

Afghanistan: an historical and geographical appraisal

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Abstract

Afghanistan's current difficulties are in large measure the product of a troubled history and a troubled geographical location. These have combined to produce a debilitated state, open to meddling from a range of external powers, that has now experienced decades of trauma. The current insurgency that afflicts the country is sustained by the sanctuaries in Pakistan from which the Taliban operate. Unless and until there is progress on this front, the situation in Afghanistan will remain stalemated.



Afghanistan, more than many other states, has been the victim of its history and geography. In the three decades since the communist coup of April 1978 and the Soviet invasion of December 1979, it has been exposed to the impact of political and ideological forces that are far beyond the capacity of the bulk of its own people to control. The Soviet invasion made it a battleground within the Cold War, and the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union turned Afghanistan into a new theatre of competition, this time between regional actors determined that their competitors should not obtain a foothold in the shadows of the Hindu Kush. In 1937, the French diplomat René Dollot described Afghanistan as 'the Switzerland of Asia'.¹ It is not a label that any wise analyst would now attach to that country, although it serves as a useful reminder that, for the five decades or so before the communist coup, Afghanistan was perhaps the most peaceful country in

the Asian continent. My aim in this article is to outline the processes by which Afghanistan lost the status of ‘the Switzerland of Asia’, and to explore some of the ramifications of these processes for the country’s future prospects. It is divided into six sections. The first examines the development of the Afghan ‘state’ as both a territorially bounded unit and a set of administrative structures. The second explores the factors that led to the political crises of 1978–1979. The third outlines the course and the impact of the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, and the fourth traces developments from the end of the Soviet presence in 1989 to the overthrow of the Taliban regime in November 2001. The fifth deals with the burden of Afghanistan’s politics and regional environment in the period since then. The sixth offers some brief conclusions.

The development of the Afghan state

One complication of studying ‘state formation’ is that the English word ‘state’ is itself ambiguous. In one sense it refers to a territorially bounded unit, equivalent to the word ‘country’. In another sense, it refers to the melange of political and administrative units that control or seek to control the public space within a territorial unit, performing tasks of resource extraction and mobilization, penetration of society, and regulation of behaviour.² The two senses cannot be completely separated; for example, the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States identifies ‘government’ as one of the qualifications that a state in the first sense of the term should possess. Nonetheless, it is analytically useful to distinguish the two senses, since the processes by which states in these different senses are formed themselves differ significantly.

Territorial states can be defined positively by an expansion of power from within, negatively by the limits of the writ of approaching external powers, or by a combination of the two. (They can also be defined by the expansion and then contraction of colonialism, but that process has less use in explaining Afghanistan’s appearance.) Afghanistan emerged as a classic buffer state, not only caught between but in part defined by the rivalry in the nineteenth century between the British and Russian empires. With the British entrenched in India, the Russian expansion into Central Asia through the establishment of a number of protectorates made the Russians and the British potential competitors in what came to be called the ‘Great Game’.³ That said, it was in the interest of neither power to see their rivalry become a shooting war, and, for that reason, the existence of a buffer state between the two

1 René Dollot, *L’Afghanistan: histoire, description, moeurs et coutumes, folklore, fouilles*, Payot, Paris, 1937, p. 15.

2 Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State–Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, p. 4.

3 On this process, see Seymour Becker, *Russia’s Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865–1924*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1968. For further discussion on Anglo-Russian rivalry, see Karl E. Meyer and Sharen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*, Basic Books, New York, 1999.

great powers was convenient. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century, the boundaries of what we now call Afghanistan had been largely fixed, although not always in ways that satisfied everybody.

Political and administrative control

In the political and administrative senses, the Afghan state developed a number of distinctive features. First, it was a dynastic state. It initially took shape as a tribal confederation during the era of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747–1772), and the monarchical system remained in place for two centuries. However, for much of the nineteenth century the Afghan state had a pre-modern form,⁴ with taxes (or tribute) collected in kind rather than cash, and rulers dependent upon external patrons, the most notorious being Shah Shuja (1803–1809, 1839–1842), whose name became synonymous with craven subordination to a patron's pressures. The late nineteenth century witnessed a considerable consolidation of state power under Amir Abdul Rahman Khan (1880–1901), especially in the modernization of tax gathering⁵ and a willingness to use muscle in order to assert control over other power centres, but later rulers lacked either the determination or the capacity that the 'Iron Amir' had brought to his position. His successor, Habibullah, was a cautious and low-key ruler, although this did not save him from assassination in 1919. Habibullah's son Amanullah, a much more committed reformer, sought the rapid modernization of the country but faced mounting opposition and was finally overthrown in 1929.⁶ After a brief interval of non-Pushtun rule, the throne was regained by a Pushtun aristocrat, Nadir Shah, and, while his brief reign was terminated by assassination in November 1933, his 19-year-old son, Zahir Shah, went on to occupy the throne for nearly forty years before he was overthrown in a palace coup by his cousin Mohammad Daoud in 1973. It was only with the killing of Daoud in the communist coup of April 1978 that dynastic rule came to an end (and, even then, Zahir Shah was to return to Afghanistan after 2001 as 'Father of the Nation', remaining a remote but popular presence in Kabul until his death in 2007).

