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**SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM
IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS REGIONAL AND GLOBAL IMPACT**

BY

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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Security Implications Of The Rise Of Fundamentalism In Afghanistan And Its Regional And Global Impact

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ABSTRACT

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The project is conceived to study the happenings in Afghanistan in the last few years. The aim is to study the historical instability in Afghanistan in terms of ethnicity and to also study what effect the rise of fundamentalism would have on this. Some of the issues that would be explored are: would fundamentalism lead to greater militancy and would it get exported; Is the narco trade facilitating this and where in the region would the effects be felt; Are we in a position to extrapolate the effects in the Central Asian Republics and what kind of role would Russia play in such a situation. What would be the role of China since Xinjiang is primarily an Islamic region? Would China be prompted to check the spread covertly and overtly or by proxy through Pakistan? What would be the effect in Pakistan since tribal identities spread across the borders and large number of fundamentalist groups have their own madrassas and camps in Pakistan. As these groups are getting their finances through narco money, would they be controllable by Pakistan and to what extent. The role Osama- bin- Laden has in fuelling fundamentalist congregation and militancy in Afghanistan. The overall global implications of this phenomenon of Talibanisation will be discussed along with the fallouts for the US. Possible options available to the US would be analyzed to determine how the spread of radical fundamentalism could be checked. The examination of the above aspects will be used to draw out conclusions in terms of security implications on the region around Afghanistan and in global terms. The project would briefly explore the history of Afghanistan and the implications of Jihad and fundamentalism. This would lead to an understanding of the causatives so that the rise of Taliban can be understood in better perspective. The regional implications would then be analyzed by discussing various countries of the region and effects on them. This would then be progressed to discuss global fallouts and the effects as also the options for US

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SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS REGIONAL AND GLOBAL IMPACT

Afghanistan enjoys a strategic location in Asia. It borders Pakistan in the Indian Subcontinent, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China and Iran. For more than a century and a half, the developments in Afghanistan have had vast implications in the region. Afghanistan with its multifarious ethnic configuration has a long record of resistance to adverse foreign interventions. In 1950, Owen Latimore had described the region as: 'A whirlpool in which meet political currents flowing from China, Russia, India and the Moslem Middle East.' The description is apt but at that time the author would not have foreseen the disintegration of the powerful Soviet monolith, or for that matter the suddenness of its demise.



FIGURE 1- AFGHANISTAN AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

The mobilization of religious orthodoxy in Afghanistan, under occupation by the erstwhile Soviet Union, is a study by itself. What concerns the present project is the chilling transformation of a purely defensive mobilization of the religious orthodoxy to one of offensive religious fundamentalism with pan-Islamic overtones, capable of conducting global terrorism. It needs to be emphasized that the religious mobilization in the first place could not have

succeeded, in forcing the Soviets to withdraw, without the massive military and financial assistance from the most powerful nation in the world. It appears that in ensuring the aim of crippling the Soviets by a "Vietnam type" struggle, the end state in Afghanistan was never visualized. It is of interest to note that the very ethnic groups that stood side by side in their confrontation with the Red Army, suffered serious internal rifts in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal. As things stand today, each of them is involved in a conflict to attain power.

In recent times the Islamic militants have made headlines from Chechnya and Dagestan to Kyrgyzstan, and from Osama Bin Laden to Pakistani insurgents in Kashmir. These developments have spurred fears that the Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise and spilling across the border regions of the Muslim world. Three major happenings in 1999 contributed to the increased concern. The first was the incident of Uzbek gunmen based in Tajikistan, holding hostages twice in Kyrgyzstan and then battling it out with the security forces in the name of their goal of turning Uzbekistan into an Islamic state. The second incident concerned the Taliban, who have imposed their own perception of Islam in a most severe form, and their refusal to hand over Osama Bin Laden, despite UN sanctions and the US claim that he was the mastermind behind terrorist attacks against the US. The third took place in Pakistan, where an Islamic strike force aided and abetted by the Pakistani army invaded and were then evicted in fierce engagements, bringing India and Pakistan, the two new nuclear states, close to an all out war.

When the above-mentioned incidents are taken together, they suggest a coherent strategy by Islamic fundamentalist militants to press forward on many fronts with the common goal of building new Islamic states. This paper explores the rise of fundamentalist forces in the strategically located and volatile region of Afghanistan, consequent effects in the region, global fallout and options for United States in dealing with it. It is worth pointing out that some countries like Russia and a majority of Central Asian Republics strongly advocate the thesis that there is a coherent plan to advance Islamic fundamentalism. David Nissman, a regional expert, however, sounds a dissenting note. He contends that though the Islamic militants of the region share a common use of Islam as their rallying cry, their conflicts are local in nature. In his view the only common thread one should see in the various conflicts involving Islamic militants is the readiness of some of the militants in one country to take part in what they see as a holy war in another country. Many of these travelling combatants, at times mercenaries, hail from Pakistan, which is home to a large Islamic movement radicalized by the nurturing of the Taliban and subsequent active involvement in their fight in Afghanistan to gain control of the better part of that country.¹

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Afghanistan, often called the crossroads of Central Asia, has had a turbulent history. Geographically the country straddles the ancient trade routes between Iran and India as well as Iran and China. Afghanistan has fallen to many invaders and conquerors through the ages, like Darius in 500 BC, Alexander The Great in 329 BC, The Scythians, White Huns and Turks in the centuries that followed. Numerous Arab invaders from seventh century AD onwards not only captured the area but also established Islam as the dominant religion. Arab rule gave way to the Persians till Turkic Ghaznavids ousted them in 998 AD. Mahmud of Ghazni (998-1030 AD) consolidated the conquests of his predecessors and turned Ghazni into a great cultural center as well as the base for his frequent forays into India. He is considered to be the greatest of Afghan rulers and had an empire stretching from parts of Iran to parts of India (the area of present day Pakistan). Mahmud's short-lived dynasty was thrown out by the

Mongol invasion in 1219 AD, led by Genghis Khan. The Mongols destroyed many cities like Herat, Ghazni and Balkh and despoilt the fertile agricultural areas. After the death of Genghis Khan, a succession of petty chieftains struggled for supremacy till late 14th century AD. Then Timur, a descendent of his, incorporated Afghanistan in his own vast Asian Empire. Babur, a descendent of Timur and the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India, made Kabul the capital of an Afghan principality in the beginning of 16th century AD. Afghanistan became a

nation state, almost of what it is today, in 1747 under Ahmed Shah. A Durrani Pashtun, Ahmed Shah was elected king by the tribal council after the assassination of Persian ruler Nadir Shah. He is credited for establishment of the Durrani dynasty. All of Afghan rulers until the 1978 communist coup were from the Durrani dynasty and were members of the Mohammadzai clan of the Durrani Pashtun confederation.

The expanding British and Russian empires significantly influenced Afghanistan in the 19th century. The British concerns over Russian advances in Central Asia and growing influence in



FIGURE 2 PROVINCES AND NEIGHBOURS

Persia resulted in two Anglo-Afghan wars. The first in 1839-1842 period resulted in the total destruction of the British force and is remembered as an example of ferocity of Afghan resistance to foreign rule. The second in period 1878-1880 was sparked by Amir Sher Ali's refusal to accept the British mission. The conflict resulted in Amir Abdur Rehman coming to the throne and in his reign the official boundaries were established between the British and Russians. These boundaries correspond to what is now the modern day Afghanistan. An agreement in 1907 gave the British control over foreign affairs of Afghanistan. The third Anglo-Afghan war in 1919 resulted in Amir Amanullah regaining control of foreign policy and declaring Afghanistan as an independent nation. In 1926 Amanullah proclaimed a monarchy to replace the Emirate. He also embarked on a modernization program on the pattern of reforms in Turkey. Some of these alienated many tribal and religious leaders, especially the reforms concerning the modernization of the women's roles. Amanullah was forced to abdicate in 1929 after Kabul fell to forces led by Tajik brigand Bacha-i-Saqao. With Pashtun support, Nadir Khan a cousin of Amanullah recaptured Kabul and in turn was proclaimed as King Nadir Shah. On his assassination in 1933, his son Zahir Shah succeeded him and reigned from 1933 to 1973.

In 1964, Zahir Shah promulgated a liberal democratic constitution. This provided for a two chamber legislature in which the king appointed one third of the deputies, one third were elected by the people and the remaining one third were selected indirectly by provincial assemblies. This experiment in democracy did not produce any significant reforms but did allow the growth of unofficial extremist parties of both the right and the left. His cousin and Prime Minister, Daoud Khan overthrew Zahir Shah in 1973. Daoud was killed in 1978 and a pro-soviet regime led by Nur Mohammed Taraki came into being. Another coup in 1979 brought in Hafizullah Amin briefly and he too was killed in a coup supported by Soviet troops in December 1979. Soviets installed Babarak Karmal as the head of the Afghan government. The Soviet invasion and efforts by the Karmal government to establish control led to over five million Afghans fleeing to Iran and Pakistan. The Soviet intervention brought in the United States, which provided arms, training and financial support to the resistance movement (the Mujahadin) through Pakistan. The Soviets stung by their losses and the economic drain eventually withdrew in 1989 but continued to aid the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan headed now by Najibullah. The US and the USSR signed an agreement in 1991 to stop arming and supporting all feuding sides in Afghanistan. This led to the ouster of Najibullah in 1992 and the fall of Kabul to the rebel groups. Despite agreement to have an interim government led by Burhannudin Rabbani, the rebel groups continued to fight among themselves to seek tribal supremacy. The power struggle amongst various tribes was also fanned by Pakistan, which was seeking a pliant regime in Kabul so that

both the security and trade interests could be served. Into the already fermenting cauldron entered the Taliban and despite their eventually holding sway over a large part of Afghanistan, the fight still continues. We will examine this phenomenon in greater detail later.

Afghanistan's strategic location and the multitude of feuding tribes have been the cause of its rather violent history. The bloodshed and violence have been an intrinsic part of Afghan society and the resistance to foreign domination has been a part of their culture. Historically too, the Afghans appear to have favored medieval societal norms. This is evident by their resistance to any reforms concerning the role of women and their tribal laws. The present conflict situation should also be viewed in the light of the fact that while Soviets reportedly supplied \$5.7 billion worth of military equipment to its proteges, the US provided \$5 billion worth of arms and equipment to the rebel groups. Thus there are \$10.7 billion worth of arms, basically in the small arms category, available to various factions in Afghanistan.² This availability affects any agreement to seek a peaceful solution or conflict termination amongst the various factions.

