

Why the Afghanistan War Does Not End

by Susan B. Maitra and Ramtanu Maitra

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It is almost eight years since the Soviet Army left Afghanistan, defeated and humiliated, and three and a half years since the once-mighty Soviet Union ceased to exist. Yet Afghans continue to kill each other under the name of a holy war, and, at this time, there appears to be no end in sight to the murderous fratricide.

At first it appeared as if the pure Sunni Pushtun, Hezbe Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, once the blue-eyed boy of the Reagan Administration, and receiver of immense fortunes in cash and expensive armaments from many sources, was on his way to capture power militarily in the capital city, Kabul. Later, when Hekmatyar faltered, the press projected that the former Communist general, Abdur Rashid Dostum, an Afghan of Uzbek origin who leads a ruthless militia, Jumbush-e-Milli, and controls the area around the town of Mazar-e Sharif in northern Afghanistan, would oust the minority Tajik-backed Rabbani government and form a grand alliance with the Pushtuns. Such an alliance would make the road from Peshawar in western Pakistan to Central Asia via Kabul a most effective trade route. The opening of the trade route would introduce virgin Central Asia to the civilized world, and thus a huge “emerging market” would soon be delivered.

When such alliances failed to make any headway, and quarrelling erupted over the anticipated loot, Dostum was written off as a spent force, and Hekmatyar labelled a “corrupt Islamic fundamentalist.” Then, last year, a “pure and zealous” Sunni religious group, known as the Taliban, was put together on the plains of Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province and the adjoining, Pushtun-dominated areas of Afghanistan by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI); the ISI has been the Pakistani handlers of the Afghan mujahideen since the days of the late President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq and Gen. Akhtar Abdur Rehman in the early eighties. The prediction was that the mighty sword of Islam wielded by the Taliban, would cut through the

various factions in Afghanistan like a hot knife through butter.

The Taliban swept through the Pushtun areas of eastern and northeastern Afghanistan, confronted and humbled the Shi’as of central Afghanistan, and stood at Kabul’s door, atop tanks with Stingers and rocket launchers. No question, the pack of cards had been shuffled once more. Victories of the Taliban in eventful skirmishes were reported every day, and experts wrote the political obituaries of all the old, familiar strongmen.

But what seemed to be the hot story of Afghanistan in early 1995 began to cool by winter. Now, as we move into the spring of 1996, the holy warriors of the Taliban movement do not even secure news-blips. Stripped of its quick glory, Taliban are now presented as an irrelevant force lost in the crags and ravines of Afghanistan. Once again, Hekmatyar and Dostum have been trotted out of the stable as the horses to watch, and in whose hands the future of Afghanistan rests.

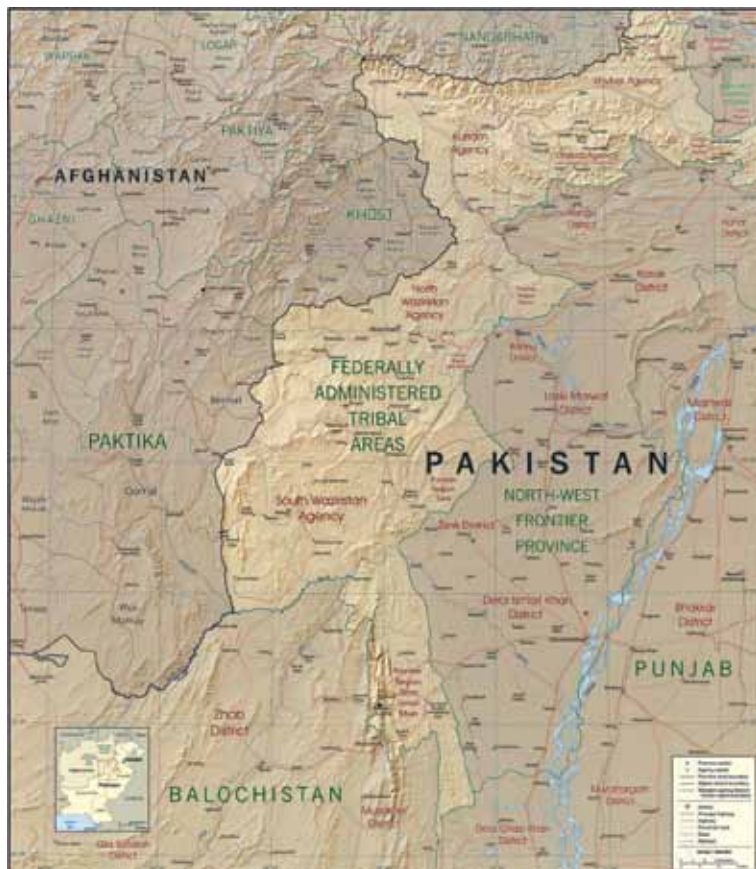
Today we are back at square one, with no better understanding of events in Afghanistan: The much-emphasized Pushtun-Tajik animosity or the Pushtun-Uzbek rivalry, the subject of voluminous books, seem to be more a charade created for public consumption than the key to current developments. In fact, a closer look shows that the so-called Afghan civil war of the past eight years has less to do with the historical rivalries between contentious tribal groups and ethnic varieties, than with the elements introduced from outside during the nine years of holy war against the Soviet occupation.