Dependency on unstable revenue

Over time, the Afghan state became a 'rentier' state, overly dependent in its budget on unstable revenue sources such as foreign aid and income from the sale of exhaustible natural resources. When Zahir Shah became king, a large amount of state revenue came from land taxes, and most state expenditure was funded from

4 See Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826–1863)*, Curzon Press, Richmond, 1998.

5 See Hasan Kawun Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1979, pp. 73–91.

6 Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan: King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1973, pp. 160–213.

internal revenue sources. By the beginning of the so-called ‘New Democracy’ in 1964, 49% of state expenditure was covered by foreign aid.⁷ The danger that arises from dependence on such revenue flows is a direct result of their instability. If donor priorities shift, state revenue can decline; likewise, if the world price of a key export drops, the revenue that accrues from its sale can fall as well. When this happens, it is unlikely that the state will be able to meet the expectations that it may have fostered in the minds of its people during the good times, and the result may be either a decline in the standing of the government or a fully fledged legitimacy crisis. If the latter ensues, the state may require considerable strength to be able to ride the storm, drawing on coercion and other non-legitimate forms of domination in order to survive.

Weak presence outside the capital

The Afghan state was fundamentally a weak state. On the one hand, it was a ubiquitous presence in many parts of the country; on the other, it was for the most part a passive and distant presence. On occasion the central state could concentrate power to serve its objects: for example, the putting down of a Safi Pushtun revolt in 1947, or the squashing of objections to the winding back of *purdah* from 1959 during the premiership of Mohammad Daoud. But this was the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, a substantial gulf separated state and subjects. Officials from Kabul disliked being sent out into the provinces, and many rural dwellers found the urban bureaucrats ignorant of their own ways of life, and of the legitimate traditional structures that served to regulate social relations.⁸ The state as it stood was no tool for the penetration and control of these complex rural realms, a fact that became painfully obvious with the crisis of 1978–1979.

A difficult geopolitical environment

The Afghan state was to some degree shaped by Afghanistan’s conflicted geopolitical environment. The Durand Line of 1893 divided the ethnic Pushtuns of Southwest Asia between Afghanistan and British India. When the partition of the subcontinent occurred in 1947, Afghanistan’s demand for ‘self-determination’ for the Pushtuns of India went nowhere. As a result, Afghanistan was the one state to vote against the admission of Pakistan to the United Nations, and this set the scene for tense relations for the next three decades.⁹ For Pakistani military planners, a nightmare scenario saw their country sandwiched between a hostile India and a

7 Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002, p. 296.

8 For more detailed discussion, see Thomas J. Barfield, ‘Weak links on a rusty chain: structural weaknesses in Afghanistan’s provincial government administration’, in M. Nazif Shahrani and Robert L. Canfield (eds), *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives*, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1984, pp. 170–184.

9 This came to be known as the ‘Pushtunistan dispute’. See Rajat Ganguly, *Kin State Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts: Lessons from South Asia*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 162–192.

hostile Afghanistan, and they stood poised to seize any opportunity to change this situation. As they saw it, the overthrow of Daoud's Pushtunist presidency, and even more the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, provided the opportunity that they had been seeking.

The crises of 1978–1979

The communist coup of April 1978 tipped Afghanistan into a social and political abyss from which it has yet to extract itself. Its roots were diverse, but at the outset it is important above all to note that it was not a product of any demand for revolutionary change on the part of the mass Afghan population. Rather, it reflected severe division within the Kabul-based political elite. The genesis of this division was the emergence of radical political groups in the 'New Democracy' period from 1964 to 1973. Two Marxist groups, the Khalq ('Masses') and Parcham ('Banner') factions had crystallized during this period and, although there were serious rivalries between the two, they joined to form the 'People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan' (PDPA).¹⁰ These groups were inspired by the Soviet model, and, while there is no credible evidence that the USSR orchestrated the April coup, it appears to have received advance warning¹¹ – not surprising, given that many members of the Afghan armed forces had been trained in the Soviet Union. Daoud's regime had failed to meet the high expectations that its own rhetoric of 'revolution' had created, and it only needed one match to set off an explosion.

The 'Saur Revolution'

This explosion came with the assassination on 17 April 1978 of a prominent Parcham activist, Mir Akbar Khayber. The identity of the assassins remains unclear, although many blamed the ruthless Khalqi Hafizullah Amin for the slaying.¹² Thousands turned out at Khayber's funeral, and Daoud's regime panicked, moving to arrest a number of communist activists. This triggered the coup of 27 April, essentially from the ranks of the military. The four key figures in the coup were Abdul Qadir and Muhammad Rafi (from the Parcham), and Aslam Watanjar and Sayid Muhammad Gulabzoi (from the Khalq). However, after overrunning the palace and killing Daoud and his family early on the morning of 28 April, they made way for a clutch of civilian Marxist politicians: Nur Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin (from the Khalq) and Babrak Karmal (from the Parcham). Taraki was the designated leader of the so-called 'Saur Revolution' (*inqilab-e saur*) that

10 See Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-party Communism: Parcham and Khalq*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1983, pp. 52–56; Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1999, pp. 20–23.

11 Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*, Basic Books, New York, 2005, p. 386.

12 See, for example, Gilles Dorransoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2005, p. 85.

took its name from the month in the Afghan calendar in which the coup had occurred. At one level, the use of the term ‘revolution’ was inappropriate: most Afghans awoke in surprise to hear of the communist takeover, which was in no sense the product of a mass movement. At another level, however, it deserved the title, for the new Marxist rulers rapidly moved to try to produce a revolution from above, a step that triggered a substantial conflict between the state and its subjects.

