops were trapped in Mazar-i-Sharif and other places in northern Afghanistan. Hundreds of them were killed. A large number were imprisoned, including several high officials of the *Taliban* and Pakistanis fighting on their side. *Taliban* offensive in the north resulted in ignominious defeat and total rout breaking the myth of its invincibility.⁵⁴

Pakistani design to bring the whole of Afghanistan under its domination through a compliant and pro-Pakistan government was once again frustrated. The naivete and ignorance of the ground reality and the people's feelings in the north against Pashtun domination on the part of Pakistani military planners who were backing the *Taliban* militia became obvious for the whole world to see.

The last word on the seemingly unending Afghan civil war has not been uttered as yet. It is possible that the *Taliban* make yet more attempts to wrest control of the northern Afghanistan through lure of money or by sowing dissensions in the ranks of the northern alliance. However, one thing is becoming increasingly clear that it would not be possible for any single group—not even the *Taliban*—to control the whole of Afghanistan. Only a broad-based coalition government acceptable to major ethnic groups can bring peace to the war-torn land and maintain its unity. Deep mutual distrust between the warring groups, the surfeit of arms at their disposal and the absence of a widely acceptable charismatic leader all make it a very difficult goal to achieve in the present situation.

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In the meanwhile its long and continued involvement in the Afghan civil war has beset Pakistani society with a host of problems. The culture of guns and drugs has aggravated the law and order in the country and has threatened the fragile balance between various communities in the country and between Sunni and Shia sects. If Pakistan sought to eliminate Indian influence from Afghanistan and the surrounding region, it has succeeded in a very limited way. For the time being Indian influence has been eliminated from the *Taliban*-controlled Afghanistan, but in the outer circles comprising northern Afghanistan and the neighbouring countries of Iran and the Central Asian Republics and in Russia even greater need is felt to associate India with a solution of Afghan crisis acceptable to all parties and neighbouring countries. It may also be kept in view that even all the Pashtuns are not behind the *Taliban* movement. In fact, the Pashtuns have been traditionally friendly towards India. The *Taliban* do not have the backing of all the religious fundamentalist parties also. *Jamaat-i-Islami*, the biggest fundamentalist party in Pakistan is not supporting the *Taliban*. It is only *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam* led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman that is backing the *Taliban*. Being frustrated in its design to control the whole of Afghanistan, divisions and dissensions may grow within the ranks of the *Taliban*. It is also possible that Pashtun nationalism comes to the fore creating more problems and difficulties for Pakistan. Continued division of Afghanistan between the northern alliance and Taliban-controlled south may make the task of getting an access to the Central Asian Republics across Afghanistan in the same measure more difficult and expensive. The Western mentors of Pakistan who have been giving substantial covert financial and strategic support to the *Taliban* militia are also likely to be frustrated at the Pakistani ability to deliver goods.

Pakistan, no doubt, enjoys an important geopolitical location in the region adjoining Afghanistan and in close proximity of the resource-rich and strategically important Central Asian Republics. If it had played a fair and mature game and moved together with other countries of the region and had sought to evolve a consensus among all the Afghan parties and worked for a generally acceptable peaceful solution of

Afghan crisis through UN mediation, it would have also have immensely gained from enhanced economic interaction and trade in the region. However, Pakistan chose to play a shortsighted and ill-concealed efforts to promote one group over the other and by playing the familiar role of cat's paw to serve the larger U.S. designs in the region. It has resulted in failure and frustration for Pakistan and its overseas supporters, while the long-suffering people of Afghanistan continue to suffer.

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THE AFGHANISTAN CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON SOUTH ASIA

*Uma Singh**

It is rather unfortunate that Afghanistan is in turmoil for the last two decades. More so, because even the end of the cold war has not brought any peace to the war ravaged state and it has not yet resolved its international contradictions. The ongoing struggle for power in Afghanistan is an indisputable manifestation of a proxy war of attrition being fuelled by regional powers in pursuance of their political strategies and economic agenda in violation of the UN charter. It is indeed tragic that the international community remain indifferent and ambivalent towards the civil war and the resultant human tragedy in Afghanistan. The inability of the special UN mission to resolve the crisis and to broker a political settlement is equally regrettable. UN secretary general Kofi Annan while explaining the inability of the UN special mission in his most recent remarks blamed mainly the warring Afghanistan while condoning the unbridled nature of foreign interference which, undoubtedly, is equally responsible for the on-going human tragedy in Afghanistan. The resolution of Afghan conflict lies only in genuine intra-Afghanistan dialogue without foreign interference. The *Taliban* in their ideological delusion and their strategic patrons in their ambition to emerge as major regional powers have ignored Afghanistan's most heterogeneous ground realities and the high stakes of the adjoining states deeply involved in the conflict.

The Afghan civil war and the overt and covert support of neighbouring countries and trans-regional governments to warring groups in Afghanistan has only resulted in devastation of that country. The age old difference between the Tajiks and the Uzbeks and the Pashtoons have now become the main hurdle in maintenance of peace

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in Afghanistan. The crux of the problem in Afghanistan is the strife between the regional and the trans-regional governments that are determined to damage Afghanistan. The control of the *Taliban* over the northern Afghanistan has collapsed despite the support lent by Pakistan and the Arab countries along with USA.

What makes Afghanistan geo-politically significant is that historically the great powers have converged here. It has provided and continues to provide access to avenues leading to Iran, Central Asia, China and India. What happens in Afghanistan, therefore, could easily spill over to some of these countries. Any strategic agenda towards this region would require the fastening of the high plateau of Afghanistan to which Pakistan is the stairway. This gives Pakistan a crucial role in the "New great game" being unfolded in Central Asia. Pakistan agenda in Afghanistan is related to its desire for being the main trade route, especially for evacuating the hydrocarbon reserves of the countries of this region. It wants to build a corridor to Central Asia through Afghanistan which would be an alternative to the trade route through Iran. The puppet regime in Afghanistan would also provide a strategic depth to Pakistan vis-a-vis India. The India factor has been critical to Pakistan's game plan in Afghanistan. Pakistan's military and strategic interest in Central Asia is determined by its rivalry with India. In fact Pakistan is using its relationship with the Central Asian countries within the frame work of ECO as a counterweight against India at the regional level. It has been particularly wary of growing influence of Iran, India and Turkey in Central Asia. Therefore, Pakistan is pursuing diplomatic effort to keep Afghanistan within its sphere of influence. Within days of the *Taliban* capturing Kabul, a special envoy of former Prime Minister Benezir Bhutto visited Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran. But the significance of the war in Afghanistan, many political observers believe, goes beyond the boundaries of that country as other powers seek to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet power. They argue that the developments in Afghanistan represent many distinct geo-political agendas-one up to the Oxus and others beyond it. Upto the Oxus, the

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question is of consolidating control over Afghanistan. Such has been the eagerness of the western media to legitimise the *Taliban* that no one has bothered to ask how the students of theology came out of madrasas one day and then were going on bombing sorties, driving tanks and using sophisticated arms and ammunition the next day. The *Taliban* force has ostensibly been engineered by Pakistan. But it is increasingly clear that Pakistan is being used by the bigger powers with their own agenda for the region, especially one of containing Russia, Iran and China and exercising an overwhelming control over the relatively unexplored reserves of Central Asia. By drawing neighbouring countries into the Afghan conflict, by invoking the ethnic and sectarian cards, the possibility of peace and security in the South Asian region has been further eroded.