War Booty

The nine-year-long Afghan War (1980-88), or the period during which the Soviets tried unsuccessfully to consolidate their control over Afghanistan, was known to many around the world as the war to bleed the Reds to death. The West’s ostensible objective of confronting the Soviet Army by training and arming the mujahideen guerrillas, was not simply to defeat the Soviet Army, but also to weaken the Soviet State. The Afghan War may yet emerge as immensely significant in world history, comparable, perhaps, in importance in the South and Central Asian region to the Vietnam War in Southeast Asia.

The Soviet Army’s reckless advance into Afghanistan to prop up its puppets in the winter of 1979 was seized upon instantly as the southern tier of the Arc of

Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Region



Bethell the principal liaison from London. The CFA concentrated its funding on Hekmatyar rival, Ahmed Shah Massoud. For the United States, the official covert operation allocation into the Afghan war was \$3 billion. In addition, huge sums of money were pumped in from Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations, building up assets within Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The murder on Jan. 25, 1993 of three CIA agents by the Afghansi Mir Aimal Kansi outside CIA headquarters at Langley, Virginia, was one indication of a vast reorganization of the afghansi—especially those mujahideen from other countries—then taking place. And in fact, since then, the afghansi have trained their sites on London’s targets—including the Bhutto government in Pakistan; the Philippines; France; and even the United States itself.

For the mujahideen warlords, the main part of the *mal-e-ghaneemat* was the narcotics money generated out of heroin and hashish trafficking from Afghanistan and western Pakistan. This part of the booty far overshadowed the money from Saudi Arabia and the war loot per se, and there was absolutely no one who did not dip into it to fill his pocket. Covert and not-so-covert operations from the West used this money to finance the mujahideen, and it is now

Crisis policy, and the opportunity to set up new instruments in a highly important strategic region.

As *EIR* extensively documented in its Oct. 13, 1995 issue, “New Terror International Targets South Asia,” Afghan Aid U.K. (AAUK), together with Radio Free Kabul of London, were the two most important coordinators of Afghan mujahideen aid efforts throughout the war against the Soviets. Afghan Aid U.K., set up in Peshawar, Pakistan, had as its main sponsor Viscount Cranborne, Lord Privy Seal and leader of the House of the Lords. Its partner agency, Radio Free Kabul, had been created by Lord Nicholas Bethell, who worked with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to drum up U.S. support for the mujahideen.

Funds and organizing were not long in coming from the various factions in U.S. intelligence circles. In 1980, the Afghan Relief Committee, under the sponsorship of avowed LaRouche enemy John Train (see following article), was organized to channel funds primarily to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezbe Islami group. The Committee for a Free Afghan was also established, with

the financing source for the afghansi internationally. For Pakistani intelligence, the management of drug trafficking generated a huge slush fund, which gave it the power to keep or remove governments in the capital, Islamabad, and to open new areas of conflict.