The period from April 1978 to December 1979 was one of almost unrelenting turbulence, for a number of reasons. The most important was that the policies of the new rulers proved profoundly offensive to the attitudes and values of large numbers of Afghans. The rulers’ avowed atheism immediately set them apart, and policies that they pursued in spheres such as land reform were both ill-considered and provocative. Faced with resistance, they rapidly turned to brutal coercion as a way of strengthening their position. In Pul-e-Charkhi prison near Kabul, prisoners were executed in large numbers. Sayid Abdullah, the prison commandant, stated that ‘a million Afghans are all that should remain alive. We need a million Khalqis. The others we don’t need, we will get rid of them.’¹³ Coercion, however, had the opposite effect to that which the regime intended, driving more and more people into the camp of the opposition, which in turn increasingly took up arms against the regime. The turmoil caused by policy failings was aggravated by the severe division between the Parcham and the Khalq. First to fall victim were Karmal and a number of his associates, who were sent abroad as ambassadors within three months of the coup. Later in the year, there was a further purge of Parchamis,¹⁴ although some survived because of Soviet protection. But this was not the only split. In September 1979, Amin succeeded in ousting his fellow Khalqi, Taraki, who was subsequently murdered, and this initiated a period of ferocious repression. It had wider effects as well. Taraki had been received by the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev shortly before his ouster, and Brezhnev and his colleagues were infuriated by the course that events had taken. Amin was living on borrowed time.

The Soviet invasion

The Soviet leadership had long been perturbed by the course of events in Afghanistan, but its initial reaction had been to try to keep its distance. On 15 March 1979, the 17th Division of the Afghan Army had mutinied in Herat, creating a grave challenge to the regime. Taraki had requested Soviet assistance, but the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Aleksei Kosygin, had responded in measured terms that bear repeating:

The deployment of our forces in the territory of Afghanistan would immediately arouse the international community and would invite sharply

13 Michael Barry, ‘Répressions et guerre soviétiques’, in *Les Temps Modernes*, Nos. 408–409, 1980, p. 183.

14 See Odd Arne Westad, ‘Prelude to invasion: the Soviet Union and the Afghan communists, 1978–1979’, in *International History Review*, Vol. 16, 1994, pp. 61–62.

unfavourable multipronged consequence ... I would again like to underline that the question of deploying our forces has been examined by us from every direction; we carefully studied all aspects of this action and came to the conclusion that if our troops were introduced, the situation in your country would not only not improve, but would worsen. One cannot deny that our troops would have to fight not only with foreign aggressors, but also with a certain number of your people. And people do not forgive such things.¹⁵

Unfortunately, by late 1979, ill-health had largely removed the ageing Kosygin from the policy-making process, and the killing of Taraki sent the Soviet leadership in a different direction. On 12 December 1979, a meeting of the Soviet Politburo, chaired by the Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, accepted the recommendation of four key Soviet leaders and Politburo members – the Communist Party General Secretary, Brezhnev, the Chairman of the Committee on State Security, Iurii Andropov, the Defence Minister, Dmitrii Ustinov, and Gromyko himself – that Afghanistan should be invaded. On 27 December, Amin was killed by Soviet commandos at the Tajbeg Palace in southern Kabul, and at 8.45 pm a Soviet radio station overpowered the signal of Kabul radio and broadcast a recording in which Babrak Karmal announced the overthrow of Amin. Afghanistan was about to enter not just a new decade but a new era.

The Soviet invasion decisively transformed Afghanistan from a remote outpost to a key theatre of Cold War rivalry. The US Central Intelligence Agency had not foreseen the invasion, and the Carter Administration was deeply affronted by what had occurred.¹⁶ Soviet motives were inscrutable, and President Carter saw the invasion as leaving the USSR poised to interdict the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, constituting ‘the most serious threat to world peace since the Second World War’.¹⁷ The response of the Carter Administration, and the Reagan Administration that succeeded it, was to arm groups opposed to the Soviet Union, with a view to signalling that such an invasion was internationally unacceptable. This approach proved successful when the Soviets finally withdrew their forces in 1989; but it had some unintended and unanticipated consequences.

The Soviet–Afghan War

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan created a deeply paradoxical political environment. The presence of Soviet forces was apparently sufficient to sustain the Afghan state, but the very dependence of the state on Soviet support for its survival limited its ability to win generalized normative support. Thus, Soviet support

15 James G. Hershberg (ed.), ‘New evidence on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan’, in *Cold War International History Bulletin*, Nos. 8–9, 1996–1997, p. 147.

16 Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, Penguin, New York, 2007, pp. 365–367.

17 Gabriella Grasselli, *British and American Responses to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, Dartmouth Publishing Co., Aldershot, 1996, p. 121.

offered not a strategy for long-term sustainable rule but rather a life-support system, and when this was cut off at the end of 1991, the communist regime in Kabul swiftly collapsed. In effect, the Afghan state as an autonomous structure for resource extraction and mobilization disintegrated following the Soviet invasion; the scale of the problem was long disguised by Soviet subventions, but, when these disappeared, so did the regime. However, what made this possible was the widespread resistance in Afghanistan to communist rule. The Soviet leadership may have hoped to win kudos from the removal of the hated Amin, but their new surrogate, Babrak Karmal, was widely scorned, and those with a strong sense of Afghan history labelled him a second Shah Shuja. This was not a promising environment for Karmal, and he proved an unimpressive client.