FUNDAMENTALISM AND JIHAD

FUNDAMENTALISM

It is important to discuss the term fundamentalism before we analyze the rise of the Taliban so that we have a common ground for our discussion. Generally the words fundamentalism, traditionalism and communalism are often used synonymously. These words, however, have differing distinct meanings. Religious orthodoxy is often described as fundamentalism. Religious orthodoxy is imbued with great social implications but very little political context, though not always bereft of it. On the contrary, the term fundamentalism, as used by most of the writers, scholars and the media today, constitutes serious political implications. The changed perception of this term came about at the time of the Islamic revolution in Iran. Most writings show that this term was basically used, primarily by the western media, to debunk Islamic revolution in Iran. It is also interesting that the same term is not used when it comes to describing the Saudi regime even though the religious orthodoxy there is as visible as Iran. Thus, one finds the term 'orthodox' characterizing Saudi regime while Iranian regime is described as 'fundamentalist'. The term fundamentalism today connotes serious and threatening implications and implicit in it is the idea of religious militancy. It is interesting to note that in the initial stages of the Taliban movement gaining upper hand in Afghanistan, it was not perceived dangerous and was not labeled as 'fundamentalist' but considered 'orthodox'. The perception probably was that they would be controllable and may also help in gaining control

over the Central Asian Republics, which had become nominally independent on dissolution of the Soviet Union. It was also probably perceived by analysts that since Pakistan was to a large extent controlling them, it would ensure that the Taliban do not threaten the western interests. This was based on the premise that it had been a recipient of aid during the struggle against Soviets.³ The Taliban not only imposed a medieval version of Islamic injunctions but also started threatening western interests. In the mould of Iranian 'mullahcracy', they commenced sponsoring of anti-west terrorist activities. They, at this juncture acquired the label of being fundamentalists. It is important to highlight this perceptual labeling, since, in present lexicon all radical religious movements with political implications are described as 'fundamentalist movements'. What needs emphasis is the fact that there is a very thin line between fundamentalism and religious orthodoxy. Both obstruct change and contribute to social stagnation. The fundamentalists go a step further by being radical and spreading terrorism and violence as part of their zeal to spread the religion.⁴

JIHAD

The violence of Islamic fundamentalist organizations has emerged as a subject of anxious concern throughout the world. The fundamentalists have increasingly used the term 'Jihad', or 'Holy War', to justify their recourse to militancy. A scan of Islamic religious literature brings out that Islam considers the world divided in two parts viz. 'Dar al-Harb (the domain of war)' and 'Dar al-Islam (the domain of Islam)'. The 'Dar al-Islam' generally refers to those lands and people who have accepted Allah and his messenger 'The Prophet'. The 'Dar al-Harb' indicates the lands and people outside the boundaries of religion's propagation. Thus, one can say that inherent within this concept is the notion of conflict concerning the areas outside Islam.

Jihad is derived from the word 'Jahada', meaning "to struggle" or "to strive". The word 'Jihad' actually refers to "a struggle" and scholars in their interpretations of the 'Holy Koran' refer to 'Jihad' as a struggle to defeat inner impurities and submit to the will of 'Allah'. It is supposed to connote spiritual and moral struggle. For centuries the notion of and the word 'Jihad' have been employed by the Islamic society as a justification for the use of force. There are some writers like John Kelsey⁵ who speak of 'Jihad' as being the virtual sixth pillar of Islam. This is due to the great obligation of followers of Islam to struggle in the path of the Allah and to propagate the religion. John Esposito, one of the most prolific and effective interpreters of Islam has given a more balanced view. He has suggested that in its most general sense and application, 'Jihad' does refer to the obligation of Muslims to strive to realize God's will and lead

a virtuous life. He feels that this also includes the universal mission and obligation of the Muslim to spread "God's will and rule"⁶.

The militancy is also inherent in the notion of spreading the religion. The Muslim armies advancing out of Arabia offered three choices to people they encountered viz. conversion to their faith; acceptance of Muslim rule and the rights and duties which went with it to qualify for the subsequent protection; and lastly non acceptance leading to battle and annihilation. The spread and expansion of Islam was not always peaceful and forcible conversions have been pursued with vigorous zeal after conquering a particular land. The history of the Mughal expansion in the Indian subcontinent also brings out, that it was always the more orthodox and religiously inclined who pursued the path of cruelty and sword to seek conversions to Islamic faith. Those who had a better understanding of the religion and could interpret the various facets logically tended to be more liberal. In later case the conversions were peaceful and the result of Sufi missionaries as well as the charitable works of the rulers themselves. Akbar, the Great, and his fourth generation successor Aurangzeb adequately exemplify this aspect. Akbar's reign was noted by his secular cabinet and spread of religion through charitable works. He even went on to suggest a more liberal religious form called "Din-E-Ilahi". Aurangzeb's reign, by contrast, was marked by his religious zeal to convert by terrorizing and demolishing symbols of other religions in the wake of his conquests.

Having defined 'jihad', it is worth considering the conditions for legitimate initiation of jihad. The available literature does not provide any clear consensus on this issue. There are widely accepted guidelines. Thus, initiation of 'Jihad' can be firstly for 'self defense', secondly for 'revolution' against unjust rule, and thirdly for the 'implementation of the holy law or Shariah'. The Islamists of the day generally take recourse to the later two reasons to invoke and justify their call for 'Jihad'.⁷ It has also been an accepted norm that 'Jihad' must be instigated by the call of a proper authority. This authority has been vested from time to time in either the central theologian or 'Imam' or an accepted high ranking 'ulema' (the class of religious scholars) or the ruler backed by the chief religious head. Despite these norms, there are numerous instances when such opinion has been ignored and the initiation is a result of literal interpretation of the 'holy Koran' to wage fight against the non-believers. Youssef Choueiri has enunciated a Clausewitzian paradigm⁸ in his book *Islamic Fundamentalism*. According to him 'Jihad' is the continuation of God's politics by other means'. It is an obligation to wage 'Jihad' whenever legal rules and tenets of Islam are violated or neglected. In this context 'Jihad' is seen as a form of political struggle to disarm the enemy and allow Islam to apply its 'Shariah' unhindered. It is also perceived that the central purpose of the 'Jihad' is obtained by the mere removal of the political

obstacle and forcible conversions have no links with 'Jihad'. This explanation outlines the notion of *jus ad bellum* in Islam. The holy Koran also outlines the notion of *jus in bello* and postulates that discrimination and proportionality must be employed in the prosecution of the 'Jihad'.

The 'Holy Koran', as well as the early sources of Islamic jurisprudence make a distinction between combatants and non-combatants, the treatment of women and children, and even the members of other religious orders, unless they are engaged in direct combat themselves. The 'Mujahadin' or the holy warriors engaged in 'Jihad' are also instructed to practice proportionality and restraint in their combat as part of 'Jihad'. Nevertheless, all these are interpretations based on how and in what context the interpretation has been attempted and the personality involved in executing the interpretation. There is no accepted '*doctrine of just war*' in Islam. There is, however, enough literature to apply various permutations of 'Koranic interpretation' as per the situation and the need to implement the 'Shariah'. The modern 'Jihad', whether called for by a state actor or an Islamic movement, involves the reinterpretation of concepts from classical writings and their articulation in the modern idiom. Hence, manipulation of group dynamics by the religious leadership, affects both the style and intensity of the violent conflict. Conflict entrepreneurs or religious ideologues are often employed to reframe a conflict in religious terms and to convince the population that it is the religiously sanctioned 'Jihad'. Thus 'Jihad' forms a rhetoric, which justifies violence.

THE ORIGIN OF THE TALIBAN.

The capture of the capital city of Kabul in September 1996, and the subsequent control of Mazar-e-Sharif in August 1998, brought the Taliban to the fore and they became the predominant group controlling a major part of Afghanistan. What attracted attention of the world was their seemingly inconspicuous entry into the ethnically divided battle zone of Afghanistan, their quick success and the harsh repressive policies promulgated by them. The emergence of an assertive and rabidly ultra conservative Taliban also placed obstacles in the way of humanitarian aid and nation building programs started under the aegis of the United Nations. It is important to understand who the Taliban are and the phenomenon of their meteoric rise, as well as success, in controlling the better part of the territories of Afghanistan.

'Talibs' and 'Imams' have been a part of Islamic socio-cultural traditions for the better part of the history of Islam itself. 'Talib' means a student while 'Imam' implies a teacher. The concept of the 'Talib' has long been known all over the Northwest Province of British India and the adjoining areas of Afghanistan. This was recorded as such by Sir Winston Churchill in 1898. He mentioned them as wandering 'Talib-ul-ilms', corresponding to the theological students in

Turkey and living free at the expense of the people.⁹ Thus the Mullah, Imam and the Talib have been an integral part of the historic religious culture of Afghanistan. They had specific roles in the social fabric. It was mainly due to the profound devotion of these figures to their religious, cultural and social responsibilities that the general public held them in esteem. This was also the reason why their daily necessities and expenditures were met through voluntary contributions. Traditionally the land owning class and the peasantry donated a certain fixed percentage of their agricultural produce for the upkeep of the village Mullah and the Talibs under him. On their part, the Mullah and the Talibs carried out their religious and cultural duties. These included teaching the children the rudiments of the religion; carrying out marriage ceremonies; naming children; saying out the burial prayers at the death and burial service; performing the Azan (the call for prayer from the Mosque); and leading the five-time daily prayers. Being a Talib constitutes the first stage for becoming a Mullah. No one can join the ranks of the Mullah without first having been a Talib. Similarly all Talibs land up becoming Mullahs, once their religious education has been completed and their knowledge considered as adequate to meet the religious needs. The Afghans have looked upon the Mullah and the Talibs as consecrated and somewhat privileged class in religious order. The Mullahs and their Talibs have figured prominently in times of crisis as rallying figures to fight for the religion. In the second Anglo-Afghan war of 1879, Mullah Moshki Alam gave the call for Jihad against the British. He also led the Kabul uprising.¹⁰

The Taliban phenomenon, therefore, is not totally new to Afghanistan. Let us now trace the rise of the present movement. A large number of resistance groups participated in the anti-Soviet campaign organized and financed by the United States, through Pakistan. The Mullahs, Imams and the Talibs became an important part of the recruitment drive in the rural areas. In fact a large number of them joined the ranks of the Mujahadin and were prominent in the 'Harkat-e-Inqalabi-e-Islami' (Movement of the Islamic Uprising).¹¹ It is also important to understand the fact that this group, of religious preacher and student combine, had become somewhat marginalised as a result of years of state building by the royal regime and subsequently the communists. The state and nation building process had created its own elite which included Islamic scholars and judicial officials trained in modern schools and universities. The internecine battle of past two decades also resulted in the eclipse of the new elite or the modernizing group, as each faction that came to power, decimated the intelligentsia of its rivals. At the same time, as millions of Afghans became refugees, the educational system collapsed and the only way of education was the religious 'madrassa' (literal meaning is school) of the rural areas. Since 1978, the children attaining school age have had their education primarily in the 'madrassas'. Hence, a whole generation has had no other formal schooling except that

imparted by the Mullahs. They also had the inherent urge to once again come to the fore in the Afghan society after having been sidelined by the modernization and nation building process.