However, the fact remains that *Taliban* have been created by invoking two mutually ungovernable forces- Islamic fundamentalism especially in the form of Wahabism and sub- nationalism. Islamic fundamentalism has been quite alien to Afghan culture and history. But as far the forces of sub- nationalism are concerned, Afghanistan is the microcosm for entire Central Asia with its Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Aimaqs, Ismailis, Shias and Sunnis.

With the *Taliban* take over of Kabul and prolonged instability in Afghanistan both the south and south west Asian region have been threatened with instability. As has been mentioned, *Taliban* is largely a creation of Pakistan and its military success as are clearly attributed to the generous help it has been receiving from Pakistan mainly in weapons and experienced military guidance in battle. There is understandable jubilation in Pakistan particularly within its army. The ISI ran the Afghan operations with full autonomy during Benazir Bhutto's regime and supported the Hizb-e-Islami under Hekmatyar. The Interior Ministry under Major General (retd.) Naseerulla Babar then assumed the conduct of Pakistan's Afghan policy despite stiff opposition from the ISI. Officially Pakistan favoured peace efforts by the UN, OIC and other regional actors because most of the Mujahideen groups maintained bases inside Pakistan.

The Central Asian republics are landlocked countries and therefore an access to sea for their growing trade, commerce and industry can easily be provided by Pakistan. In fact the major communication routes from Pakistan to the Central Asian republics lie through Afghanistan. A Pakistan backed government in Kabul would give Pakistan the strategic depth it was longing for ever since it came into being. It would make Pakistan an even more valuable ally for America as the keeper of a corridor for America to reach the resource rich and strategically located Central Asian states. It would also serve the shared interest America and Pakistan have in further reducing the importance of Iran as an outlet for the Central Asian republics to the outside world through the Persian Gulf and India thus gets further isolated from an area of great concern to it.

Two important factors have weighed with the US to review its attitude towards Afghanistan. As has been earlier mentioned, apart from the Iranian factor, US oil companies found Central Asian republics more lucrative than even the Middle Eastern allies due to their refusal to “countenance foreigners running their oil industries”. In 1993 the American oil company Chevron concluded a deal worth 540 billion dollars to develop Tengiz oil field on the north eastern shore of the Caspian. Peace and stability in Afghanistan is a prerequisite to the construction of pipe line through alternative routes other than Iran. One of the US companies UNOCAL planned for the construction of an oil pipe line through Afghanistan at a cost of \$ 8 billion. The Clinton administration had openly supported the UNOCAL project “as an alternative to schemes involving links through America’s old nemesis Iran to the Arabian sea.” One of the reasons why the Clinton administration changed its approach towards Pakistan and sought to renew its ties by enacting the Hank Brown Amendment was due to the developments in Afghanistan and Central Asia. In September 1995 Robin Raphael made a statement that “ Pakistan has strategic and cultural reasons for wanting to play a constructive role in Central Asia, an area which it has ties dating back centuries. As a moderate Islamic state, Pakistan is often seen as an alternative model to Iran in Central Asia.”

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The government of Pakistan has also played an important if sometimes controversial role in Afghan affairs. Under the present circumstances, Washington does not seem to have any option except keep reiterating its support to the UN effort in Afghanistan. It was on US insistence that a new UN envoy has been sent to that country. The way the US has provided cautious support to the *Taliban* and managed to distance clearly from them in the wake of international outcry against their fundamentalist policies indicates that it desires to open the line of communication to various Afghan factions.

After his defeat by the *Taliban* Hekmatyar accused the *Taliban* of being patronised by ISI and US. This view was also corroborated by the retired Chief of Pakistani Army General Mirza Aslam Beg who said that the US was fully supporting the *Taliban* in Afghanistan to contain Iran's influence. The renewed American interest in the Afghan crisis was a direct reaction to the growing Iranian influence in Afghanistan. In early 1996 the US organised an internal conference on Afghanistan in Washington. The renewed American interest after a gap of seven years is directly related to its strategic and economic interests in Central Asia. Of late, the US has pursued a policy aimed at changing the political matrix in Central Asia which cannot be accomplished without pushing the Russians further North, curbing the spread of Iranian influence and undermining the importance of India in the Central Asian region. In their pursuit, the US has especially sought the support of Uzbekistan with an aim to establish its own sphere of influence in Central Asia. Islamabad, Washington, Riyadh and Tashkent have formed a political and strategic nexus towards Central Asia. For quite some time Pakistani and American quest for a direct trade route to Central Asia has been frustrated by the civil war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan was the first country to recognise the *Taliban* government and the Benazir's government despatched officials to Kabul to have a liaison with the new government. Apart from the regime, the fundamentalist parties which have sponsored the *Taliban* effort since 1994 have been too pleased with the turn of events. The Jamiat-e-Ulema led by Maulana Fazlur Rahman has been the principal supporter

of the *Taliban* and sent experts to Kabul to help the new regime to draft Islamic laws. Pakistan had understandably, more than one motive for creating the *Taliban*. Its leaders claim that the *Taliban* represent Afghanistan's best hope for a return to peace. Without this, the remaining two million refugees will never go back. But the desire for peace does not explain Pakistan's opposition to the various UN sponsored attempts to bring back peace. The fact is that Pakistan has always had a second more important goal to bring Afghanistan under its control and extend both its "defence in depth" and its influence in the region.