The mujahideen

Resistance to the Soviet presence came from many different circles, but the armed resistants came to be known as ‘mujahideen’, which means practitioners of *jihād*. The Afghan mujahideen had many different components, including political parties based predominantly in Pakistan, commanders with different degrees of sway within Afghanistan itself, and communities on whose support they drew.¹⁸ Their disparate character was a strength during the 1980s (when it made them very difficult to co-opt or decapitate) but a weakness after 1991 (when they lacked the coherence to exercise state power effectively). The mujahideen reflected the complexities of Afghan society – which is differentiated significantly on ethnic, sectarian, spatial, economic, and gender lines – and manifested a number of sharp ideological distinctions as well. They included parties as diverse as the near-Leninist Hezb-e-Islami (‘Party of Islam’) headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and the moderate Islamist Jamiat-e-Islami (‘Islamic Society’) of Burhanuddin Rabbani, as well as smaller parties led by figures such as Pir Sayid Ahmad Gailani and Sibghatullah Mojadiddi, who reflected Sufi influences and supported the return of Zahir Shah, and Abdul Rab al-Rasoul Sayyaf, who was much more influenced by Wahhabi tendencies originating from the Arabian peninsula. Such parties became conduits for international aid, but on the ground were less directly important than commanders such as Haji Abdul Latif in Kandahar, Ismail Khan in Herat, and Ahmad Shah Massoud in the Panjsher Valley to the north of Kabul.¹⁹ The mujahideen were not able to hold and occupy major cities, but they harried Soviet and regime forces very effectively throughout most of the countryside, denying them any semblance of ‘victory’.

18 For more background on the mujahideen, see Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 98–148; Abdulkader Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2008, pp. 119–172.

19 For more information on these parties and commanders, see William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, pp. 52–55.

Global and regional support

The mujahideen were actively supported in their resistance through most of the 1980s by the United States, led by President Reagan, and by Pakistan, under General Zia ul-Haq. Each of these states, however, had its own distinct interests. The United States was intent on striking at the foundations of Soviet power, and saw the mujahideen as an instrument that could be turned to this purpose. Pakistan, by contrast, had a complicated set of regional interests. Having confronted a smouldering border dispute with Afghanistan over the decades since 1947, Pakistan had no interest in boosting the position of secularized, nationalistic Afghans, and it thus preferred to support radical Islamists such as Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami,²⁰ which had long been a loyal client of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). This was something that the United States, the main source of funding for the arms used by the mujahideen, was prepared to tolerate, although it was no secret that the Hezb-e-Islami was also radically anti-Western. This was often a matter of intense annoyance to commanders such as Massoud, who questioned how much fighting the Hezb was actually doing, and felt that a Frankenstein's monster was being created with which they would one day have to cope. In this they were to prove much more astute than either policy-makers in Washington or CIA personnel in Islamabad.

Soviet withdrawal

Ultimately, the Soviets withdrew their forces from Afghanistan. A new leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev, who became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985, found little in the Afghan commitment that was to their taste. At the 27th Party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachev referred to Afghanistan as a 'bleeding wound' (*krovotochashchaia rana*),²¹ and, on 5 May, Babrak Karmal was replaced as General Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee by Dr Najibullah, who had headed the regime's secret police from 1980 to 1985. On 13 November 1986, the Soviet Politburo took the decision to withdraw Soviet forces over a two-year period. Najibullah was encouraged to engage in an attempt to broaden his regime's base through 'national reconciliation', but the wounds of war were too deep and, as one analysis put it, his secret police background 'inherently disqualified him as the architect of national reconciliation'.²² With supplies of Soviet materiel, Najibullah succeeded in surviving the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, but, as subsequently became clear, his survival was dependent

20 See Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan–Pakistan Connection*, Hurst & Co., London, 2004, pp. 53–57; Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005, pp. 93–133.

21 *Materialy XXVII s'ezda Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza [Materials of the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union]*, Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, Moscow, 1986, p. 69.

22 Kim M. Tsagolov and Selig S. Harrison, 'Afganskaia voina: vzgliad iz segodniashnego dnia [The Afghan war: a view from the present day]', in *Vostok*, No. 3, 1991, p. 53.

on his having Soviet-supplied resources with which to buy the loyalty of key actors in varying parties of the country. Almost as soon as the supply of such resources dried up, his regime began to fall apart as key actors repositioned themselves; in April 1992, the regime collapsed completely.²³

The effects of the war on Afghanistan were absolutely devastating. Between 1978 and 1987, on average over 240 Afghans were killed every day for ten years straight, a level of civilian casualties fifty times greater than that experienced in 2010.²⁴ This high level of mortality was accompanied by shocking and extensive war crimes and human rights violations.²⁵ It was also accompanied by vast and enduring population displacement and forced migration, giving rise to long-term problems of social disruption.²⁶ Out of a pre-war settled population estimated at 13.05 million, by the beginning of 1990 around 6.2 million were living abroad as refugees, mostly in Pakistan and Iran. The refugee camps in Pakistan proved to be ambiguous spaces, not just protecting vulnerable refugees but also nurturing combatants,²⁷ and ultimately they were to provide a breeding ground for the Taliban movement, a toxic yet tragic force that reflected not some ‘traditional’ Afghan society but the results of decades of disruption of everyday life for ordinary Afghans. Afghanistan was profoundly traumatized by the events of the 1980s and has a long way to go before it will have any hope of complete recovery.

Post-Soviet turmoil: mujahideen and Taliban

The disintegration of Najibullah’s regime resulted in the takeover of Kabul by elements of the Afghan mujahideen. They faced two problems, however. The first was that they inherited the symbols of a state (notably a capital city) but not functioning state mechanisms: bureaucrats had scattered or fled, the army had split along ethnic and regional lines, and there were simply no longer agencies available to extract and redistribute resources. Few resistance movements have ever acquired such a debilitated inheritance.

23 See Phillip Corwin, *Doomed in Afghanistan: A UN Officer’s Memoir of the Fall of Kabul and Najibullah’s Failed Escape, 1992*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ, 2003.

24 Noor Ahmad Khalidi, ‘Afghanistan: demographic consequences of war, 1978–1987’, in *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 10, 1991, pp. 101–126.