The present 'Taliban' movement came up as a response to the failure of the 'Mujahidin' to establish a stable government after the Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of subsequent governments.¹² The movement was led by Mullah Muhammad Umar with a group of 'madrassa' teachers and students basically of the Durrani Pashtun clan. The mission was to end the tyrannical power of the various mujahadin warlords and establish a pure Islamic regime. The movement succeeded largely because of the military aid provided by Pakistan and the financial backing given by Saudi Arabia. This aid enabled them to gain control of Kandhar in October-November 1994 and almost 85 percent of the country by August 1998. It is also interesting to note that in the advance of the Taliban, it was mostly the power of money that played an important role rather than the much-touted military capabilities, as war weary Pashtun warlords were bought off by finances made available by Saudi Arabia.¹³

THE TRUE FACE OF THE TALIBAN.

The groundwork for the coming together of the Taliban was laid outside Afghanistan, in the refugee camps in Pakistani provinces of Baluchistan and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Most of these refugee Afghans (predominantly Durrani Pashtuns) were from the landless and poor strata of the Afghan society. The younger lot had been brought up in the refugee camps themselves and had no memories of or attachment of any home in Afghanistan. As far as the older lot was concerned, they were composed of mercenaries, members of smuggling gangs making their living in drug and arms smuggling, dropouts from Mujahidin bands for some misdemeanor and generally a lot with no sense of social obligation. The Mullahs and their Talibs, wielded power in such a conglomerate and gave the group the sense of moral superiority.

The Madrassas in the refugee camps were run by the 'Jamait-e-Ulema-e-Islam', a fundamentalist sect tracing its lineage to the Deoband School of ultra Islamic conservatism, with origins in India. The schools run under their aegis specialized in indoctrinating young Afghans to follow a highly puritanical version of Islam and medieval policies. The main leaders of the Taliban organization also came from other seminaries of the Jamait. Mullah Mohammed Omar and three of his six key subordinates are a product of the madrassas run by the Jamait in Karachi, Pakistan. The fighting force of the Taliban was a result of the turf battle between Pakistan's Interior Ministry headed by General Nasiruddin Babar and the Inter-Service Intelligence agency (ISI), during the second term of Benazir Bhutto as the Prime minister.¹⁴ In

Babar's view the madrassa students provided an opportunity to open another track as a parallel force to the ISI sponsored Mujahadin group led by Gulbuddin Hikmetyar. The ISI opposed the move as it felt that the duo of Babar and Bhutto were trying to cut down their turf. Babar persisted and was perceptive enough to visualize the potential of religiously indoctrinated Taliban, as a counter to corrupt Mujahadin, in the game plan to lay the foundations of a pro-Pakistan and dependent regime in Afghanistan.

Through the 1980's and early 1990's the ISI had channeled more arms and money from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of United States, to Hekmetyar's radical-fundamentalist faction than to any other Mujahadin group.¹⁵ Hekmetyar's attraction for the ISI lay in the fact that he had very little grassroots support inside Afghanistan itself and was thus beholden and dependent on the Pakistani's. In Babar and Bhutto's calculations this became a serious flaw. In their calculus Hekmetyar could never consolidate power to the extent that was desired by Pakistan to safeguard the land routes to the potential oil states of Central Asia.¹⁶ Thus, the decision to prop up Taliban was taken as a solution to Pakistan's problem. The Taliban were thus provided with money, fuel, and supplies to sustain them along with vehicles, weapons and volunteers from Pakistani madrassas.¹⁷

The Taliban grew in strength and importance when the Jamait's Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman joined the coalition government of Benazir Bhutto. Rehman, in his capacity as the chairman of the National assembly's standing committee on foreign affairs, lobbied for both moral and financial support for the Taliban in the US and Europe. His pitch was that the Taliban were Islamic moderates and once in power would stop the flow of drugs from Afghanistan as also wind up the terrorist camps there.¹⁸ He also lobbied in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. The result was broad support and acceptance of the Taliban as well as major financial backing from Saudi Arabia. The ties with the Taliban were further cemented when Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal visited Pakistan in 1996.¹⁹ The flow of Central Asian oil and gas through Afghanistan to seaports in Pakistan was a major economic spin off consideration for ensuring a pliant regime in Afghanistan.²⁰ Apparently the United States was also backing a US oil company Unocal, for the project of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Pakistan. An Argentinean company Bridas was also in the fray with its own financial supporters.²¹

These interests ensured that the Taliban could be propped up both militarily and financially through multifarious sources. The *fuel permits* mafia in Pakistan also played an important support role. Their modus was based on the permits issued by the provincial governments of Baluchistan and NWFP to tribal chiefs in Afghanistan for buying food in

Pakistan to supply the Mujahadin fighting the Soviets. The Taliban with their Jamait credentials were given access to businessmen close to Asif Zardari, husband of Prime Minister Bhutto, and monopolized the permits to export fuel to Afghanistan. These permits became major revenue earners for both the Taliban and the Pakistani businessmen and created a core of politicians and business interest groups who had a vested interest in backing and promoting the Taliban. The greater the success Taliban achieved, more the demand went up for fuel and food from Pakistan and brought more revenue to businessmen and politicians.²² Another source of financial support came in the form of the *truck transport* mafia. Pashtuns, of the same clan as the Taliban, dominated the truck trade. This created natural affinity and bondage. The *truck trade mafia* was interested in expanding its trade and smuggling operations across Afghanistan to Iran and Central Asian Republics. The local warlords around Kandhar checked them. The Taliban came to their rescue and the warlords were bought off and chased away²³. The *truck Mafia* played a crucial role in putting the Taliban on to drug trade for their revenue. This trade is the most lucrative source of Taliban revenues.²⁴

The period from late 1994 to summer of 1995 proved crucial for the rise of the Taliban. During this period Pakistan became more disillusioned with Hekmetyar, as he was unable to capture Kabul from Rabbani and Masood. The Taliban now got full support from the ISI as well



FIGURE 3- MAIN TOWNS

as the Pakistani Army. The ISI also brought in hundreds of ex Afghan army men who had fled the country after failing to overthrow the communist President Najibullah.²⁵ Coincidentally the majority was 'Durrani Pashtuns', who were more than willing, to take part in any endeavor which reasserted their clan. They also provided a military organization and tactical backup to ensure better operational efficiency. The Pakistani artillery and other suitable combat as well as service support elements were also grouped with the Taliban militia as it moved to assert itself.²⁶ The

Taliban juggernaut steadily moved from Spin Boldak (a trucking halt on the border opposite the Pakistani border town Chaman) to Kandhar to Ghazni and onwards to Kabul. The capture of Ghazni was also the turning point when the ISI and the Pakistan Army decided to dump Hekmetyar and throw the full weight of their support behind the Taliban.

Thus, it was not a coincidence, that by February 1995 the Taliban forces had become 10,000 strong from a few hundred only four months earlier. They now had tanks, artillery, good communication systems and were organized into mobile, tactically flexible units capable of even undertaking night operations.²⁷

The hand of the Pakistan Army in this organization and training was clearly visible. The support also extended to Pakistani personnel fighting alongside the Taliban to ensure that a hardcore of well-trained and motivated fighters was available to bolster the morale and the fighting capabilities of the Taliban. This is borne out by the reports of approximately 500



Pakistani personnel being captured by the Northern Alliance of President

FIGURE 4- TALIBAN ON WAY TO KABUL

Rabbani.²⁸ As many as 200 Pakistani's were also killed during the first Taliban attack against Mazar-i-Sharif in 1997. The Taliban leadership acknowledged the presence of Pakistani fighters as volunteers taking part in a Jihad against a tyrannical regime.²⁹

The Taliban successes were a result of better organization, good command and control setup, an excellent logistics support structure and the speed of advance. All these factors were further enhanced by fifth column activities and huge bribes to buy off commanders of various factions to weaken the resistance.³⁰ The funds provided by Saudi Arabia, through the

ISI, helped in this process. The Taliban are reported to have paid the Hezb commander, Abdul Malik Pehalwan, a sum of 200 million dollars to desert General Dostum.³¹ The crisis, in the month of May 1997, in Mazar-i-Sharif actually exposed the weakness of the Taliban. Hundreds of Taliban fighters were gruesomely massacred when fight broke out between them and the supporters of Pehalwan. This came about just three days after Pakistan had recognized the Taliban at a hastily organized press conference, following their apparent victory over the Dostum-Pehalwan combine at Mazar-i-Sharif. Almost 2000 Taliban fighters were killed in these skirmishes and it exposed to the world their actual military prowess. It also placed a question mark on the durability of the Taliban phenomenon since "if nothing succeeds like success then nothing fails like failure."³²

To summarize, it can be said that the Taliban are the young men originating from the fundamentalist Islamic schools in Pakistan. They are led by mullahs from these schools and the leadership is basically confined to adherents of the Jamait-e-Ulema-e-Islam based in Pakistan. All of them profess the Sunni faith in Islam and are essentially composed of the Pashtuns. The Durrani sect of the Pashtuns claims the majority. The organization has active support of Pakistan and their military success appears primarily due to this support. It would also be appropriate to conclude that the ranks of Taliban swelled due to volunteers from Pakistani madrassas and even by unemployed men from the Punjab and Sind³³ regions of Pakistan along with some Arab, Kurd and other mercenaries. The Pakistani support is designed to cater for a pliant regime in Kabul. Such an arrangement would actively assist Pakistan in attaining its strategic objectives in the region. The extreme Sunni image meets Saudi approval, as it sees the Taliban as a counter against its political rival – Shia Iran. The Taliban have imposed their own extremely conservative interpretation of Islam, based on the refugee camp mentality where they have grown up.³⁴

So far the Taliban have conducted themselves like an army of occupation. The Amnesty International and other Human Rights groups have documented their atrocities against the other minority groups and the women in detail. The human rights groups have coined the name “Devil’s Militia” for them.³⁵ They rule by instilling fear and by being brutal rather than by commanding support for their ideals. Despite the religious cloak that they wear, they have embarked on realizing revenues through the drug trade. The reports indicate that opium cultivation has received their active support and Afghanistan ranks as the largest heroin producer in the world.³⁶ They have restored order in the areas captured by disarming the population, especially those not from their own clan. No institutions have been built to sustain the rule and establish governance. The future of the Taliban appears uncertain, since, Afghanistan has basically been a conglomerate of tribal and ethnic identities, comprising anarchic mountain people who have historically come together for their own interests to beat back foreign domination. Left alone, they are more likely to maintain their tribal socio-cultural independence and resist domination by any other tribal group.

RENTIER STATE THEORY AND APPLICABILITY FOR AFGHANISTAN.