The question arises defence against whom? The obvious answer is -India. Pakistan's strategists have been clamouring for a defence in depth against India ever since the emergence of Bangladesh. These strategists will hardly fail to claim that with the *Taliban* victory, they have at last, obtained what they had so long sought. The immediate end to which this newly found accretion of strategic muscle will be put is to renew bid to annex Kashmir. That was one of the reasons why Sikh and Kashmiri militants began to be given training in the mujahideen camps when the Afghan war began to wind. It was also what the Harkat-ul-Ansar was created for (according to the US State department by merging two organisations, the Harkat-ul-Jehad-i-Islam and Harkat-ul -Mujahideen in 1993) There was also a third reason why successive Pakistan governments sought to turn first the highly bloated ISI, then the residual mujahideen towards an external enemy. This was to shield its own society from the further encroachment of fundamentalism. The November 1995 bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad and internecine violence in Karachi has shown how easily Pakistan can be driven by fundamentalist violence. That it should also seek to turn the *Taliban's* attention towards Kashmir is inevitable.

The right wing of Pakistani elite which is most attached to the concept of "defence in depth" is also opposed to fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami and other related parties within the country. It wishes to portray itself to quote the US president as a "modern and moderate" stabilising force in the region. But to change this goal it will have to

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deal with the *Taliban*. The *Taliban* however is a product of Jamaat's madrassas and like the Harkat -ul Ansar has close links with it. No matter how the realignment of forces works out, it will leave the fundamentalist forces stronger and the democratic forces weaker.

Pakistan's persistence in its present policies with or without American blessings cannot but prolong the increasing bloody civil war in Afghanistan. Tehran meeting made a fervent plea for a cessation of hostilities. It has also created apprehension among the Central Asian countries and Russia.

Thoughtful people in Pakistan are themselves worried that the supremacy of the *Taliban* would cause enormous problems for Pakistan itself because this fanatical group promotes the kind of sectarian fundamentalism which is already tormenting Pakistan. At the same time, the *Taliban* leadership's determination to impose the Shariat which is acceptable to Sunni denomination compounds the problem because of large Shia population in the area.

Instability in Afghanistan has always spilled over into Pakistan, spreading through body politics - the triple poison of ethnic strife, gun-culture and drug traffic. The *Taliban* fattened by the soaring profits from heroin trade have contributed to the pool of international terrorism. And in alliance with ISI it has fostered narco-terrorism. It has turned Kandhar airport into a heroin and arms centre. Best poppy fields are under its control. The two western provinces of Pakistan, Baluchistan and Sindh have always been vulnerable to their danger as Punjab and N.W.F.P. are to strife between Shia and Sunni Muslims which also can be further ignited by the fallout of developments in Afghanistan.

Another possibility which looms large and could be damaging to Pakistan rests as a quandry which Pakistan had always faced : how to promote Pashtoon ascendancy in Afghanistan, which alone can produce a pro-Pakistan regime in Kabul and douse Pashtoon ambition in Pakistan's own N.W.F.P. for a great Pashtoonistan - the creation of which would be disastrous for the integrity of Pakistan.

The glorification of fundamentalism by them in Kabul can rouse the same sentiments in Pakistan and other Muslim countries. There is a clear and immediate danger in Kashmir- the *Taliban* victory has boosted the morale of militants. One Pakistani leader named Rashid has publicly announced that he is opening two transit points in Pakistan to facilitate the movement of Afghan mujahideen to the valley and he would like to know who in Islamabad would try to stop him. Recently a new irritant has emerged in Sino-Pakistan ties. A report in Bangkok based news paper as well as a western news agency despatch has reported that Tablighi Jamaat-an Islamic outfit with headquarters near Lahore had been sending copies of religious works - into Xinjiang - a Muslim majority province of China with a view to incite the Muslim population there. Pakistan's relations with Iran have also been going through a strained patch over its wholehearted backing of the *Taliban* forces. Its absence from the Tehran meeting irked the Iranians. A meeting of "Friends of Afghanistan "was held in Tehran in October 1996. Iran has been trying to wrest the initiative from Pakistan which is the main supporter of *Taliban* militia. Shia Iran is worried about the spread of unrest to its western flank from the Sunni *Taliban*. Iran is also apprehensive of the US and Saudi Arabian support to any Afghan group that may contain Iran's regional clout. The Tehran meet was attended by representatives of Russia, Tajikstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, India, Turkey, the United Nations, the Organisation for Security in Europe and the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Among those who did not participate were Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. On Benazir's dismissal from government, the Iranian state radio commented that the *Taliban* had harmed Pakistan's political prestige especially that of Bhutto. Incidentally, the *Taliban* leadership had refused to comment on the change of guard in Islamabad in November 1996 but the changes did have an impact in Afghanistan. Nasirulla Babar who was to meet Afghanistan warlord Rashid Dostam, abruptly cancelled the meeting.

Both sides of Afghanistan factions face major political and military differences within their own ranks making it difficult for either of the two to assert enough strength to either initiate peace process or

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implement the military option effectively. The division within the northern allies and the *Taliban* have been further fuelled by the disaster in Mazar-e-Sharif some time ago, when the *Taliban*'s traditional leadership and military muscle drawn from southern Afghanistan was shattered. The northern alliances had to deal with the double betrayal by general Malik Pehalwan and increasing operation of tensions among the Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras.

Afghan travellers from Mazar-e-Sharif and workers and western officials say "differences within the Uzbek High command have increased in recent weeks and General Malik is far from having control of all the forces and territory under his command". General Malik is still not trusted by many of his own Uzbeks while his betrayal of General Dostam and his willingness to hand over Ismail Khan, the former Governor of Herat to the *Taliban* along with 700 fighters has earned him the bitterness of Persian speaking westerners. General Malik is treated as a pariah by many and seems to be straddling two stools, wanting to strengthen his alliance with General Masood and the Hazaras but also keep the door open to the *Taliban*. Likewise General Masood is suspicious of Malik and there seems to be very little military co-operation between the two. Significantly, in the heavy fighting and the wide front that he controls north of Kabul, General Masood had not solicited General Malik's help.

The Hazaras are more unhappy with General Malik for inviting the *Taliban* to Mazar-e-Sharif. The Hazaras of Hezb-e-Wahadat under Karim Khalili have emerged as a major fighting force after breaking the siege of the Hazarajat by the *Taliban* immediately after the Mazar debacle. They have also been helped by a large influx of Iranian weapons aid. They were the first to rebel against the *Taliban* presence in Mazar-e-Sharif forcing General Malik to break with the *Taliban*. They also broke the nine month *Taliban* siege of Hazarajat and *Taliban* attempts to capture their capital Bamiyan in central Afghanistan. They pushed the *Taliban* out of the Shibar pass inflicting heavy casualties, moved east along the Ghorband valley forcing Pakhtuns to leave the area and then swept southwards along the western line of Kabul.