25 See Jeri Laber and Barnett R. Rubin, *A Nation is Dying: Afghanistan under the Soviets 1979–87*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1988; The Afghanistan Justice Project, *Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity 1978–2001*, Afghanistan Justice Project, Kabul, 2005; William Maley, ‘Human rights in Afghanistan’, in Shahram Akbarzadeh and Benjamin MacQueen (eds), *Islam and Human Rights in Practice: Perspectives Across the Ummah*, Routledge, New York, 2008, pp. 89–107.

26 See Susanne Schmeidl and William Maley, ‘The case of the Afghan refugee population: finding durable solutions in contested transitions’, in Howard Adelman (ed.), *Protracted Displacement in Asia: No Place to Call Home*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008, pp. 131–179.

27 Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2002, pp. 55–82; Sarah Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries? Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005, pp. 44–72.

Intra-mujahideen rivalry

Just as seriously, the divisions between the mujahideen had themselves intensified. While most Sunni Muslim mujahideen leaders signed an agreement on 24 April 1992 to form a 'Leadership Council' (*Shura-i Qiyadi*) under Professor Mojadiddi, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar declined to participate; his spokesman had earlier stated that 'Hekmatyar can't agree to anything that includes Ahmad Shah Massoud'.²⁸ Despite several subsequent attempts to resolve these divisions, they remained an acute source of tension,²⁹ and when finally Hekmatyar returned to Kabul as 'Prime Minister' in June 1996, all his presence did was to contaminate the reputation of the government, which by this time was headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani.

One of the key reasons for this was that intra-mujahideen rivalry had resulted in brutal armed conflict that caused massive damage to the capital itself. While mortality in most parts of Afghanistan fell dramatically at this time, in Kabul the opposite was the case. Different parts of the city had come under the control of different forces, with the Shiite Hezb-e-Wahdat in the west of the city, forces loyal to Massoud in the north, a militia associated with the former communist commander Abdul Rashid Dostam in the Bala Hissar area, and loyalists of Abdul Rab al-Rasoul Sayyaf in Paghman. Fighting between the Hezb-e-Wahdat and Sayyaf's forces broke out first, in June 1992.³⁰ On top of this, rocket attacks were made on the city by Hezb-e-Islami forces located to the south, using arms accumulated during the 1980s, to try to prevent anyone from ruling if Hekmatyar himself could not do so. Rabbani referred to Hekmatyar as a 'dangerous terrorist who should be expelled from Afghanistan'.³¹ The human consequences of this period were atrocious, with large-scale war crimes being committed by a number of forces that were involved in the conflict.³² It was only in March 1995 that Massoud succeeded in securing both the city and its surrounds. The lull that this produced proved to be short-lived.

Emergence of the Taliban

It was in this context that the Taliban movement emerged on the scene in 1994, taking first the city of Kandahar, then Herat in 1995, and finally Kabul in September 1996.³³ 'Taliban' is simply the Persianized plural of an Arabic word for

28 In *International Herald Tribune*, 22 April 1992, p. 2.

29 See William Maley, 'The future of Islamic Afghanistan', in *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 24, December 1993, pp. 388–390.

30 Kristian Berg Harpviken, *Political Mobilization among the Hazara of Afghanistan: 1978–1992*, Report No. 9, Department of Sociology, University of Oslo, Oslo, p. 113.

31 BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, FE/1461/B/1, 17 August 1992.

32 See Human Rights Watch, *Blood-stained Hands: Past Atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's Legacy of Impunity*, Human Rights Watch, New York, 2005.

33 For more detail on the Taliban's rise, see Anthony Davis, 'How the Taliban became a military force', in William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, Hurst & Co., London, 1998, pp. 43–71; Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region*, Palgrave, New York, 2002, pp. 117–124; Michael Griffin, *Reaping the Whirlwind: Afghanistan*,

‘student’, and various ‘Taliban fronts’ had existed in Afghanistan the early 1980s. This movement, however, was different. It was much more a conventional military force. Its emergence fundamentally reflected Pakistan’s desire for a surrogate that could hold and occupy significant chunks of territory, which Hekmatyar’s Hezbe-Islami had failed to do. Pakistan’s Interior Minister, retired Major-General Nasseerullah Babar, used to refer to the Taliban as ‘our boys’, something which infuriated the Pakistan foreign ministry.³⁴ Pakistan’s role in supporting the Taliban movement was central to its rise: as Human Rights Watch put it,

Of all the foreign powers involved in efforts to sustain and manipulate the ongoing fighting, Pakistan is distinguished both by the sweep of its objectives and the scale of its efforts, which include soliciting funding for the Taliban, bankrolling Taliban operations, providing diplomatic support as the Taliban’s virtual emissaries abroad, arranging training for Taliban fighters, recruiting skilled and unskilled manpower to serve in Taliban armies, planning and directing offensives, providing and facilitating shipments of ammunition and fuel, and on several occasions apparently directly providing combat support.³⁵

The effects of the Taliban’s ruthlessness

Unfortunately for Pakistan, the behaviour of the Taliban rapidly won them pariah status. As Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar remarked, ‘Islamabad failed to foresee that the Taliban were internationally perceived to be the creation of Pakistan ... As the only friend of the Taliban, Pakistan was blamed for their policies’.³⁶ The Taliban’s policies towards women won them international condemnation,³⁷ and their treatment of minorities was often horrific, something most dramatically on display in Mazar-e Sharif in August 1998 when over 2,000 ethnic Hazaras were massacred in just three days, in gruesome circumstances described by a staffer of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:

Some were shot on the streets. Many were executed in their own homes, after areas of the town known to be inhabited by their ethnic group had been systematically sealed off and searched. Some were boiled or asphyxiated to

Al Qa’ida and the Holy War, Pluto Press, London, 2004, pp. 30–47; Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, Penguin, London, 2005, pp. 280–300; Roy Gutman, *How We Missed the Story: Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban, and the Hijacking of Afghanistan*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 2008, pp. 61–79; Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi (eds), *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2008; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010, pp. 17–30.