Barnett R. Rubin, Director of the ‘Center for Preventive Action Council on Foreign Relations’ is considered an expert scholar on Afghanistan. In October 1998 he gave testimony on the situation in Afghanistan to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. He has also carried out a very detailed historical and situational analysis of events in Afghanistan in

his book "The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System." Rubin has advocated the concept of rentier state in the context of Afghanistan, based on his incisive historical analysis of the pattern of the formation and subsequent collapse of Afghanistan as a state.³⁷ In this hypothesis, a rentier state implies a state with no indigenous natural resources or an agricultural base that can sustain the economy of the state.

When we apply this criteria to Afghanistan we find that over a period of time the state has existed mainly on outside resources. Only twelve percent of the land area of Afghanistan is arable land. The problems are further compounded by lack of water for irrigation purposes.³⁸ Hence, it has lacked a sufficient agricultural economy to sustain the economic demands of nationhood. Historically, the economic resources in Afghanistan have been garnered, by taxing the caravans plying the 'silk route'; by forays into neighboring richer areas of India and Iran for loot and plunder; and by external aid from the British in the colonial era of competition with the Russian empire. Between 1955-1978, Soviet Union provided nearly \$ 1.25 billion in economic aid and \$ 1.27 billion in military aid.³⁹ It was also the preferential trade partner and allowed trade at terms favorable to Afghanistan. Afghanistan has never been able to exercise tight control over all its tribal entities in order to draw up a worthwhile and sustainable taxation structure. As per available figures, in 1978 the peasants and nomads paid no taxes to the government. The government of the day was able to collect minimal tax revenue from the peasants in the river valleys but had no control over the nomads of the hill regions.

In these circumstances, the concept of statehood was built around a charismatic military leader uniting the tribes with the promise of sharing the loot, or by coercion and subsequently sustaining it by surviving on foreign aid. This has generally involved Pashtun rulers, using external resources to meet the economic demands of the state and to manipulate ethnically heterogeneous tribal society to sustain their rule. The demise of the ruler or the end of the foreign aid has generally led to the fracturing of the state along tribal entities. It appears that this approach has been used by Pakistan in working out their options in post- Soviet withdrawal period in Afghanistan. To control the rentier state, Pakistan embarked on providing military muscle and arms to bring up an allied and pliant group, Saudi Arabia was roped in to provide the finances needed to run the state and buy the loyalties of various tribal groups. The initial support to the Taliban by United States was based probably on ushering stability for humanitarian assistance. Subsequently, the lobbying by oil firms could have brought in the interest in the opening of the oil and gas routes to the Central Asian Republics.⁴⁰ The cash inflow through taxes on flow of oil and gas was seen as future stabilization factor for the regime propped up in this calculus.

REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

PAKISTAN.

Pakistan has the closest and the strongest links with Afghanistan. The Taliban have come up through the 'madrassas' in Pakistan and have had very active political, financial and military support from Pakistan. As brought out earlier, the Taliban were propped up by the democratic government of Benazir Bhutto to create a pliant regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan has always been strategically concerned with Afghanistan. The confrontation in the east with India; the loss of its eastern half when Bangladesh came into being in the 1971 civil war; and the historic challenge posed by an ethnically similar population of Pashtuns spanning the border province of NWFP and adjoining areas in Afghanistan, making demands of separate 'Pakhtunistan', have been a great cause of concern for Pakistan. It needs to be recalled that Afghanistan was the only country voting against the admission of Pakistan to the United Nations.

Pakistan saw the civil war in Afghanistan as a window of opportunity to obtain a secure border on its West and North and gain strategic depth against India. Successive governments in Pakistan, regardless of their ideology, have followed this goal with a single-minded devotion. General Zia chalked out his own game plan while offering to act as the front line state for the US efforts to check the Soviets. Pakistan and its ISI have supported and worked diligently to bring up an Islamist rather than a nationalist group in Afghanistan. The logic was that an Islamist regime would not create problems against a fellow Muslim state as compared to a nationalist group, which is more likely to raise issues along the border region inhabited by the same ethnic group. The involvement of Pakistan in the resistance movement, and as the conduit for military and financial aid for the 'Mujahadin' from the US, also helped to bring up many Pashtuns into the military and political elite. This helped to assuage the Pashtun feelings of neglect and domination by the Punjabi clique. Incorporation of Pashtuns also enabled them to exercise clientelistic control and influence over Pashtun groups in Afghanistan. This has also allowed Pakistan to successfully sever the Delhi-Kabul axis, which had strategically troubled it in the past.⁴¹

In leveraging for a pliant regime in Afghanistan, Islamabad also saw the opening up of Central Asian Republics as a major source of economic and diplomatic gain. The proposal for laying pipelines through Afghanistan for oil and gas from Central Asian Republics and the revenue generation has been a major consideration. This primarily affected Pakistan, however, Saudi Arabia also extended the financial support due to involvement of its oil company in collaboration with the US company.⁴² In assessing the effects of the rise of the Taliban on

Pakistan, one also must keep in mind that the Taliban have been brought up and nurtured in the madrassas in Pakistan. Most of the Taliban leaders have graduated from Dar-ul-ulum-Haqqania in NWFP and Jamia-ulum-ul-Islamia in Karachi. They have strong links with the fundamentalist political party Jamait-ul-ulema-e-Islam. Volunteer Pakistani nationals from the madrassas in Pakistan have bolstered the Taliban forces. At the same time the *trucking and drug smuggling mafia* has closely supported the Taliban for their own vested interests. This support and the finances involved in both these trades have their own dynamics. The result of these and the war in Afghanistan has manifested in an increased flow of arms, drugs and easy money in Pakistan. This has added to both social and political tensions.⁴³

The Taliban phenomenon has also given a fillip to conservative and fundamentalist forces and created internal religious tensions. The madrassa network encouraged by General Zia is creating its own radical fundamentalists and creating an upsurge of religious conservatism in Pakistan. The Sunni and Shia rivalry, separatist aspirations of Baluch and Sindhi populations, and the urge of Islamists to copy the Taliban vision of society does not bode well for Pakistan. As aptly summarized by Rashid “*the threat of an Islamic revolution in Pakistan has never been greater.*”⁴⁴ Recently, when Pakistan’s Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider criticized the Islamic parties conclave for their brazen display of arms, the leader of the faction of Jamait-e-Ulema-e-Islam retorted back that the weapons were displayed to demonstrate to the United States that the Muslims are not weak.⁴⁵ The closeness of association with Taliban has brought gun culture, increased involvement in drug trade and religious fundamentalism with extremist overtones in the society. Thus, it appears that instead of Afghanistan providing the strategic depth to Pakistan, it is Pakistan, which is now providing the strategic back up to the Taliban. This fatal embrace needs to be taken note of, as Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons.

On the social front, the Islamists in Pakistan are already extolling the Taliban code for women in Afghanistan and making demands for a similar code in Pakistan. The plight of women in Afghanistan has been well documented by various human rights groups as also the State Department’s report on Human Rights Practices in Afghanistan⁴⁶ and needs no further elaboration. Its extension into Pakistan would certainly be a great tragedy. All evidence leads to the conclusion that Pakistan (or more specifically the various madrassas there) has become the fountainhead of Islamic militancy. The fundamentalist organizations nurturing these madrassas with Saudi finances want to seek a greater role by internationalizing the spread of their brand of Islam through the cadre prepared by them. Hence, we find Pakistani trained Islamic militants not only in Kashmir but also in Chechnya, Dagestan, and as per recent reports even in Albania making efforts to woo support in Kosovo.⁴⁷

As we analyze the shape of affairs and the relationship of Pakistan with Taliban, it is clear that with more than 2500 madrassas churning out future warriors for the Islamic cause, the political future of Pakistan has a big question mark. What is certain is that Islamic and fundamentalist forces, with the Taliban as their guiding figures, will increase their influence and bring in more uncertainties in the already fragile polity of Pakistan. The time frame for the Islamic hard-liners to coalesce cannot be predicted but their rise to predominant position is certain in the near future. Despite the close ties Pakistani security and intelligence agencies have with the Taliban, the latter do not appear to be totally under Pakistani control. The Taliban have been able to exploit the differences in the various political, religious and governmental organizations and manipulate them to their advantage.⁴⁸ Pakistan has also proved incapable of controlling the religious and other organizations, which support Taliban. The *drug cartels*, *smuggling mafia*, *truckers mafia* and the petty politicians looking for financial gains have created their own vested interests which increases sectarian violence and domestic turmoil. Afghanistan will survive the Taliban phenomenon, but it is uncertain if Pakistan will be able to.⁴⁹ It is also clear that dismantling the entrenched fundamentalism; militancy and criminalization will be very difficult indeed. Any attempts by the present military regime will lead to greater internal conflict. It would not be wrong to assume that Pakistan is also a very possible candidate to join the list of failed states in the foreseeable future.

IRAN.

Iran shares a long border with Afghanistan. It had provided refuge to a large population of Afghanis during the period of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The developments in Afghanistan have considerable impact on the Iranian population in the contiguous provinces. Iran had hoped that the withdrawal of Soviet forces would lead to the return of Afghan refugees. Not only has this not taken place due to the internecine civil conflict amongst various tribes and ethnic groups, but the raging civil strife has added to more refugees flowing into Iran.⁵⁰ The refugee influx has led to the spread of contagious diseases, gunrunning and drug smuggling. Iran also tried to play a mediator's role amongst the various groups after the Soviet withdrawal and even appointed a special representative in its foreign ministry as 'in-charge of the Afghan affairs'. After the occupation of Kabul by the Taliban, Iran hosted a regional conference, which was attended by delegates from Russia, Pakistan, India, China, Central Asian Republics (except Uzbekistan), the European Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the representative of the United Nations.⁵¹ The Taliban and Saudi Arabia did not send their

representatives despite being invited. The 'Sunni' Taliban have shown their mistrust towards 'Shia' Iran right from the inception of gaining power, over major part of Afghanistan.

Iran's links to various Afghan groups have changed and deepened over a period of time. A study of Iranian policy towards Afghanistan highlights that the policy is dictated by a combination of factors. The first is the solidarity with the Shia population in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. The next, is the strategic concern over the embargo by the United States and the need felt to open better links to the Central Asian Republics. The next factor is the rivalry with Saudi Arabia. Hence, we find that Iran has reacted forcefully to the Taliban advances in the Northern part of Afghanistan, where the Shia population resides. It is also important to bring out that Iran originally became involved through its links with the revolutionary groups that took control of the Hazarajat area in 1979.⁵² Iran united all the Shia groups in 1988 into Hizb-i-Wahadat and pressed for their inclusion in the international negotiations dominated by Sunni groups supported by the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.⁵³ In Iranian perspective, after the Soviet withdrawal, it was the Soviet backed Kabul government which was ensuring that the *Sunni Wahhabi* groups are not allowed to take over power in Afghanistan. Hence, it did not support the Shia groups making war with Kabul during this period.⁵⁴ The rise of the Taliban has led Iran to adopt a more active posture in terms of economic and military support to the Shia groups. Iran has also been instrumental in cobbling together the Northern Alliance and is the main supporter for their economic and military needs. Iran has been deeply concerned with the future of the Shia population in Afghanistan especially after the Taliban atrocities in Herat, Hazarajat and Mazar-i-Sharif against the Shia community. The massacre of Iranian diplomats by the Taliban in 1998 further exacerbated the bad relations between the Taliban and Iran.