The *Taliban* also face increasing internal problems. The majority of *Taliban*'s main Kandahar shoora, the Kabul Shoora, the Government in Kabul, its military commanders and its most loyal and experienced fighters were drawn from the Duwan tribes in the south. The majority of *Taliban* leadership is drawn from the southern provinces of Kandhar, Urozgau and Helmand. But after having lost 10 of its leaders captured in Mazar-e-Sharif, over 3600 troops captured and thousands more killed and wounded in fighting, the *Taliban* have been forced to draw upon new recruits from the Ghilzar tribes of eastern Afghanistan, the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, where the majority is also Ghilzar and are inexperienced.

The *Taliban* ability to offer negotiation to the opposition is also hampered by a clear declaration of what will be the nature of government they want for the country in the future. The *Taliban* are willing to negotiate with the opposition but on one condition that no political party can take part in the discussion. Islam is against all political parties "said one *Taliban* cabinet minister." "The constitution is Shariat and we do not need a constitution. People love Islam" and that is why they all support the *Talibans*, commented another *Taliban* minister. Apart from Pakistan support the *Talibans* are now effectively isolated in the region. Iran has closed its borders with Afghanistan after the Iranian embassy was asked to leave. The border closure has put a serious strain on the *Taliban*'s administration in Herat as Iranian sources of fuel, wheat and other supplies dried up. In the month of July'97. *Taliban* carried out provocative military manoeuvres just seven miles from the Afghan Border.

The *Taliban* are furious with the role of Iran but there is no attempt to either initiate a dialogue or a compromise with either Iran or Hazaras. "Iran and Russia are interfering and supporting the opposition and they do not want the refugees to return. India is also encouraging the opposition and as Pakistan has good relations with us, so India is trying to destabilise that" said Maulvi Jililullah, the *Taliban* Attorney General.

Likewise, Uzbekistan has virtually closed its borders with northern Afghanistan. Displeased with General Malik's coup against General

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Dostam and unwilling to trust him as an ally while also publicly critical of *Taliban* and Pakistan, Uzbekistan's border closure has put an equally severe strain on food and fuel supplies, into both the north and the south. Meanwhile Turkmenistan which faced a sudden influx of some 9000 Turkmen refugees from western Afghanistan who have now returned home, is extremely nervous of the *Taliban*. Also Turkmenistan is coming under increasing pressure from Russia and Uzbekistan to take a tougher line against the *Taliban* and close their border with *Taliban* administered west. All these actions illustrate the apprehensions of Afghanistan's neighbours about a possible *Taliban* victory and conquest of the north. None of their neighbours is prepared to accept a permanent *Taliban* government or further expansion by *Taliban*.

With the *Taliban* reluctance to broaden the ethnic base of its own movement, it will find it increasingly difficult to govern the cities and earn the loyalty of the non-Pashtoons in the north. And given the rivalries, mistrust and lack of unity within the northern alliance, its ability to offer a real solution to the problems of forming an interim government is limited. At the heart of this crisis is the ever increasing ethnic divide and the sudden turn of sectarianism in the country with the battle lines between the Pashtoons and the non-Pashtoons becoming sharper and less accommodating everyday.

A perusal of some Pakistani newspapers of the last few months indicate that the losses in northern Afghanistan have "tamed the rigid *Taliban*". Having exhausted the military options to find a settlement of the Afghan issue, the foreign office in Pakistan is trying to evolve a political settlement of the intricate issue. It is a settled fact now that *Taliban* and the opposition forces have failed to militarily resolve the problem. War does not solve problems but only complicates the issues and prolong them. The Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called for the convening of a regional conference in which all parties concerned with the Afghan issue are invited. Interestingly the decision has been well received by the regional players including Iran, Central Asian Republics, Russia, US and the United Nations. As a result the Pak foreign minister Gohar Ayub Khan started a shuttle diplomacy and went to Central Asian Republics and the Russian Federation.

Evidently by trying to impose a military solution to Afghan issue the vested interests have done the maximum damage to the national interest of both Pakistan and Afghanistan and yet the *Taliban* reversal is a greater rebuff for them and their militaristic approach. More importantly the recent ignominious reversal suffered by the ultra radical student militia in Mazar-e-Sharif at the hands of Shiite Hezb-e-Wahadat and General Malik's forces points to the *Taliban*'s over-ambitious and counter productive agenda. As the situation exists, *Taliban*, credibility in areas under their control seems to be eroding due to a combination of factors inter alia, their strict interpretation and enforcement of Islamic Shariat, pattern of brutality, their contemptuous disregard for the time tested Afghan tradition, lust for power and unmistakable presence of non Afghan combatants within their ranks as well as ascendancy of those *Taliban* hailing from the Kandhar province.

Compelled with the *Taliban*'s growing influence in the frontier, the recent skirmishes at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border are an ominous signs that the students militia may well take its *jihad* across the borders. Over the last three months the *Taliban* have established contacts with the religious groups based in the frontier-Peshawar, Charasadha, Swabi and Mardan as well as in the northern and southern districts of frontiers. The results of the election in FATA show that religious leaders have a decisive influence in the border regions as overtly pro-*Taliban* candidates with strong religious madrasa links in their respective areas were returned by PATA voters in the area's first adults elections. In early April a contingent of the *Taliban* border guards posted at Naava Kandas, a creek on the Kunnar - Mohammed Agency border crossed over to a patch of disputed territory and ordered the Pakistani paramilitary officials stationed there to evacuate the area. Frontier corps officials posted at Nawagai Bajaur agency told *Herald* in the first week of June that inspite of several representations by Pakistan authorities the *Taliban* were adamant about holding on to the area as also to its cemented bunkers and a packed helipad. Meanwhile as the main Torkham crossing down the Khyber pass, border

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tension has been simmering since the *Taliban* take over of Kabul. The tension has brought into focus an old dispute involving a strategic Pakistan oil port located well inside Afghanistan territory.

Recent border incidents show that if the *Taliban* are able to seize full control of Afghanistan, they are likely to use to the maximum their clout in the tribal areas where they have ethno-religious allies in the form of TIUQ, the TNSM and the JUI backed leadership of the Warizstan agency. The situation may worsen, however if the *Taliban* fail in Afghanistan. According to Abdul Khattak an Afghan journalist, “The *Taliban*’s reversals in the north will Pakhtoonise them and send them back over the borders with a vengeance. This may well mean a resurgence of Pakistan run nationalism in the frontier province and Baluchistan”.