34 See S. Iftikhar Murshed, *Afghanistan: The Taliban Years*, Bennett & Bloom, London, 2006, p. 45.

35 Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan – Crisis of Impunity: The Role of Pakistan, Russia and Iran in Fuelling the Civil War*, Human Rights Watch, New York, 2001, p. 23.

36 Abdul Sattar, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy 1947–2005*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2007, p. 227.

37 See, famously, Physicians for Human Rights, *The Taliban’s War on Women: A Health and Human Rights Crisis in Afghanistan*, Physicians for Human Rights, Boston, 1998.

death after being left crammed inside sealed metal containers under a hot August sun. In at least one hospital, as many as 30 patients were shot as they lay helplessly in their beds. The bodies of many of the victims were left on the streets or in their houses as a stark warning to the city's remaining inhabitants. Horrified witnesses saw dogs tearing at the corpses, but were instructed over loudspeakers and by radio announcements not to remove or bury them.³⁸

Added to such atrocities were acts of gross vandalism, such as the destruction of the famous Buddhas of Bamiyan in March 2001. Furthermore, since resistance to the Taliban continued under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the movement proved incapable of securing Afghanistan's UN seat, and only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates ever granted it diplomatic recognition.

The end of the Taliban regime came quite quickly. While Osama bin Laden's terrorist Al Qaeda network succeeded in assassinating Massoud on 9 September 2001, its attacks on US targets two days later led to a direct US assault in October 2001 ('Operation Enduring Freedom') that the Taliban were quite unable to resist. By mid-November Kabul had fallen to anti-Taliban forces, and by mid-December most of the Taliban leadership had fled to Pakistan. It is easily forgotten how quickly the Taliban regime fell once a stronger force had appeared; the lesson is that, in conflicts such as that in Afghanistan, it is vital to obtain and maintain momentum.

Afghanistan since 2001

The period since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in November–December 2001 has witnessed both achievements and disappointments. Survey evidence suggests that 54% of Afghan respondents feel 'that their families are more prosperous today than they were during the days of the Taliban regime', and 78% agree that 'Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government'.³⁹ However, the country is extremely diverse, with a kaleidoscopic range of local political environments. Furthermore, any casual discussion in Afghanistan rapidly brings to the fore a host of complaints, and many reflect specific ways in which the post-2001 transition has gone astray. Five particular problems stand out.

Weak government

First, Afghanistan has carried the burden of weaknesses in the design of its new political institutions. The Bonn Agreement of December 2001 provided for up to

38 Rupert C. Colville, 'One massacre that didn't grab the world's attention', in *International Herald Tribune*, 7 August 1999.

39 Ruth Rennie, Sudhindra Sharma, and Pawan Sen, *Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People*, The Asia Foundation, Kabul, 2009, pp. 43, 100.

twenty-nine departments of government, when perhaps six to eight would have sufficed, and this set the scene for rivalry between agencies controlled by different political factions. Furthermore, Afghanistan's 2004 constitution, by establishing a strong presidential system, created an overburdened office at the heart of executive government, and ensured that key issues would go unaddressed unless and until they received the president's attention. Beyond this, the blocking by the US of the expansion beyond Kabul of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2002 more or less forced the new Afghan leader, Hamed Karzai, to offer positions of power in provinces and districts to armed actors who might otherwise have become 'spoilers'. This had the effect of marginalizing legitimate local leaderships, especially those based in Pushtun tribal structures, and in the long run it contaminated the reputation of the new state and encouraged major problems of nepotism and maladministration.⁴⁰

Corruption

Second, poor governance and corruption have been endemic problems, fuelled by the resurgence of the opium industry, and the failure to rebuild a judicial system capable of ensuring that the rule of law is respected. The rule of law remains pathetically weak; as a result, for most Afghans the impressive guarantees of rights set out in the constitution and in various statutes exist only on paper.⁴¹ Bribery is one of the main contributors to this problem: judges can easily be bought.⁴² According to Integrity Watch Afghanistan,

One adult in seven, i.e. an approximate equivalent of 1,677,000 adults, experienced direct bribery in Afghanistan in 2009. 28% of Afghan households paid a bribe to obtain at least one public service ... In 2009, the average value of the bribes among those who paid them was 7,769 Afs (156 USD). This represents an enormous amount of money in a country where the per capita income is 502 USD per year.⁴³

40 William Maley, *Rescuing Afghanistan*, Hurst & Co., London, 2006, p. 128; Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban*, Penguin Press, New York, 2006; Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*, Hurst & Co., London, 2007, p. 16.

41 For detailed discussion, see Whit Mason (ed.), *The Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Missing in Inaction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010.

42 Paul Watson, 'In Afghanistan, money tips the scales of justice', in *Los Angeles Times*, 18 December 2006; Keith B. Richburg, 'In Afghanistan, U.S. seeks to fix a tattered system of justice', in *Washington Post*, 28 February 2011.

43 Integrity Watch Afghanistan, *Afghan Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption: A National Survey 2010*, Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Kabul, July 2010, p. 10. See also United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims*, UNODC, Vienna, January 2010; Manija Gardizi, Karen Hussmann, and Yama Torabi, *Corrupting the State or State-crafted Corruption? Exploring the Nexus between Corruption and Subnational Governance*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Kabul, June 2010.