In strategic terms, Iran has considered the opening up of the Caucasus and the Caspian basin more important to it than Pakistan. Iran borders the Caspian region and shares borders with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. The route through Iran for the region's oil and gas is the shortest to the sea. Iran and Turkey have been confabulating on joint enterprise to tap the oil and gas resources from the Caspian basin.⁵⁵ This venture would allow the Central Asian Republics to gain more economic independence from Russia. Hence, the support extended by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as also the involvement of American oil company Unocal, was seen by Iran as a part of US plan to encircle and isolate Iran.⁵⁶ Iran's opposition to the Taliban is a product of both the ideological and strategic considerations. Iran sees Pakistan, backed by Saudi Arabia, as the main player supporting Taliban and trying to obtain leverages detrimental to Iran's interests. The rivalry thus formed between Iran and Pakistan, which is also eyeing the

Caspian basin, has probably become the major source of support for the continuing conflict in Afghanistan.

Iran is affected by the Shia-Sunni divide and radical posture of the Taliban who are Sunni extremists. Tehran may be tempted to try a more direct engagement of Pakistan if its present set of initiatives against the Taliban does not yield desired results. It is possible for Iran to engineer an insurgency in Pakistani Baluchistan, which is contiguous to Iranian Baluchistan. The Baluchis in Pakistan have been making demands for a separate homeland to get out of the dominance of the Punjabis. The Iranian regime has presented a more moderate face in the recent past and there are tentative indications of a thaw in relations with the United States. At the same time, the presence and support by the Taliban for Saudi dissident Osama-Bin-Laden has cooled the Saudi support for Taliban. Iran on other hand has moved ahead to take out the chill from its relations with Saudi Arabia. All these steps imply that Iran is seeking to isolate Pakistan as the sole supporter of the Taliban and the terrorist activities undertaken by Osama-Bin Laden. Historically, Persia exercised a strong cultural influence over the Central Asian region before the Russian conquests. Iran clearly sees its role in the region in this historical perspective. The Central Asian Republics would also be eager to collaborate with Iran in the oil and gas spheres since, it not only provides the shortest route, but Iran's credibility is also high being one of the oldest oil producers in the world. Thus, the rise of the Taliban appears to have stimulated an Islamic fundamentalist competition for influence in Central Asia.

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

The term Central Asian Republics include the five separate states that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union: *Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan*. These states did not exist prior to the drawing of the Soviet republican boundaries and hence, in the centuries before the Russian conquests there has been substantial transmigration of various ethnic groups in the region. The various groups were identified by the clan they belonged to or by either their being Turkic speaking or Persian speaking.⁵⁷ The present borders include various ethnic groups in each of the new states. Tajikistan has Uzbeks in Khojent province; Kyrgyzstan has Uzbeks in the Osh area of the Fergana valley. Chimekant region of Kazakhstan also has Uzbeks. Tajiks are a substantial group in Bukhara and Samarkand areas of Uzbekistan as also are a large number of Kazakhs. Kazakhstan has a large population of Russians, Ukrainians and Germans in its northern part. Hence, this is a complicated region with strong ties to Russia. The region feels directly threatened by the happenings in Afghanistan, especially the rise of fundamentalist forces. As

individual states, the threat faced is in terms of spill over of fundamentalist forces to trigger anti-regime Islamic movements, drug trafficking, and the migration of refugees from Afghanistan. The threat perception gets magnified due to similar ethnic composition along the border areas and the clan loyalties that spill across. The drug trade poses the greatest challenge. It is not only leading to the corruption of security officials, but it is also giving rise to an indigenous drug trade within the Central Asian Republics. The civil war in Afghanistan has also affected the region financially. The five states were hoping to better their economies by reducing dependence on Russia and seeking trade with other nations through Afghanistan.⁵⁸ The Iranian route was not accorded a priority because of US sanctions against Iran and its limited links to other nations. Consequently, the civil strife in Afghanistan has ensured that Russian influence remains intact.

Let us now consider each of these states and the security threat perceived by them from Afghanistan. *Tajikistan* perceives a direct threat due to the fact that Tajik opposition had functioned from Afghanistan and had safe sanctuaries there. *Uzbekistan* is concerned about the stability of the border region it shares with both Afghanistan and Tajikistan due to the ethnic composition of the population. The migration of Uzbeks and Tajiks from Afghanistan, due to nontolerance exhibited by the Taliban towards other ethnic groups, is also an area of concern as it upsets the delicate ethnic balance in these two states. *Turkmenistan* appears to face a direct security threat, but it seems to have responded to the economic necessity rather than the security threat. Out of its concern for the need to transport goods through Afghanistan, it has kept itself away from any Central Asian efforts to isolate the Taliban. It has also not directly recognized the Taliban government. As the project of pipelines through Afghanistan got delayed and then abandoned, Turkmenistan entered into agreement with Iran for shipping out its oil. Iran has also agreed to create suitable railroad infrastructure for this purpose. Of the remaining states, *Kyrgyzstan* is affected the most by the drug trade and the refugees coming from Tajikistan. *Kazakhstan* seems to have been the least affected by the Afghan situation so far. In terms of response, Uzbekistan has tried to influence the military situation in Northern Afghanistan. It is likely to continue to be involved in supporting the Uzbeks.⁵⁹ Turkmenistan has served as a supplier and conduit of military aid. These states will continue to watch the situation and are not likely to support the Taliban. In general, the region is increasingly concerned about the prospect of the rise of fundamentalist forces influenced by the Taliban.⁶⁰

CHINA

China has the largest concentration of Muslim population in East Asia and this segment of population is considered important in terms of national security concerns by the Chinese government. The three bomb explosions in February, 1997 in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, which is the Muslim majority province, is a reminder of this concern. Reportedly the explosions caused seven fatalities and 67 injuries.⁶¹ The Urumqi explosions are the confirmation of the rising tempo of Islamic fundamentalism and militancy in Xinjiang and the rising concern China harbors in this context at the happenings in Afghanistan.⁶² Historically, Xinjiang became part of China in the closing decades of the Ching dynasty about a century ago. The province has been known for frequent rebellions and the territories have changed hands between China and Russia. There has even been self-rule by the Turkic inhabitants from 1944 to 1949. The communists amalgamated the region, after conquest in 1949, and it became one of the five autonomous regions of China. The Chinese policy of assimilation during the last 50 years has ensured that the Han population has gone up from 15 percent in 1950 to 38 percent in recent years.⁶³ This figure will change drastically when the east-west rail link to span the province is completed. This migration of and settling of the Han is a major irritant and source of discord. The Uighurs are very angry with this.⁶⁴ Islamic militancy came to the fore in mid 1980's as a consequence of large Islamic militant force raised to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁶⁵ Since then, the militant activities have been on the rise. Large numbers of Uighurs undertook studies and training in the madrassas run in Pakistan and have been indoctrinated on the Taliban pattern.⁶⁶ The Uighurs harbor deep animosity towards the Chinese not only because of religion but also because the Han population treats them as ignorant barbarians. The madrassa training and the rise of fellow Talibs in Afghanistan are a great motivating force to spur the militancy in Xinjiang.⁶⁷ The Chinese authorities view these developments seriously.

The rise of the Taliban has serious implications for China. The Taliban phenomenon strengthens the separatist forces. Pakistani madrassas and the Jamait-i-Islam party are too happy to train the Uighurs or for that matter any Muslim from any other country as part of their philosophy to spread Islam. It is also possible that some of the mercenary Afghans, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz Islamists may have linked up with the Uighur movement to make it more potent. In this milieu, China is attempting to follow a two-pronged strategy. First, on the domestic front, China has adopted a hard and ruthless approach to curb Islamic militancy. Bans have been imposed on building of mosques, prayers and religious congregations. At the same time the policy of 'Han Inundation' to change the demographics is being pursued vigorously along with economic

development, with the hope that prosperity will kill the separatist and Islamic sentiments.⁶⁸ Second, China is pursuing diplomatic initiatives to better its relations with the Islamic states. Trade is an important part of this initiative. Aim being that the countries concerned can be persuaded that it is not in their economic interests to support Islamic movement in China. China has major economic stakes in Xinjiang, as the two most promising oil basins, viz. Tarim and Turpan, are located in Xinjiang.

As part of this strategy, reportedly, a Chinese delegation met with the Taliban leader Mullah Omar with a proposal to help against fresh sanctions by the United Nations. Their Ambassador in Pakistan led the Chinese team.⁶⁹ It is interesting to note that China has tried to placate the Taliban by promising military assistance and training in a bid to extract a commitment that they would not support any Islamic movement in Xinjiang. There have been media reports to the effect that the Taliban had permitted Chinese missile experts to take the unexploded cruise missile fired by United States at Laden's camps. The Taliban too have tried to woo China by using the good offices of Pakistan, which maintains close relations with China. Their motive has been to get military and financial aid. China, as part of its strategy to contain the support for the Islamic militancy in the Xinjiang province, has been willing to help. The drug trade also causes concerns in China as routes have been carved out, by the drug cartels with Taliban connivance, into Xinjiang to feed a growing addict population. The Chinese are also concerned with the ramification of militant groups using the drug trade to finance their movement.⁷⁰

China, despite the overtures to the Taliban, is cautious and has not severed links with the Northern Alliance. The Northern Alliance headed by Rabbani has an embassy in Beijing and its representative in the United Nations is recognized by China as the official representative of Afghanistan. This is so despite China's relations with Pakistan, which only recognizes the Taliban and actively seeks support for them. The reason for support to the Northern Alliance fits into the Chinese strategy. The alliance controls the strategic Wakhan corridor, which borders Xinjiang. Wakhan provides the shortest route to push drugs and support for Islamic militants in Xinjiang.

RUSSIA

Russia does not have a common border with all the Central Asian Republics but has strategic interest in ensuring that the Central Asian Republics, despite their independence, remain closely allied to Russia. A key concern of Russia is the rise of fundamentalist and radical Islamic movements supported by the Taliban and Pakistan. Russia has blamed Pakistan for

training Islamic terrorists and sending mercenaries to fight in Chechnya and Dagestan.⁷¹ Russia is concerned about Taliban fundamentalism spreading into the Central Asian Republics and the support that can be garnered from Afghanistan and Pakistan in this context. To check the Taliban initiatives, Russia has strengthened the troop deployment in the Central Asian Republics.⁷² However, Russia would not like to get involved directly in Afghanistan, since it has experienced the morass there.