For the international narcotics traffickers and money launderers of Dope, Inc., the opportunity is wide open. The drug networks set up during the Afghan War are expanding by the day, and the Central Asian nations have already developed capabilities to become major drug suppliers and heroin manufacturers in the region. There is no question that the drug money will continue to nourish and nurture guerrilla groups like that of the Islamic Renaissance Party within Tajikistan, or Hekmatyar’s Hezbe Islami, or Dostum’s Uzbek militia, or Ahmed Shah Massoud’s Tajik militia.

There exists very open cooperation among all these forces. For instance, the Tajik rebels ensconced in the northern Afghanistan refugee camps in Kunduz and Takhor, are under the control of Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Massoud, who are otherwise regarded as mortal

enemies. These refugees, besides keeping up the terrorist pressure on the Tajikistan government of Emomali Rakhmanov in Dushanbe, play a major role in the drug-running operation through the Pamirs to Kyrgyzstan and beyond. Some of these Pamirs and Garmians have long been under the control of the CIA operatives who got them to participate in the Afghan War against the Soviets in support of Ahmed Shah Massoud.

This is the real story of the Afghan War, and its gory outcome: establishment of the monster called the “Afghansis” on the basis of narcotics trafficking. And this is the real reason that, although the Soviet occupation is over, the Afghan War does not end. On the contrary, it is still in the early stages of claiming victims, and these are not simply Tajiks or Pushtuns or Uzbeks, but entire nations in Central Asia that have emerged as independent republics following the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

No Winners

While the drug money will have the strongest voice by far in Afghanistan, it is not unlikely that an arrangement can be reached whereby the powerful drug warlords can keep their “cuts” and operations intact.

In northern Afghanistan, the whole thing has come to a neat package. Here, Hekmatyar, in an attempt to undercut Ahmed Shah Massoud, a Tajik minority Afghan, is training and arming the Tajik rebels, who belonged to the late Tajikistan President, Rakhmon Nabiyev. But reports from the area indicate that the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan has sent at least 20,000 Tajiks in support of Ahmed Shah Massoud, and the refugee camps at Takhor in northern Afghanistan are full of Tajiks backed by Massoud with money and arms.

At the same time, the Uzbek militia leader from Mazar-e Sharif, Gen. Abdur Rashid Dostum, who has definite commercial and intelligence links with Uzbekistan, has found it necessary, with the rise of the Taliban, to switch his support for Hekmatyar. On the other side, Hizbe Wahadat, the Shi’a party in Afghanistan, is now leaning in support of Massoud, as Pakistan is beginning to soften its stance towards the Rabbani government in Kabul. This was also reflected in the slow demise of the Taliban, and became evident when Pakistan reopened its embassy in Kabul in 1995. Pakistan is once again actively involved in trying to put together a coalition of Hekmatyar and Dostum to keep both Afghanistan and Tajikistan under pressure.

As a signal, Dostum had stepped up attacks in late 1995 on the Rabbani forces in the Khinjan Valley and Baghlan provinces. The attacks, by land and air, were ostensibly to loosen Massoud’s control over the Salang Highway, which is Kabul’s main transport line north. Dostum’s actions were in conjunction with the Taliban attempt to close off the Kabul-Kandahar Highway, Rabbani’s main transport line south. At that point, it was reported that even Hekmatyar was trying to join the Taliban-Dostum clique and bring down the Rabbani government.

Exploding Tajikistan

Soon after the Soviet Army had dragged itself out of Afghanistan in 1988, conflicts in Tajikistan began to appear with unexpected, and unpublicized, virulence.

The three-year-long struggle between clans from backward regions such as Garm, Pamir, and Karategin, and the pro-Communist regime of Rakhmon Nabiyev, backed by the pro-Russian clans from Khodzhen and the capital, Dushanbe, under the banner of the Popular Front came to a head in 1991.

In 1991, young people strongly opposed to the regime of Kakhor Makhkamov, then first secretary of the Central Committee, formed the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and recruited the Garmians and Pamirs. Another party, the National Rastokhez Party, also made its appearance around the same time, in the same area. Also about the same time, the Islamic Renaissance Party was formed, which drew support from the peasants of southern province of Kurgian Tyube, known for its economic backwardness.