As well as funding the government's opponents,⁴⁴ opium profits have supplied some of the monies with which corrupt payments can be made, but so have lavish Western contracts given to Afghans perceived to have helpful connections. There is little inclination at the top of the Afghan system to address these problems. This became painfully clear when President Karzai moved to protect a presidential associate arrested in July 2010 for soliciting a bribe. The president rounded on the Afghan and international agencies that had sought to bring the accused to justice: according to Mr Karzai's chief of staff, this was because the president wanted these units to operate 'within an Afghan framework'.⁴⁵

Patronage and alliances

This points to a third problem, namely that Afghanistan's political leadership has been unequal to the task of taking the helm. President Karzai grew up in a state-free political environment in Peshawar in the 1980s and his conception of politics is not fundamentally concerned with policy development and implementation, but with patronage, networking, and alliances. In late 2009, the US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Karl W. Eikenberry, set this out in a cable to Washington:

President Karzai is not an adequate strategic partner ... Karzai continues to shun responsibility for any sovereign burden, whether defense, governance, or development ... It strains credulity to expect Karzai to change fundamentally this late in his life and in our relationship.⁴⁶

Tragically for Karzai, as time went by his strengths became less and less relevant, and his weaknesses more and more an encumbrance. This problem was aggravated by his being surrounded by a network of self-interested and conspiratorial associates,⁴⁷ and finally culminated in the disastrous presidential election of August 2009, in which the monumental fraud that was used to secure Karzai a second term at the same time undercut his legitimacy both domestically and in the eyes of Western publics.⁴⁸

Iraq as a fatal distraction

Fourth, the shift of US focus to Iraq from late 2002 deprived the Afghan theatre of oxygen at a vital moment, and encouraged a resumption of active Pakistani

44 Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin is Bankrolling the Taliban and Al Qaeda*, Thomas Dunne Books, New York, 2009.

45 Rajiv Chandrasekaran, 'Karzai seeks to limit role of U.S. corruption investigators', in *Washington Post*, 9 September 2010.

46 Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry, 'COIN strategy: civilian concerns', US Department of State Cable No. Kabul 03572, Kabul, November 2009.

47 Elizabeth Rubin, 'Karzai in his labyrinth', in *New York Times*, 9 August 2009.

48 On the electoral fraud of 2009, see Martine van Biljert, *Polling Day Fraud in the Afghan Elections*, AAN Briefing Paper 03/2009, The Afghanistan Analysts Network, Kabul, 2009, available at: <http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/20090903/pollingfraud.pdf> (last visited 15 March 2011); and Thomas Ruttig, *Afghanistans Wahlkrise: Die gefälschte Präsidentschaftswahl und Strategien für 'danach'*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, 2009.

support for the Taliban. For this, former US President Bush, Vice-President Cheney, and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld bear the prime responsibility, since they recklessly assumed that in a country such as Afghanistan, which had experienced decades of turmoil, stability could be attained in a matter of months. The effects of the Iraq distraction were serious and long-lasting. In 2007, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that: ‘In Afghanistan we do what we can. In Iraq we do what we must’.⁴⁹ No more devastating picture of Washington’s misplaced priorities could be imagined.

Growing insurgency

Finally, and most importantly, Afghanistan faces a vicious ongoing Taliban insurgency. Large numbers of Afghans live in fear, knowing that they are exposed to the insurgents’ predations and that the agencies of the state cannot or will not do much to help them. While corruption and poor governance have discouraged many Afghans from standing firmly by the Karzai government, and civilian casualties have become a major public relations issue for NATO,⁵⁰ the insurgency recommenced before these problems became palpable. Indeed, one of the first markers of Taliban recrudescence was on 27 March 2003, just a week after the commencement of the US invasion of Iraq, when a Red Cross worker, Ricardo Munguia, was murdered by the Taliban near Kandahar.⁵¹ The insurgency fundamentally reflects Pakistan’s disposition to interfere in Afghanistan’s transition in profoundly destructive ways.⁵² In August 2007, the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, publicly admitted during a visit to Kabul that ‘There is no doubt Afghan militants are supported from Pakistani soil. The problem that you have in your region is because support is provided from our side’.⁵³ At one level no more need be said: as a sovereign state, Pakistan clearly has the responsibility to prevent its territory from being used in this way. Unfortunately, it has not done so, and mounting evidence points to duplicity on its part, with the Afghan Taliban continuing to receive active support from military circles.⁵⁴ For the United States and Afghanistan, this is understandably infuriating: as of May 2010, the ‘latest

49 Robert Burns, ‘Mullen: Afghanistan isn’t top priority’, in *Washington Post*, 11 December 2007.

50 See Human Rights Watch, ‘*Troops in Contact: Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan*’, Human Rights Watch, New York, 2008.

51 See William Maley, ‘The “war against terrorism” in South Asia’, in *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 12, June 2003, p. 214.

52 See William Maley, ‘Pakistan–Afghanistan relations’, in Michael Clarke and Ashutosh Misra (eds), *Pakistan’s Stability Paradox*, Routledge, New York, 2011.

53 Taimoor Shah and Carlotta Gall, ‘Afghan Rebels Find Aid in Pakistan, Musharraf Admits’, in *The New York Times*, 13 August 2007.