The *Taliban* perception of Pakistan as a friendly country underwent a radical transformation when the former governor of Nangarhar, Haji Abdul Qadeer launched an anti-*Taliban* drive in Kunar province early this year. The *Taliban* responded by re-activating the long redundant Ministry of border affairs and establishing contacts with religious groups deep inside the Pakistani territory. The question arises, how potent is this threat? “Pakistan, particularly the less urbanised region of the frontier and Balochistan are fast descending into a state of economic anarchy” says Amal Khan, a journalist who covers Afghanistan affairs for a Lahore based daily. This threat is more directly by the officials responsible for implementing the country’s border policy with Afghanistan.

That the Afghan *Taliban* tangle has a multifaceted dimension is beyond doubt. The *Taliban* movement into northern Afghanistan has had a serious impact on the security and stability of the region. Because of the threat due to the *Taliban*’s military operations, Russia and four Central Asian states threatened to use force against them if it crossed into former Soviet Union territory, during the CIS summit held at Almaty in early October. The fall of Kabul has also brought a destabilising Islamic fundamentalist regime to the door steps of most of the Central Asian states. Two of the Central Asian republics Tajikistan

and Uzbekistan have ethnic population that straddle their border with Afghanistan and are vulnerable to the profound change in the ethnic power balance in Afghanistan. There are also fears among Afghanistan's neighbours about their alleged agenda of exporting their own brand of Islam. Such fears have also been strengthened by the statement about their goals being the capture of Sumarkand and Bukhara. Pakistan's decision to turn a de facto situation to a de jure recognition of Afghanistan is not surprising either. Pakistan may not agree with the *Taliban* brand of fundamentalism but Pakistan gives priority to its interests in Central Asia and a pro-Pak government in Kabul is a must. Billions of dollars worth of projects in gas and oil pipeline would be at stake if civil war in Afghanistan continues. Being perceived as a major backer of *Taliban*, Islamabad has exacerbated the fears of Central Asian allies as well as Iran about its own role in the Afghanistan imbroglio.

Although Hekmatyar himself is a Pashtun he has revealed secrets about the *Taliban* groups. He has mentioned that those few heading the *Taliban* group have made secret deals with the US and will try to get the country out of the hands of Jihadi group.

In its latest official statement on June 11, 1997 the Pakistan government announced that it does not recognise the government established by the *Taliban* as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. The statement also said that Pakistan is in favour of government in Afghanistan which comprises of all factions and groups. In fact a faction within the *Taliban* has recently reached some agreements with the US on the return of the deposed Afghan king Zahir Shah. *Taliban* are openly violating the human rights in Afghanistan but the western countries particularly the US which claim to advocate the cause of democracy and human rights do not object to such violations. When former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto in an interview with BBC was asked to comment on the reason for her country's support to the *Taliban*, she said, "We are not alone. This is a plan headed by the US and impaired by some Persian Gulf countries. We just train the

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Taliban". Nawaz Sharif during the initial days after his victory announced that he is going to review the country's policy on Afghanistan.

Ultimately the Afghan issue will be settled through peaceful means as no groups in that country can ensure its solution through fighting. The Tehran meet of the Afghan leaders and the representatives of different political groups stipulated that the different Afghan factions agree on a provisional government through negotiations.

India has not played a very active role in Afghanistan crisis. Unlike other powers India never supported either covertly or overtly any group or faction in Afghanistan but recognised the ruling regime in Kabul. India's assistance to Afghanistan has been humanitarian and for the development purposes. Although India failed to react quickly to the *Taliban*'s capture of Kabul, it favoured the deposed President Rabbani's government as the legitimate ruler of Afghanistan. India positively responded to the Iranian initiative by sending a high level delegation to Tehran. India was also among the 19 countries to participate in the UN conference on Afghanistan held in New York in November 1996.

Since the 1950's Pakistan has aligned its strategic interests with the US and the congruence of interests between the two has resulted in escalation of the Afghan civil war and a continuous confrontation between Islamabad on one side and Tehran, a majority of Central Asian Republics and Russia on the other side. It has become clear to all the regional actors that Afghanistan cannot return to normalcy so easily and like Hekmatyar, the *Taliban*'s leadership is not acceptable to other factional leaders. In fact, the new alliance that emerged between General Dostum and Ahmed Shah Masood after *Taliban*'s capture of Kabul and their successful efforts in repulsing *Taliban*'s attack on Panjsher valley has made *Taliban*'s position (though they occupy 24 provinces in Afghanistan) untenable. Even after so many years, the objectives of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy have remained inconclusive. It still remains unclear as to how its perceived objectives are going to be achieved in the complex situation that has emerged in Afghanistan.

Uma Singh

Within weeks of taking over as United Nation's Secretary General Kofi Annan's special envoy to Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi is assisting him to prepare a report on Afghanistan for submission to the 52nd session of the UN General Assembly. He has met all the rival factions battling for control of Kabul and discussed peace prospects with the regional powers that are actively involved in Afghanistan. He is also trying to put pressure on Islamabad to coax the *Taliban* into agreeing to unconditional talks. Both the *Taliban* and the Northern Alliance have put forward some pre-conditions.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (53rd Session) : A Report on HRCF's Participation

*Sharad K. Soni**

The UN Commission for Human Rights convened for the 53rd time on March 10, 1997 at Geneva for a period of about six weeks ending on April 18, 1997 to review and discuss the human rights situation all over the world. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala-Lasso, read out a message of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who called on all participants to take steps for giving concrete meaning to human rights. Paying tribute to the continued efforts of the international community in the field of human rights Mr. Annan stated that much has been accomplished in this field since 1948, when the noble principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights became a point of reference for all future efforts in this domain. "As Secretary General I would be a champion of human rights and would ensure that human rights are fully integrated in the action of the organisation in all other domains."

In his opening speech at this session of the Commission, Mr. Jose Ayala-Lasso, the outgoing High Commissioner said that the institution of High Commissioner had been consolidated and had earned the respect of States, international and non-governmental organisations. "The last few years have seen considerable progress in the area of human rights. Although there are still differences in relation to the content of human rights, no one denies the need to improve respect for such rights." He suggested that the United Nations gives equal priority to all human rights issues. However, given the difficulties faced in applying such a principle in practice, Mr. Ayala-Lasso said that he had established a number of basic lines to guide the work of the High Commissioner, including responding quickly and efficiently to

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emergency situations, acting to prevent human rights tragedies and cooperating with States to reinforce their national democratic institutions. Mr. Miroslav Somol of the Czech Republic, was elected Chairman of the 53rd session replacing Mr. Gilberto Vergne Saboia of Brazil. In his inaugural address, Mr. Somol noted that while the positive political changes that had taken place since the beginning of the decade had influenced the practice of human rights, the climate was still not fully favourable to the effective protection and promotion of these rights all over the world. The politicization of the work of the Commission could not always be avoided, but it could be diminished by facing facts, real situations and substantial arguments and by accepting that the situation of human rights in many countries was influenced by factors which could not be overcome completely in the near future.