The economy is another factor of importance for Russia. It would like to ensure that Central Asian States remain integrated to its economy. Russia is also keen to control the vast oil and gas potential of the region. Russia uses the threat posed by the Taliban to maintain a considerable level of economic and political influence in the region. The instability works in favor of Russia as it delays the construction of oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian. This ensures that the export of petroleum products from the Central Asian Republics remains in Russian hands. Russia would remain keen to work on any arrangement that stalls Taliban and thus it provides support to the Northern Alliance. The main concerns in the Russian context are terrorism, drug trafficking, the spread of Islamic militancy in the Central Asian region, and the refugee influx into the Central Asian Republics if the Taliban capture the Northern part of Afghanistan. As one looks at it, there may be a convergence of strategic interests of Russia and China on the threat posed by the rise of Taliban.

INDIA

India does not share a common border with Afghanistan but has been involved in Afghan affairs for a long time. Afghanistan had a very sizeable Hindu population involved in trade and commerce and they had lived in Afghanistan for centuries till their ouster during the period of 'Afghan Jihad' against the Soviets. During the period before the invasion by the Soviet Union there were a large number of Indian professionals in the fields of medicine, engineering and higher education. The Indo-Afghan relations were based on the fact that Afghanistan had not accepted the Durand line, drawn by the British as the dividing line between it and Pakistan, at the time of the partition of India.⁷³ Thus, mutual antagonism towards the formation of Pakistan shaped the relations between the two countries. The rise of Taliban, trained, indoctrinated and supported militarily and financially by Pakistan has security implications for India. There also has been greater interest by fundamentalist organizations after the Taliban successes. There have been reports of to greater interest by Saudi Arabia in financing activities of fundamentalist preachers and organizations in India.⁷⁴ This is important when we analyze the consequences of

the rise of a force, which is rabidly fundamentalist and militant in preaching the spread of Islam through violent means.

The Indian Government had given formal recognition to the Rabbani regime like most of the countries of the world. It has refused to recognize the Taliban and supports all United Nations endeavors against the human rights record of the Taliban. The very fact that the Taliban came up with active Pakistani support and are a source for sending mercenaries into Kashmir, along with sponsoring terrorist activities, makes it difficult for India to recognize them. Media reports from both India and Pakistan carry news items on the Taliban cadre being diverted by the ISI of Pakistan to fight in Kashmir.⁷⁵ In the words of Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani correspondent for the 'Far Eastern Review', the Taliban support of the insurgency in Kashmir has led to a siege mentality in New Delhi and it makes dialogue between India and Pakistan increasingly difficult.⁷⁶ It has been estimated that the ISI of Pakistan is pumping approximately \$ 1 billion from narcotics trade to sustain its mercenary operations in Kashmir. This includes the amount paid to the mercenaries recruited through the madrassas, comprising both Afghan and Pakistani nationals, before they are inducted and after they come back from Kashmir.⁷⁷

The effect of Talibanisation of proxy war in Kashmir has resulted in the struggle losing its self-determination motive and becoming one with serious religious appeal. The fundamentalist parties running various madrassas and training camps for recruiting mujahadin in Pakistan use the Taliban as their guiding examples.⁷⁸ The effect of this can be seen from the fact that Afghan and Pakistani mercenaries were used to ethnically cleanse the Kashmir valley of the *Hindu Pundit community* which had coexisted for centuries with their Muslim brethren. A similar attempt was made again in 1999 resulting in the massacre of a large number of Sikhs in the valley. According to a news item published by Omaid Weekly, an organization called Din-e-Mohammed Taliban, sponsored by the Taliban in Afghanistan, has opened a series of schools in Northern Kashmir to educate children free of cost. The education will be based on Islamic fundamentalist teachings. According to many analysts this would help in preparing the children as soldiers of Islam.⁷⁹ The rise of Taliban has also resulted in terrorist camps being relocated in Afghanistan. Pakistani ISI has also been making full use of its leverage with the Taliban in training and equipping militants for the 'Jihad' in Kashmir. The increase in rabid fundamentalism in this region is a direct fallout of the rise of the Taliban. India and Russia issued a joint statement during the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin that Afghanistan had become a center of terrorist activities and both countries would coordinate their effort against it.

GLOBAL FALLOUT

DRUG PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING

According to a report by the UN-sponsored anti drug organization, up to 4% of the world's population consumes illicit drugs, fuelling an industry worth approximately \$400 billion a year. This is larger than international trade in iron, steel and motor vehicles. Afghanistan tops the blacklist of illegal drug-producing states in Asia, and poses the biggest problems for governments in the world fighting drug abuse. *"In Afghanistan, due to civil war, political turmoil and lack of administrative structures, large scale illicit opium and poppy production, and heroin manufacture continues,"* the annual, 1997 United Nations Drug Control report notes.⁸⁰ As a result of the increase of 25% in the opium yield in Afghanistan, opium production in Southwest Asia exceeds that in



FIGURE 5- FARMER EXAMINING POPPY CROP



FIGURE 6- READY CROP

Southeast Asia.⁸¹ The United Nations has voiced grave concern at Afghanistan's growing role as a key producer of drugs in Asia and the impact on the world. In its annual report, the UN's International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) commented that Afghanistan, which is responsible for 75% of the world's opium production, is doing little to tackle the problem. According to the report, there was a 40% increase in the amount of land being used to cultivate illegal opium poppy.

Afghanistan is believed to have produced 4,600 tons of opium in 1999. This could be converted into 460 tons of heroin.⁸² This is more than twice the production of 2,100 tons in the previous year.

Afghanistan's production levels dwarf those of other countries. The rest of the world's combined production during the corresponding period was estimated to be 300 tons.⁸³ The commission asked Afghanistan to take measures as per convention on international control of narcotic drugs.

UNDCP representative in Pakistan, Bernard Frahi, while releasing the findings of the survey conducted by the United Nations, told journalists that more than 90 per cent of poppy was being cultivated in areas controlled by the Taliban militia.⁸⁴ He said that the Taliban

leadership should respect and fulfil obligations to international conventions on narcotics to which Afghanistan is a signatory. This survey indicated that the area under poppy cultivation increased by 43 per cent from 64,000 hectares in 1998 to some 91,000 hectares in 1999.⁸⁵ Cultivation of poppy was reported for the first time in the Jawzjan and Kunduz provinces, bringing the total number of provinces where opium is grown to 18 among the 31 provinces. Frahi also said that the Taliban authorities received 10 per cent tax on all crops, including poppy. He said collection of tax on poppy meant that the crop was considered "legitimate". Narcotics remain Afghanistan's and the Taliban's largest source of income.

Afghanistan's porous borders with Pakistan, Iran and Central Asian countries, combined with its rugged topography and an absence of narcotics law enforcement, make it one of the world's least controlled narcotics trafficking areas. Numerous morphine bases and heroin laboratories operate in Afghanistan, primarily in Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces along the Pakistani



FIGURE 7- TALIBAN LEADERS

border.⁸⁶ Large quantities of precursor chemicals reportedly enter Afghanistan from Central Asia, Europe and Pakistan. There are numerous reports of drug traffickers operating in Taliban territory with the consent or involvement of Taliban officials.⁸⁷ The Iranian security forces, according to a news item of BBC News⁸⁸, seized more than two tons of opium being transported by camels across the mountainous eastern region of Khorasan bordering Afghanistan. The news quoted a senior official as saying that there were twenty camels and some light weapons were also captured. Iran lies on a major drugs smuggling route between the producers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the markets in Arab and European countries. Leaders of Central Asian states have also called for more concerted international effort to keep at bay the biggest threats to them viz. terrorism and the drug trade.⁸⁹

Pakistan is also deeply enmeshed in the Afghani narcotics problem. Cartels in Pakistan control the refining of much of the opium produced in both Pakistan and Afghanistan into heroin. Mobile laboratories operating in Pakistan's autonomous tribal areas along and across the Pakistani-Afghan border produce the bulk of heroin manufactured in the *Golden Crescent*.⁹⁰ A few laboratories operate in Pakistani Baluchistan and others have been set up in Jalalabad and Kandhar in Afghanistan.⁹¹ Pakistani drug cartels garner enormous profits, although figures are

impossible to verify. According to one study the Pakistani share of the world's narcotics trade is about \$120 billion a year.⁹² During the eight-year period of martial law under Gen. Zia-ul-Haq (1977-85) a number of officers became involved in narcotics. They were mostly majors in the army who headed martial law courts and started by taking bribes from those accused in narcotic cases.⁹³ It is also alleged that the ISI allowed Afghan resistance groups to trade in narcotics and that individual ISI officers participated in the trade.⁹⁴ The ISI is also deeply involved with Sikh militants who used Pakistan as

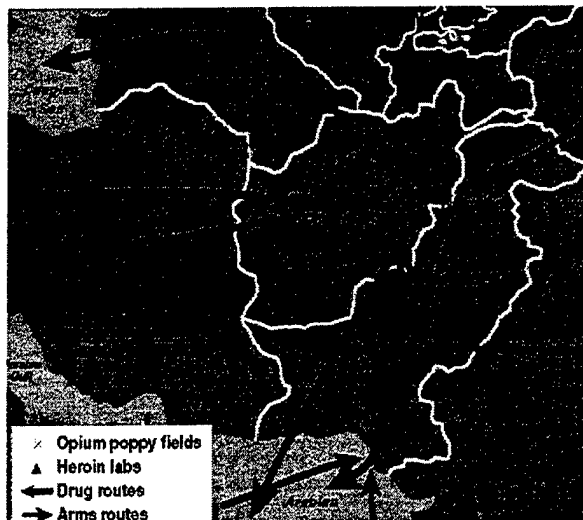


FIGURE 8- DRUG AND ARMS ROUTES

sanctuary and also use heroin to fund their arms purchases.⁹⁵ The Kashmir insurgency is largely funded by narco-trade. Some observers also believe that the army is more deeply involved in narcotics trafficking and that the narcotics Mafia and their politician allies (Nawaz Sharif was included in this group) regularly pay off the corps commanders.⁹⁶ Sophisticated Pakistani trafficking organizations operating out of Quetta in Pakistan, smuggle heroin base and morphine out of Afghanistan to the international markets. These groups place orders with the Afghani processors and arrange for transshipment of the drugs from Afghanistan through Pakistan, and to Iranian or Turkish buyers who move it through Iran and into international drug channels. Most Afghan opium is destined for processing into heroin in Pakistan and Turkey. The finished heroin is sold primarily in Europe.⁹⁷

The global impact of the Afghanistan-Pakistan drug trade is immense and is likely to grow if not checked with greater determination. The complicity of the Taliban as also the terrorist network of Osama-bin-Laden increases the dimensions of the problem. Competition over this trade is one of the main reasons for the continuing civil war in Afghanistan, pitting the Taliban, who control most of the country today, against the Northern Alliance. Control over heroin-trafficking routes is also the cause of most of the ongoing gang warfare in Pakistan and the bloody clan war in neighboring Tajikistan. It is also an important factor in the gang wars in the Caucasus, where competing armies and militias often depend on the Afghan heroin trade to buy arms.