54 See, for example, Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 195; Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, Viking Press, New York, 2008, pp. 249–250; Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2009, pp. 256–273; Matt Waldman, *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship between Pakistan’s ISI and Afghan Insurgents*, Discussion Paper No. 18, Crisis States Research Unit, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, June 2010.

intelligence showed trucks crossing the border that were full of Taliban combatants with all kinds of weapons packed in the back. They were being waved through into Afghanistan to kill Americans at checkpoints controlled by the Pakistanis'.⁵⁵ The significance of this duplicitous behaviour is quite profound, for, as Barfield has put it, 'If Pakistan ever reversed its policy of support, as it did to Mullah Omar in 2001, the insurgency in Afghanistan would be dealt a fatal blow'.⁵⁶ Afghanistan has been poorly governed since 2001, but it has had to cope with a creeping invasion by its eastern neighbour.

Conclusion

Many different lessons might be drawn from Afghanistan's experience over the last three decades, and not many of them are encouraging from the viewpoints of ordinary Afghans. Too often, their distinct interests and perspectives have been lost in the wider politics of struggle within their country. The novelist Doris Lessing once quoted a poignant comment made to her by an Afghan acquaintance: 'We cry to you for help, but the wind blows away our words'.⁵⁷ Many international actors have been prepared to exploit the suffering of the Afghans without empathizing with them in any serious fashion; in the long run, this can only breed cynicism about Western motives in committing troops and resources to the Afghan theatre of operations.⁵⁸ The threats to Afghanistan need to be recognized in a starkly realistic fashion, but met from a position of principle grounded in the provisions of the UN Charter, international law, and the norms of international society. The danger is that, instead, a crude form of realpolitik with a focus only on short-term issues will determine Afghanistan's fate.

With waning support among Western publics for the Afghan commitment, the desire in NATO capitals to strike some kind of deal with the Afghan Taliban leadership seems to be mounting. However, the risks of any such attempt need to be appreciated properly.⁵⁹ Mere talk of talking with the Taliban is deeply unsettling for Afghan groups such as women and ethnic and sectarian minorities that suffered under the Taliban in the past,⁶⁰ and risks triggering expanded refugee flows out of the country. The Taliban themselves have shown no serious inclination

55 Bob Woodward, *Obama's War*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2010, p. 367.

56 Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010, p. 328.

57 Doris Lessing, *The Wind Blows Away Our Words*, Pan, London, 1987.

58 The Taliban have sought in their propaganda to emphasize the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan as a problem: see *Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?*, International Crisis Group, Kabul and Brussels, 2008. There is, however, very little evidence that a majority of Afghans at present would like to see NATO/ISAF troops withdraw from the country.

59 Ashley J. Tellis, *Reconciling with the Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 2009.

60 See, for example, Human Rights Watch, *The 'Ten Dollar' Talib and Women's Rights*, Human Rights Watch, New York, 2010.

to negotiate and, as a highly ideological movement,⁶¹ they would be unlikely to shift from any of their fundamental positions, although for tactical reasons they might seek to make themselves look less extreme. Any power-sharing arrangement with the Taliban would probably survive only while they mustered their forces in preparation for a thrust for total power. The detriment in terms of extremist recruitment flowing from what radical forces would undoubtedly trumpet as yet another defeat for a superpower at the hands of religious faith should not be underestimated. And, far from bringing peace to Afghanistan, the return of the Taliban to centre-stage as part of a short-sighted ‘deal’ could well see Afghanistan once again become a theatre of intense armed competition between Afghan actors backed by powers such as Pakistan, Iran, the US, and Russia, and trigger turbulence in South and Southwest Asia more broadly.

The greatest threat to order in Afghanistan arises from the sanctuaries in Pakistan that the Taliban employ. The reluctance of Western governments to speak candidly about this issue is a source of frustration for Afghan politicians and citizens alike,⁶² and risks fuelling conspiracy theories (already alive and well) about Western objectives in Afghanistan. The problem of Pakistan is not an easy one to confront: the United States depends upon access to Pakistani territory in order to provision US troops in Afghanistan; theories of negotiation tend to warn against driving parties into corners from which they cannot escape with dignity; and positive inducements often deliver more than threats.⁶³ In the case of Pakistan, however, positive inducements have been deployed at considerable cost, and with no real return.⁶⁴ If the wider world continues to turn a blind eye to what is happening, the adverse consequences for Afghanistan, for Pakistan, and for regional and world order more generally could be serious and possibly incalculable.⁶⁵

61 The ideological dimension of the Taliban is often underrated. Yet it is very important to note, since it helps to explain why it is extremely simplistic to treat the Taliban as somehow the ‘representative’ of the Pushtuns of Afghanistan. See Thomas Ruttig, *How Tribal are the Taleban? Afghanistan’s Largest Insurgent Movement Between its Tribal Roots and Islamist Ideology*, AAN Thematic Report 04/2010, The Afghanistan Analysts Network, Kabul, June 2010, available at <http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/20100624TR-HowTribalAretheTaleban-FINAL.pdf> (last visited 15 March 2011).

62 See, for example, Rangin Dadfar Spanta, ‘Pakistan is the Afghan war’s real aggressor’, in *Washington Post*, 23 August 2010, p. A13.

63 See Miroslav Nincic, ‘Getting what you want: positive inducements in international relations’, in *International Security*, Vol. 35, Summer 2010, pp. 138–183.

64 See Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, ‘When \$10 billion is not enough: rethinking U.S. strategy toward Pakistan’, in *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, April 2007, pp. 7–19.

65 See Bruce Riedel, ‘Armageddon in Islamabad’, in *The National Interest*, No. 102, July–August 2009, pp. 9–18; Michael E. O’Hanlon and Hassina Sherjan, *Toughing It Out in Afghanistan*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2010, pp. 4–8; see also Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, RAND National Security Research Division, Santa Monica, 2010.