Various issues deliberated at the 53rd session of the UNCHR included the Realization of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Right to Development; the Right of Peoples to Self-determination and its Application to Peoples under Colonial or Alien domination or Foreign occupation; Rights of all Persons subjected to any form of Detention, Torture, Enforced Disappearance; Further Promotion and Encouragement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; Human Rights and Mass Exoduses; Status of the International Convention on Human Rights; Human Rights of Migrant Workers; Report of the Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities; Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities; Implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief; Rights of the Child etc. Besides, the Commission considered the final report of a study on protection of children affected by armed conflicts and evaluated the implementation of a programme of action against child labour. Special Rapporteur's report dealing with the violence against women was also discussed in detail. This session also provided an opportunity for members of the Commission to review progress in preparations for the celebration of

the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is scheduled for the year 1998.

The Right of Peoples to Self -determination and its Application to Peoples under Colonial or Alien Domination or Foreign Occupation

As in previous sessions, the right of peoples to self - determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation, was on this year's agenda as well. The Commission heard the latest report of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Enrique Bernales Ballesteros on the question of the use of mercenaries (E/CN.4/1997/24) which was prepared in accordance with the Commission resolutions 1995/5 and 1996/113. In his report, Mr. Ballesteros said the use of mercenaries in various parts of the world was a persistent problem and that such activity should be prohibited in international and national law and existing loopholes closed. He called on the Commission to reaffirm its condemnation of terrorist and mercenary activities and suggest to all states to incorporate practical measures in their national legislation to prohibit the use of their territory for recruitment, training, assembly, transit, financing and use of mercenaries. Ballesteros concluded that mercenary activities are a form of violence used in the last 40 years to hamper the exercise of the right to self - determination of peoples and to violate human rights. "Mercenary activity has been increasing and has been observed in serious criminal activity, including terrorist attacks and drug and arms trafficking," he added.

During the discussion on this agenda item, a number of Member States and NGOs made their statements. The HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION (HRCF) too presented its view before the Commission. Prof. Riyaz Punjabi of HRCF in his statement said, the issue of right to self determination had been raised many a time in this forum and other fora too, couched within the framework of religion. However, the issue of self-determination needed to be adjusted in pluri-ethnic, pluri-religious and pluri-lingual societies and therefore that right could not be interpreted to the extent of dismemberment of states. "The strengths of stable borders and nation states need to be emphasised", he added. "Hybrids are always stronger

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and it is this principle that people, who seek self-determination and the creation of new states on the basis of religion, need to understand". He urged the world community to take up as a priority the process of educating them on these lines.

Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

The Commission had before it the report (E/CN.4/1997/71 and Add.1) of the UN Special Rapporteur, Maurice Glele-Ahanhanzo on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. He told the Commission that the rise of these problems was increasingly disturbing and was gaining ground in an almost official way. Victims of racial discrimination around the world had their eyes and hopes focussed on the United Nations, which could not continue to remain quiet and had to take concrete measures, he added.

During the discussion on this item, the Indian representative Arundhati Ghose decried that the Programme of Action of the current Third Decade to combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was starved of finances, yet there appeared to be funds available for other activities of the UN Centre for Human Rights. She urged the Commission to promote the debate on racism and support the convening of a world conference to combat it. The call for such an international gathering was further echoed by the representatives of Zimbabwe and Iran.

Prof. Riyaz Punjabi of the HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION said that the world had witnessed worst holocausts which were directly the result of promotion of racist ideologies. Unfortunately, the lessons of history had not been learnt and there was a resurgence of racial discrimination and xenophobic practices. Among the groups, suffering from discrimination was the Christian minority of Pakistan and ironically, the government was ignoring their plight even when their homes had been set on fire and their members assaulted. "While we condemn discriminations against Blacks, Arabs and migrant workers etc., we need to express our concern equally on Christian minority in Pakistan," he added.

Status of the International Covenants on Human Rights; Effective Functioning of Bodies Established Pursuant to United Nations Human Rights Instruments.

As the Commission began to hear statements by both the member states as well as NGOs during debate on these two items together, the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Philip Alston presented to the Commission a proposal for an international instrument that would allow individuals to complain of violations of their rights under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Commission had before it the UN Secretary General's report on the Status of International Human Rights Covenants (E/CN.4/1997/72) as well as a note by the Secretary General transmitting the report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the work carried out towards the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/CN.4/1997/105). The Commission had also before it a report of the UN Secretary General listing measures taken to implement the different international human rights instruments (E/CN.4/1997/73). The Commission reviewed the report of the seventh meeting of Human Rights Treaty Bodies, held in September 1996 in Geneva (A/51/482) besides studying an inventory drawn up by the High Commissioner of all international human rights standard-setting activities (E/CN.4/1887/75).

In his intervention, the representative of the HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION, Prof. Riyaz Punjabi said, it was amazing that after three decades, there were states that had not signed the International Covenants on Human Rights or any optional protocol. He noted that those states had the audacity of raising a cacophony regarding the violation of human rights in rival countries, at the same time refusing themselves to be signatories to the covenants and protocols to evade their responsibilities. "How long can this forum be allowed to be utilized for the strategic purposes by the rival countries", he asked the Commission.

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Realization of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Realization of the Right to Development.

While considering these two agenda items, the Commission had before it the progress report submitted by Fatma Zohra Ksentini, Special Rapporteur, on the adverse effects of the illicit movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous wastes on the enjoyment of human rights (E/CN.4/1997/19). The Special Rapporteur's mandate stemmed from Commission resolution 1995/81 which noted that the increasing rate of illicit dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes in developing countries continues adversely to affect the human rights to life and health of individuals in those countries. She concluded in the report that in recent years there has been a notable increase in the movement of waste from the developed countries to the developing countries in the form of recycling or recovery operations. Therefore, she recommended that among other things, developing countries should be provided with legal aid and assistance for the purpose of training their magistrates and agents concerned with a view to the formulation of national legislation that would make it possible to effectively combat the illicit traffic and strengthen national capacities to detect, prevent and punish fraudulent practices.

Also, the Commission had before it a report of the Secretary - General (E/CN.4/1997/17) on the measures to be implemented in order to achieve a durable solution to the debt crisis of developing countries, so that they might fully enjoy human rights. The report was drawn up pursuant to Commission resolution 1996/12 which called for continued efforts to carry out political dialogue to find a durable solution to the debt crisis.