In May 1992, after years of low-intensity warfare, a coalition of Democrats and Islamists moved in, emerging victorious. Safarali Kendjayev, the leader of the Popular Front, fled Dushanbe and the 201st Russian motorized rifle division was brought in to maintain peace in the capital. President Nabiyev, in his efforts to maintain law and order, began working with the Democrat-Islamist coalition.

However, Nabiyev, having compromised politically, was pushed out in September 1992 and a new consensus leader, Akbarsho Iskandrov, took over. In October 1992, Kendjayev, armed with Uzbek arms and tanks, invaded Dushanbe: The period of implosion was over, and Tajikistan then began to explode.

In November 1992, at the height of Tajikistan’s civil war, 60,000 people were reportedly killed. At this point, Emomali Rakhmanov was elected the Parliament

Speaker, and consequently head of the republic, at the Tajik Supreme Soviet session held at Khodzhen. At the same session Sangak Safarov, commander of the Armed Forces of the ousted Popular Front, moved in. Safarov, with a long criminal record, had earlier spent 23 years in prison.

In mid-December, the Islamists, backed by Rakhmanov, Safarov, and the narco-traffickers, began their effort to seize power in Dushanbe. Their first objective was to rush the prisons in the outskirts of the capital, and release hundreds of prisoners serving long sentences for grave crimes.

Strengthened further by the criminals, the Islamists lodged themselves in Kofirnikhon near Dushanbe, until the Popular Front and the Tajik government, in a joint operation, pushed the Islamists back about 80 kilometers, to the western edge of the Pamirs in the Ramit Gorge and in the southern Kurgian-Tyube and Kulyab region.

A series of murders followed: On the night of April 12, 1993, Rakhmon Nabiyev, the former Tajikistan President and long-serving first secretary of its Communist Party, died in obscure circumstances.

Two weeks earlier, there was a fierce shootout near the town of Kurgian-Tyube between the political and military leaders of the Popular Front of Tajikistan, Sangak Safarov and Fayzali Saidov, killing them both. In early March, a military force belonging to Saidov marched into Dushanbe. Saidov's men surrounded the Interior Ministry with their tanks and presented Interior Minister Yakub Salimov with an ultimatum demanding "some leading positions" in the ministry.

Soon after, Sangak Safarov (who had bestowed upon himself the dubious honor of being the "Father of the Tajik Nation"), appeared on the scene, demanding Saidov disband his men. The negotiations turned into a heated argument, eventually resulting in the deadly shootout.

Politics of Refuge

While the death of such notables as Nabiyev, Saidov, and Safarov have been highlighted in the media, in reality, more than 100,000 lives have been lost in the Tajik civil war and another 800,000 have left Tajikistan to live in camps in northern Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

In northern Afghanistan, at least a half-dozen large refugee camps have been set up to lodge the fleeing Tajiks. Reports indicate that these camps are under control of one or the other Afghan "strongman." These

strongmen, such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Ahmed Shah Massoud, and Gen. Abdur Rashid Dostum, use the refugees to exert pressure on the governments in Tajikistan or Uzbekistan, and to enhance drug-trafficking operations.

Camps in Balkh and Samangan, under the control of the National Islam Movement and General Dostum, are under the supervision of the UN High Commission for Refugees. Camps in Konduz and Takhor, under the control of Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Massoud, have little UN supervision, and it has been reported that the refugees of these two camps are in the forefront of guerrilla activities within Tajikistan. It is also known widely that Massoud was backing Nabiyev with arms and other matériel against the Emomali Rakhmanov government. In fact, some claim that the two actually linked up much earlier, when Massoud was battling the Soviet Army in northern Afghanistan.

Also of interest is the constitution of these refugee camps. Both the Konduz and Takhor camps are heavily inhabited by the backward clans from Garm, Pamir, and Gorno-Badakshan, with a smattering of Kurgian-Tyube and Kulyab clans. Balkh and Samangan camps have large number of refugees who were living in the southwestern areas of Tajikistan bordering Uzbekistan.