TERRORISM

In hearings before the "SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE of the UNITED STATES SENATE (106th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION on CURRENT AND PROJECTED NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS TO THE UNITED STATES)" held on February 2, 2000, J. Stapleton Roy, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, brought out important facts quoted hereafter:

" International terrorist, Osama-bin-Laden's organization is the most prominent that threatens Americans at home and around the globe. Narcotraffickers and international criminals endanger the American way of life and corrupt governments and societies everywhere. Increasingly, where attacks occur does not fully reflect the origin of the threat. The far-flung reach of Osama-bin-Laden from his base in Afghanistan is reflected in a continuous flurry of threats by his organization on almost every continent. His transnational network and the devastating example of his 1998 attacks on our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania make him the primary threat to U.S. interests at home and abroad. Members of his network and other like-minded radical Mujahadin are active globally. Laden funds' training camps and participates in a worldwide terrorist network. But he is not responsible for every Mujahadin attack. The network is analogous to a large corporation with Laden, as a CEO, who provides guidance, funding, and logistical support. His supporters, like regional directors or affiliates, are not micromanaged, and may be left to follow separate agendas."⁹⁸

In his statement, George J. Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, said:

"Since July 1998, working with foreign governments worldwide, we have helped to render more than two dozen terrorists to justice. More than half were associates of Osama-bin-Laden's Al-Qaida organization. These renditions have shattered terrorist cells and networks, thwarted terrorist plans, and in some cases even prevented attacks from occurring. Osama-bin-Laden's organization and other terrorist groups are placing increased emphasis on developing surrogates to carry our attacks in an effort to avoid detection. For example, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) is linked closely with Laden's organization and has operatives located around the world, including in Europe, Yemen, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Afghanistan. And, there is now an intricate web of alliances among Sunni extremists worldwide, including North Africans, radical Palestinians, Pakistanis, and Central Asians. Laden, has shown a strong interest in chemical weapons and his operatives have trained to conduct attacks with toxic chemicals or biological toxins. There is also ample evidence that Islamic extremists such as Laden use profits from the drug trade to support their terror campaign."⁹⁹

The statements made in front of the select committee of the Congress clearly bring out the menace created in Afghanistan. The Taliban have very close contact with Laden and the cannon fodder for his terror campaigns is being produced among the Taliban as well as the madrassas of Pakistan.

It is important that we club both Afghanistan and Pakistan together. In effect both in the case of narco-trade and terrorism the area of concern can be classified as an Afghan-Pakistan Cauldron. It is also important to understand that Osama-bin-Laden is perhaps the most public face of a deeper malaise. The nearly ten thousand madrassas strewn over the Afghan-Pakistan Cauldron are producing thousands of new 'bin-laden clones' who will be ready to emulate him and carry his cause to create terror against United States and its allies.¹⁰⁰ According to a report published in 'The Hindustan Times' datelined 16 January 2001, by the Washington based journalist, 50,000 to 70,000 militants from 55 different countries have been trained in recent years in Afghan-Pakistan Cauldron.¹⁰¹ The Islamic militants and terrorists being produced by the madrassa are a threat to democratic and secular countries. It is highly probable that inspired by the 'Taliban example' they may turn against the polity in Pakistan itself, as part of their bid to wield independent power.

Osama-bin-Laden and allied radical-fundamentalist organizations have already identified their targets as the Western democracies led by United States, India, and Israel. It will require a global effort to curb the activities of terrorism patronized by the Taliban and radical fundamentalist organizations in Pakistan. The rise of the Taliban has accentuated the Islamic radicalism and militancy. This in turn fosters terrorism in support of misconstrued religious gains. The indoctrinated, battle hardened, and trained mujahadin are thus being seen in ever increasing numbers in varied places like Kashmir, Bosnia, Chechnya, Dagestan and even Kosovo.¹⁰² Two prominent Asian security experts, Barry Buzan and the late Gerald Segal, had visualized the area west of India, comprising Pakistan, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia emerging as a "zone of chaos" by 2030.¹⁰³ The signs of this "zone of chaos" emerging in Southwest Asia are already visible. It is not difficult to surmise that as long as the army, the mullahs, and the feudal lords, in the name of Islam, jihad and Kashmir, exercise real power in Pakistan there will be no peace in the region.

SPREAD OF RADICAL ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

The danger and the prospect of the spread of Taliban rhetoric and practices into other countries in the region are very real. The first to be affected (if not already affected) is Pakistan, with its close historic, ethnic and ideological links to the Taliban. Pakistani state institutions are crippled by corruption and ineffectiveness. Many of the Taliban have grown up inside the country, making it easy for them to garner a following. The Taliban have close links to several Pakistani political parties and religious movements. The general discontent with Pakistani-Polity is such that there is a fertile environment for Islamic opposition philosophies.¹⁰⁴ According to

Rashid "*Pakistan will face a Taliban-style Islamic revolution which will further destabilize it and the entire region*".¹⁰⁵ He further adds "*Pakistan army's high command would be hard pressed to order troops to open fire when confronted with Koran-waiving youth if a radical Islamic revolution commences*".¹⁰⁶

We also need to understand that Taliban movement is a *totalitarian* movement, just like the Nazi and Stalinist regimes.¹⁰⁷ The difference is in their Islamic rhetoric, and not in their actions. Like those totalitarian regimes, the Taliban try to find an ideological justification for the totalitarian state they want to create to influence people's lives. Most of the "laws" by the Taliban, have not been written down, creating a sense that the law binds the people, but not the state. They take recourse to the 'Holy Koran' to justify their actions, but, they do not allow any intelligent discussion on the tenets and their interpretations. Again, the parallels with Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union are obvious. Maley has quoted the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister as admitting "our rules are obeyed by fear".¹⁰⁸

"*Talibanization*", the destabilizing export of Afghan-style radical Islam, has become a new term in the political lexicon. As political fragmentation, economic meltdown, ethnic and sectarian warfare, and Islamic fundamentalism tighten their grip on Pakistan and much of the rest of the region; the dangerous behavior of Afghanistan's new leaders will not remain localized. The joint venture between the Taliban and the Jamait-e-Ulema-e-Islam, the Pakistan based radical fundamentalist organization, funded by Saudi Wahhabis, and supported by the Pakistani ISI, has become an ever-expanding enterprise, seeking new markets in the region and beyond.¹⁰⁹ The Taliban have promoted a new, radical model for Islamist revolution. The Iranian revolution had thrown up Khomeini, while the Afghan war has brought in the Taliban. They are fast becoming the role models for radical fundamentalist organizations to spread the Wahhabi brand of Islam and Sunni dominance. There has been a distinctive rise of radical fundamentalist forces from the Caucasus to South Asia as fallout of Taliban's rise to power. The spread of Taliban extremism is likely to take place through the medium of thousands of students, from various countries, in the madrassas in Pakistan.

RESPONSE OPTIONS FOR UNITED STATES

Afghanistan has occupied a significant niche of concern for the United States in recent years. Instability and conflict in Afghanistan impacts stability in the Gulf Region, Central Asia and South Asia. The areas span the responsibilities of two CINC's. The Afghan-Pakistan cauldron houses not only some of the most lethal anti-United States terrorist organizations but also the largest heroin producing factories in the world. These, combined with being the

fountainhead for the potentially dangerous spread of radical Islamic fundamentalism, make this region to be of strategic significance in terms of future US security interests. There also is a moral factor attached to the imperative for interest by United States. The present state of affairs in the Afghan-Pakistan cauldron are, at least partially, a result of the money and arms provided by the United States to create the resistance against the Soviet occupation.¹¹⁰ There could be three response options for United States. The first being "Wait and Watch", allowing the situation to find a solution of its own with the involvement of present set of players. The second option would be of "Reactive Response", in terms of reacting to exercise control and limiting the Taliban activities. The third option is to have "Proactive Engagement", to employ all elements of power to neutralize the disruptive force in the 'Cauldron'. Each of these options is discussed separately in subsequent paragraphs.

Option One: Wait And Watch. The United States could remain equidistant from both the Taliban and the Opposing Alliance. It should ensure that the agreement with Russia, to ensure that neither country provides any aid to the combatants, is respected in letter and spirit. The United Nations should be utilized to ensure that humanitarian aid and assistance is provided to the needy. At the same time, through the United Nations, suitable curbs and restrictions could be promulgated to check human rights violations in Afghanistan. The United Nations could also be asked to impose more checks and control measures through its narcotic drug control regime to curb and limit the production and flow of drugs from Afghanistan. The major advantage of this option is that the US engagement is kept at minimum essential and at diplomatic initiative level. The moral authority of the UN is exploited to bring necessary pressure on the Taliban and to seek modification of their behavioral pattern. This ensures that the Taliban are denied the proxy symbol against which they can mobilize the fundamentalist ire. The disadvantages are that it could spur the establishment of a rogue state actively sponsoring terrorism and drug trafficking. The human rights scene will also remain murky and threat to regional peace and stability will continue.

Option Two: Reactive Response. In this option the strategy is centered on reacting to the developments as they take place. The United States should diplomatically engage Taliban and the military authorities in Pakistan, to advise them to check spread of terrorist activities and narcotics trade. The resolve to check could be demonstrated through the missile attacks based on hard specific intelligence inputs. Concession of recognizing the errant regime till they show concrete results will be denied. Other nations and the institutions of the United Nations will be allowed to carry on their efforts and humanitarian work. As is evident, this course is marginally better than the 'wait and watch' option, in terms of ensuring that threats and inimical actions are

dealt with and resolve for stronger action is conveyed if the situation so warrants. The engagement is confined to intelligence and surveillance in order to check narcotics trade and terrorist activities. The reactions could be graduated to cater for a worsening of the situation. The weakness of this option is in allowing the events to overtake the planned actions. The terrorist nurturing and lucrative narcotics trade is likely to carry on and thrive, with the players ensuring all means of deception to avoid direct action by United States.