The Commission also received the progress report of Inter-governmental Group of Experts on the Right to Development established in 1996 (E/CN.4/1997/22). In its report the group recommended that the right to development be included in the basic texts which establish or govern the activities and projects of United Nations Organisations, as well as international organisations whose mandate relates to the right to development. According to the group,

the World Bank and the IMF should take account of the right to development in their guiding principles, decision-making criteria and programmes.

The report of the Secretary-General prepared in accordance with Commission resolution 1996/15 which invited the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure widespread dissemination and promotion of the Declaration on the Right to Development, was also placed before the Commission. The report (E/CN.4/1997/21) put forward information from various quarters, including the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the United Nations Population Fund, the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organisation.

During the general debate on these agenda items, several speakers charged that not enough attention was paid within the United Nations to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. They stressed the universality and indivisibility of all human rights, with majority of them charging that economic, social and cultural rights were being neglected in favour of civil and political rights. The representative of China, Wang Min, said that only one of the 32 Special Rapporteurs appointed by the Commission and only six out of 85 resolutions passed during the last session dealt with these rights. Colombian delegate too stressed that the participation of all in economic, social, cultural and political development was necessary to ensure world peace. Its representative Harold Sandoval Bernal said that his country sought to encourage dialogue between industrialized and developing countries to establish such rights. While Mexico and Argentina said it was time to fulfill the right to development for all countries, Egyptian representative stated that the implementation of the right to development was a duty for the international community and should be based on a cooperative basis guaranteeing mutual respect. This view was further echoed by representative of Iran as well as several NGOs. There was general opinion that economic growth could only materialize with the strengthening of human rights.

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Meanwhile, the Commission took up the report on the enjoyment of human rights of people living in extreme poverty, introduced by the Special Rapporteur of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Leandro Despouy (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/13). He concluded in his report that the fight to eradicate poverty required not only detailed knowledge of the causes and factors which give rise to it, but also of its impact on human rights and fundamental freedom as a whole. He recommended that consideration of this phenomenon should be a principal axis of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006). "The topic should also be put on the agendas of the General Assembly, the Commission and the Subcommission as a high priority item", he added.

Noting that the right to development cannot be separated from the right to life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness, Ashok Bhan of the HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION stated that the world community must act to preserve the heritage - both physical and spiritual-of people everywhere. According to him, when alien ideologies are thrust upon people, when their lands become battlegrounds and when political and territorial ambition pits one group against another, then the very concept of unhindered freedom which is a pre-requisite for the enjoyment of the development process, becomes a casualty. He described the difficulties faced by the people in Jammu and Kashmir, striving to improve their lot and provide a brighter future for their children. "But what development, what progress can we achieve when our lives are at the mercy of terrorists and foreign mercenaries whose only aim is to establish a reign of terror and deny us a life of peace and prosperity", he argued. "If human endeavour is to flourish and society is to ensure that the unalienable right to development is bequeathed intact by us to future generations, along with the rewards of our own efforts, then it is imperative that the world community place on notice those countries which would thwart this noble objective."

Human Rights of Migrant Workers; The Rights of Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; Implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief.

The Commission before opening the general discussion on these agenda items, heard UN Special Rapporteur's report on the Elimination, of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief (E/CN.4/1997/91). Mr. Abdelfattah Amor of Tunisia while presenting his report said that he had examined incidents and situations as well as legislation, regulations and decisions that did not conform or respect the 1981 Declaration. He said, during 1996 he sent 53 communications containing 47 allegations and 6 urgent appeals to 49 States, concerning numerous cases of violation of the rights of freedom of religion and belief; the right to dispose of religious goods; the right to life and physical integrity; and the right to health. Mr. Amor stated that although there was increased interest in and awareness of the freedom of religion and belief, instances of religious intolerance and violations of the freedom of belief were the visible tip of the iceberg. Religious extremism on the part of any group warranted particular attention; crimes committed under the cover of religion, especially those attributed to certain groups and sects, were used as pretext for religious intolerance. He added that existing measures to identify and monitor cases of religious discrimination and intolerance did not adequately reflect the reality of these situations; such incidents tended to be managed rather than prevented.

Further in an addendum to the report, the Special Rapporteur discussed his visit to India (From December 2 to 14, 1996), at the invitation of the Government. He described the situation in India with regard to tolerance and non-discrimination based on religion as being satisfactory. India's political commitment to "unity in diversity", by which it seeks to make viable a democracy covering a subcontinent and embracing a multi-religious and multilingual society was certainly an example to human kind, the report said. However, as shown by the traumatic situations in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab etc. India's

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democratic structure was susceptible to attack on account in particular of factors connected with extremism and with international relations, the report added.

The Commission had also before it a report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.4/1997/65) on the status of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the efforts made by the Secretariat to promote the convention. In addition, a report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.4/1997/82) on the measures taken by States to give effect to the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, was also taken up by the Commission. This report also contained information on the activities of the relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations and of NGOs with regard to the provisions of the Declaration. Besides, there were reports of the Working Groups on Minorities of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on its first session (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/2) and second session (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/28).

In his intervention, the Secretary-General of the HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION, Prof. K. Warikoo drew attention to the discrimination made against ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities despite the fact that progress had been made towards recognition of the equal rights of all human beings. He said that the principle of freedom of religion should not be distorted for chauvinist and political ends. He lamented that there were a number of cases where religious extremism had led to terrorism and ethnic-religious cleansing of minority communities in South Asia. In the State of Jammu and Kashmir which consisted of four geophysical areas, only one—the Kashmir valley—was predominantly Muslim, though the whole region had been known through its history for the harmonious blend of cultures of Buddhists, Kashmiri Pandits, Sikhs, Gujjars, Shias, Baltis, Muslims and others. “But the pluralistic and composite societal and cultural set-up in Kashmir has been obliterated by the terrorists and mercenaries cloaking their actions under the guise of religion”, he

said. "Several extremist and terrorist organisations like *Markaz Dawat al Irshad*, *Lashkar-e-Tayyaba*, *Harkat-ul-Ansar*, *Jamiat-ul-Mujahedin* have been publicly taking pride for killing Hindus and are still collecting funds, arms and ammunition openly for export into Kashmir". Prof. Warikoo said that such crusades have taken a heavy toll in terms of human lives, disruption of peace and harmony in other countries as well. They have also influenced constitutional and legal structures in Pakistan which has resulted in a campaign against minorities such as Christians, Ahmediyas, Zikris, Hindus and Buddhists. He said that the extent of damage to the ethnic-religious minorities in Kashmir had been of such a colossal magnitude that even known pro-Pakistan organisations had been condemning the nefarious role of "foreign agencies and communalist elements in the Kashmir Valley in the name of Islam and Jihad-e-Kashmir and for killing" of religious, and political leaders, intellectuals, and members of the Hindu community. He urged the Commission to take a resolute stand against the perpetrators of such terrorist crimes.