What is relevant about this level of detail, is that a large number of Gorno-Badakshanis are Ismaili Shi'as loyal to Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan. Sadruddin Aga Khan, besides being the leader of this sect, is a career bureaucrat, and the former coordinator of UN Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programs relating to Afghanistan (see *EIR*, Oct. 13, 1995). Sadruddin Aga Khan is now all over that region, covering Afghanistan, and the refugee camps in the Pakistani provinces of North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan and Balkh, and Afghani provinces of Samangan, Kunduz and Takhor. It is no surprise, then, that the Aga Khan's followers, or Ismaili Shi'as, are a major political, terrorist and drug-trafficking unit in Central Asia.

Future Explosions

After a lull of almost three years, during which low-intensity warfare was taking lives in ones and twos, yet another situation is fast emerging where large-scale bloodbaths will be the order of the day.

The first major bad news surfaced last September, when it became evident that two military units belonging to the Tajik Defense Ministry were clashing in the area of Kurgian-Tyube. First Deputy Chairman of the

Tajik Defense Ministry, Aleksandr Chubarev admitted this in an interview with Russia's Itar-Tass news agency. It was reported that the First Army Brigade stationed in Kurgian-Tyube used tanks and artillery to seize the territory of the neighboring 11th Military Unit. The ensuing clash killed at least 30 people, but unofficial reports put the number as high as 200. It is also reported that the 11th Military Unit is not resigned to let this armed attack by the First Army Brigade pass. What is also evident is that thousands of residents fled to refugee camps in northern Afghanistan in the wake of the armed clash.

The clandestine Voice of Free Tajikistan, allegedly broadcast from Takhor refugee camps in northern Afghanistan and which voices the views of both Massoud and Hekmatyar, said on one occasion that the government had lost control of the former Popular Front of the brothers-in-arms Safarali Kendjayeov and Sangak Safarov. If this state of affairs continues, the broadcast warned, the possibility of military takeover will exist in Kabul.

Two other events of substance have occurred: Warlords from Tursunzade, west of Dushanbe, formerly loyal to the Tajik government, have attacked the cities of Tursunzade and Kurgian-Tyube. Former Tursunzade Mayor Ibod Boimatov, supported by 300 cadres, two tanks and two armored personnel carriers entered Tajikistan from Uzbekistan and captured the aluminum factory in the city on Jan. 26. In Kurgian-Tyube, Mahmud Khudaberdiyev, commander of the First Brigade, took control of the police station and government buildings. Both Khudaberdiyev and Boimatov have demanded that the Rakhmanov government resign.

On the night of Jan. 21, the pro-Moscow spiritual leader of Tajikistan, Mufti Fatkhulla Sharipov, was machine-gunned down at his home west of Dushanbe. The Mufti was considered a key element in the upcoming talks between various Tajik factions scheduled to be held in Ashgabad, Turkmenistan, under UN observation. Mufti supported the Emomali Rakhmanov government. It is no surprise that the talks failed afterwards.

It is not clear as yet who killed the Mufti. But there is no question that many Tajik observers believe that opposition leader Akbar Turadzhonzoda, who is based in Peshawar, Pakistan, is a beneficiary of the Mufti's death. He has denied any involvement of the opposition in the assassination. However, Tajik government agencies believe that the killers came from the south, from refugees camps across the border. President Rakhmanov is quoted in a Moscow public TV broadcast on Jan. 22

saying, "Show them which Islamic States are training these terrorists. Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan train them specially to terrorize the Tajik people. They feed them, they pay them. Show them, and let the international community know."

It is obvious that the institution-less Tajikistan, rife with clan rivalries and past animosities, flush with drug money, arms, and ill-wishers, and left in the lurch by the rest of the world, cannot prevent another slaughter. It is coming, and there is possibly nothing that can be done to prevent it.

On the other hand, a military solution is out of the question. It would further destabilize the region, as hundreds of thousands of refugees will pour out through the porous borders and set up refugee camps. These refugee camps will breed more killers, drug-runners, and bounty-hunters. At some point, the conflict will flow into the heart of the neighboring nations. None of the Central Asian nations has the resilience to absorb these forces of instability or has the ability to eradicate them.