During the discussion a number of country representatives and NGOs spoke before the Commission. The statements ranged from a plea by the World Council of Churches that States and intergovernmental bodies desist from using such "dehumanizing" terms as "illegal migrants" or illegal aliens"; to the contention by the Asian Cultural Forum on Development that there was a "yawning gap" between legal rhetoric and actual protection of religious minorities in Asia; to charges by Ireland that religious considerations were being used in some countries to discriminate against women. The representative of India, Arundhati Ghose stated that extremism and intolerance in the name of religion, and the rise of so-called religious fundamentalism, was a challenge that confronted almost all nations and religious. This problem carried the danger of lapsing into militancy, violence and even terrorism. India's society was faced with these challenges but its government attached the highest importance to the promotion of religious tolerance and elimination of religion-based discrimination at home and abroad.

Rights of Detainees; Torture; Enforced Disappearance

During the discussion on this agenda item, several member countries and NGOs made their interventions. Ashok Bhan of the HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION stated that the international community in general and the UN Human Rights Commission had so far not been able to devise any meaningful mechanism to protect the life, liberty and freedom of people being held hostage by terrorists and mercenaries. He drew the attention of the Commission to the decision taken by the 47th session of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on 18th August 1995 concerning the brutal murder in Jammu and Kashmir of the Norwegian hostage, Hans Christian Ostro by the Al Faran terrorist group and the death threat held out by the group to four other hostages, one American, one German and two Britons. In its decision the Sub-commission had demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages by their captors and that the persons responsible for such brutal inhuman acts should be apprehended and prosecuted. He urged the Commission to recommend to the Security Council and General Assembly, to initiate action against countries from where terrorist and mercenary organisations publicly function and proclaim their involvement in violence in other countries. Such countries should be singled out for censure, he said, “when such censuring is done only then world it be possible to ensure that the rights of innocent civilians are not threatened and violated by armed groups operating outside the ambit of law, who detain them and make them prisoner and sometimes kill them.”

Further Promotion and Encouragement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, including the Question of the Programme and Methods of work of the Commission. Internally displaced persons, Human Rights and Mass Exoduses.

Under this item, several speakers called for more effective and vigorous actions to meet the human rights needs posed by internal displacements. It was during this debate that Prof. Kashinath Pandita of the HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION

said that it was important not to send the wrong signals to the crescendo of religious extremism which could result in even greater flows of displaced persons. He highlighted the fact that the patterns of religious extremism in forcing mass exoduses and displacements in the western Himalayan, Hindu Kush and Badakhshan regions such as Afghanistan with 120,000 people displaced since Taliban take-over, Tajikistan with 600,000 internally displaced and 90,000 exiled since declaration of independence in 1991, and Kashmir with the entire Pandit religious minority community of 300,000 people sent on forced exile, bore remarkable similarity to one another. However, “it has been noted with concern that the phenomenon of replacing democratic disposition by a theocratic arrangement at the point of gun and forcing pluralistic societies to succumb to regimentation has not been adequately and uniformly taken into account by the Special Rapporteurs”, he said. He pointed out that the Special Rapporteur on All Forms of Discrimination based on Faith, who in his visit to India, had not said a word about the massacre of 1500 innocent Pandits by the religious extremists. “Whether these acts and their mention in the report fall outside the agenda of the Special Rapporteur?”, Prof. Pandita asked. “His (special Rapporteur) visit to the Indian state in question along with his team should have included on spot assessment of the human rights situation in one of the eighteen refugee camps in Jammu”. While appreciating the options of post-conflict measures suggested by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in his report, namely voluntary repatriation or local integration or resettlement of displaced persons, Prof. Pandita stressed that the Commission must give greater attention to the multiple obstacles forced on displaced persons.

The HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION apart from making its plea before this 53rd session of the UN Commission for Human Rights for protection of ethno-cultural, civil and political rights of minorities in the Himalayan and adjoining South and Central Asian region, also organised a seminar on “**Approaches to Conflict Resolution in South and Central Asia**” at the Palais des Nations on March 17, 1997. The seminar laid stress on

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dialogue and economic cooperation between the conflicting states in South Asia.

Prof. K. Warikoo speaking at the seminar, expressed serious concern over the terrorist violence, religious extremism, drug-trafficking and narco-terrorism, induction of mercenaries and the resultant mass exodus and displacement of ethnic-religious minorities in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Prof. Riyaz Punjabi ascribed the conflict and violence in Kashmir to the competitive use of Islam by the warring Muslim groups by misusing religious sentiments. He also pointed to the proliferation of small arms, Klashnikov culture and landmines as the key sources of conflict, which can be resolved by strengthening the democratic traditions. While Ashok Bhan highlighted the role of dialogue and negotiation as a means to conflict resolution, Prof. K. N. Pandita underlined the role of ethnicity and Islamic radicalism in generating conflicts in South and Central Asia. Prof. Pandita stressed that conflicts are taking place in the predominantly Islamic societies and that solutions have to emerge within these societies keeping in view the human rights of other minority groups there.

Prof. Tatiana Shaumian of Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow pointed to the drastic change in the geopolitical situation in the region after the end of the cold war, withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, disintegration of the former USSR and the emergence of new Central Asian Republics. "When national borders become international boundaries, new problems are bound to arise", Prof. Shaumian said.

All the participants at the seminar expressed satisfaction at the restoration of democracy and assumption of power by a duly elected government in Jammu and Kashmir. There was a consensus that dialogue, economic cooperation and trade, promotion of democracy, relief and rehabilitation of victims of terrorist violence, creating adequate legal, socio-political and institutional mechanisms to safeguard the distinct ethno-cultural heritage, human rights and political aspirations of minorities are the main approaches towards the resolution of conflicts in South and Central Asia.

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES is a quarterly Journal published by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, which is a non-governmental, non-profit research, cultural and development facilitative organisation. The Journal is devoted to the study of various issues pertaining to the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, connected with its environment, resources, history, art and culture, language and literature, demography, social structures, communication, tourism, regional development, governance, human rights, geopolitics etc.

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