Option Three: Proactive Engagement. This option is based on the premise that the United States accepts the fact that the 'Afghan-Pakistan Cauldron' is actively engaged in drug production and trafficking; nurturing terrorism; and is becoming the fountainhead for exporting radical militant fundamentalism. The underlying theme of this option is to employ all means of national power to curtail the nefarious activities of the Taliban as well as the supporting organizations. The end state visualization will be a stable area that follows the norms of international behavior and participates in curbing activities that threaten peace and stability. To start with, the United States should lay down clear terms for both Afghanistan and Pakistan on the issues concerning terrorism, drug production, narcotics trade, and radical fundamentalism. These could be conveyed as part of diplomatic posturing and could be further linked to continuation or blocking of economic assistance through all sources. In addition suitable measures must be initiated to identify active and passive supporters and the means to bring about diplomatic and economic pressure on them. Saudi Arabia is a strong candidate in this category and it should be possible to leverage Saudi Arabia to cut aid flowing into the 'Afghan-Pakistan Cauldron' through governmental or quasi-governmental agencies and religious organizations. As part of wide ranging diplomatic initiatives, relations need to be improved with Iran, and between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran acts as a strong counter to the Taliban and is also suitable as a balance to Iraq. The moderate leadership and the younger population imply a more open, receptive and 'on-the-path-to-moderation' Iran. Being the Shia sect leader it would be amenable to efforts to contain Sunni extremism. Suitable diplomatic initiatives may be needed to assist Iran in firmly pursuing a moderate path and shedding its fundamentalist image.

Necessary leverages also need to be built with Russia, the Central Asian Republics and China to contain the spread of radical fundamentalism and terrorism. Russia could be assured that its economic interests in the Central Asian Republics will not be undermined by an engagement plan worked out by the United States. The strategy here is to establish an effective *cordon sanitaire* to check the outflow from 'Afghan-Pakistan Cauldron'. It should also be possible to involve China, due to threat of fundamentalism in Xingjiang, to bring to bear suitable pressure on Pakistan to curb the madrassas and drug trafficking. A suitable resolution could

also be moved through the Security Council for effective action against nuclear terrorism. This declaration should have a provision for countries not to provide sanctuary to such terrorists; multinational action in case of non-adherence; no international acceptance of any concessions secured under threat of nuclear blackmail; and collaborating authorities, organizations, governments or military officials being tried for crimes against humanity. It should also incorporate the threat of nuclear powers taking immediate actions to neutralize the country and its collaborators and dismantling the setup that supports such activity.

Once such active diplomatic initiatives are in place, then measures to weaken the Taliban should be initiated in conjunction with Iran and Russia. It needs to be underscored that Afghanistan has always been an ethnic and tribal identity. The only method of ensuring peace is to ensure that separate identities establish their own areas. These could either be part of a federal structure under present state umbrella or independent entities. The major hurdle here

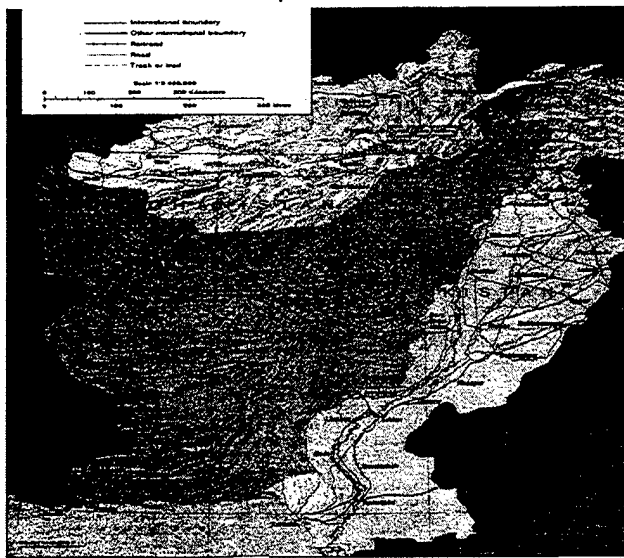


FIGURE 9- PASHTUN AREAS

would be that some of them span the existing international boundaries. We need to accept the fact that artificial divides created during colonial era, separating ethnic identities between two nations, will become the fault lines for future conflicts. It is possible to attain more lasting peace as also neutralize the 'Afghan-Pakistan Cauldron', as a threat to international peace, by assisting the ethnic identities to forge their cross border linkages. The Taliban are basically Pashtun tribals and not acceptable to other Afghan entities. If they were to get

their own Pakhtunistan, with their own ethnic homogeneity, then it might be possible to check the present extremist forces. Pashtuns have never accepted the Durand Line drawn by British. The emergence of Pakhtunistan with the tacit support and efforts of the United States is likely to create an entity dependent on the US. It may then also be willing to curb the present set of nefarious activities.

Pakistan would need to be convinced that it's so called concept of seeking strategic depth and a vassal state on its West is flawed and has no logical basis. Afghanistan's 'rentier status' implies that it needs massive outside financial resources and Pakistan is not in a position to

sustain it. A separate Pakhtunistan would probably provide a better security climate on Pakistan's western border. Similarly the Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks in the Northern part of Afghanistan should be allowed and assisted to form their own ethnic areas as part of a federation or as autonomous regions.

China needs to be co-opted in all these initiatives as also convinced that it is in its national interest to join such an initiative. There would be a requirement to force Pakistan through both positive and negative incentives to commence dismantling of madarassas fanning radical and extremist fundamentalism. This would have to be joint effort led by the US. The present Jihad has its roots in the calls for liberating Afghanistan. The present madrassa network in Pakistan uses the call for the liberation of Kashmir to get its recruits. The Jihadi forces can be weakened and more secular and liberal Islamists will get the chance to come to fore if the rallying issues are neutralized. All initiatives and proactive engagement would probably yield better results if carried out under a multinational umbrella incorporating all the regional players and stakeholders.

Word Count = 15,150

ENDNOTES

¹ David Nissman, "Militant Islam," available from <http://www.rferl.org/nca/1999/12>; accessed on 18 October 2000. The analysis and causes given out by Nissman are general in their assumptions. A more in depth analysis of the reasons why Islamic Jihad is drawing volunteers from the region of Afghanistan and Pakistan would have helped in understanding the phenomenon of the spread of fundamentalism.

² Robert M Gates, "From the Shadow: The Ultimate Insiders Story of Five presidents and How They Won the Cold War". (Simon and Schuster, 1996). Gates has mentioned about the active support and rough figures covering a large span of period. Samuel Huntington, in his article "Erosion of American National Interests" published in Foreign Affairs, Sep-Oct-97, mentions that \$625 million were provided as covert aid and \$430 million as aid for refugee work. Tara kartha, in her book "Tools of Terror: Light Weapons and India's Security" (Knowledge World, New Delhi, 1999) mentions \$8.7 billion on pages 58-68 as part of aid for arms. Another source, a Pakistani writer, Eqbal Ahmed, in "Roots of Violence" (Making Enemies, Creating Conflicts: Pakistan's Crisis of State and Society, Zia Mian and Iftikar Ahmed, ed: Mashal, Lahore, 1997) mentions \$10 billion as aid by US for arms for Mujahadeen. Rubin, Barnett, "Afghanistan the Forgotten Crisis", Refugee Survey Quarterly, Volume 15 No. 2 UNHCR 1996; writes that between 1986-89 the total aid to the Mujahadeen exceeded \$1 billion per year. In the absence of any figures published by the US agencies, it is difficult to peg the exact amount. The fact to be highlighted is that substantial amounts were invested by US and Soviets to arm various forces in Afghanistan and weapon stocks are available in the region with various factions. This availability sustains the conflict. The figures quoted are an average of various figures being mentioned in all literature on the subject of US support for Afghan resistance against Soviets.

³ Ahmed Rashid, "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia" (Yale University Press, 2000). Rashid describes the politics of oil and how the US policy went through changes from 1994 till 1997. Chapters 12 and 13 cover the various facets of the support in the initial stages and subsequent disillusionment. The support to the Taliban or 'turning a blind eye' by the US has also been covered by an analysis by John F Burns in the New York Times of May 26, 1997; under title "Triumph of Fundamentalism in Afghanistan". Richard Mackenzie in "The United States and the Taliban" (part of Maley, William (Ed.); "Fundamentalism Reborn"; New York University Press, 1998) brings out lack of policy direction in US till Taliban came to fore. At this juncture US merely followed Pakistani advice and hoped that the Taliban will ban narcotics, restore security for construction of oil and gas pipeline from Caspian basin, contain Iran and Russia and assist in removal of terrorists from Afghanistan. It appears that there was a lack of critical thinking amongst policy makers and the oil politics led to US tacit support to the Taliban.

⁴ Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Islamic Fundamentalism" (Westview Press, Inc., A Division of HarperCollins, Inc., 1996). This is a scholarly compilation on 'Islamic Fundamentalism'. The thrust of the works compiled is to create the impression that Islamic fundamentalism is not a single monolith but a dynamic political force. The genesis and

behavior of various Islamic movements has been traced to provide a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism. The work also brings out that when the Islamic movements come to power they may not uphold the ideological purities for which they have fought. This is an interesting analysis and its validity in the present context of the Taliban cannot be predicted because of a rather closed and narrow religious educational process through which the Taliban have come up. As also due to their vision of having a society based on their perception of Prophet Mohammed's society in medieval Arabia.

⁵ John Kelsey, "Islam and War". (Westminster, 1993).

⁶ John L. Esposito, "Islam and Politics". (Syracuse University Press, 1984). The book provides a very informed insight on how the Islam evolved and why the religion and state are so entwined. As per him, the Muslim obligation to spread the God's righteous rule or governance of the "Shariah", (Islamic law) came to be formulated in the Abbasid times (752-1258). Towards this end the world was divided into Islamic territory (Dar al-Islam or land of Islam) and non-Islamic land (Dar al-Harb or land of warfare).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Youssef M. Choueiri, "Islamic fundamentalism". (Pinter Publishers, 1990).

⁹ Winston Churchill, "The Story of Malakand Field Force". (W.W.Norton & Company, 1990).

¹⁰ William Maley, Ed, "Fundamentalism Reborn". (New York University Press, 1998). The book provides an in-depth description of the religious and political roots of the Taliban in its first chapter by Maley himself.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Editors, Afghan Politics Organization, available from www.afghan-politics.org; accessed on 18 October 2000. This is an officially sanctioned site and gives a pro Taliban stance to defend the happenings in Afghanistan. It appears to have been floated by the sponsors of the Taliban and probably run or financed by the Inter Services Intelligence Agency of Pakistan.

¹³ Anthony Davis in Maley, Part 1.

¹⁴ Aabha Dixit. "Soldiers of Islam: Origins, Ideology and Strategy of The Taliban", Strategic Analysis, Vol. XX. (IDSA, 1997).

¹⁵ Barnett Rubin. "Afghanistan: The Forgotten Crisis", an updated report for WRITENET, December 1996, available from www.cip.fuhem.es/afghanistan.htm. Maley and Ahmed Rashid have also covered this issue.

¹⁶ Ahmed Rashid. "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia" (Yale University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Rubin, 2.

²⁰ Rashid, Part 3, 144-174.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. Also see Rubin and Anthony Davis in Maley, Part 1.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Maley, 50-53.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 81. In this part of the book, Ahmed Rashid has brought out that the crucial arms dump was guarded by troops of Frontier Constabulary of Pakistan. These troops were under the control of the Interior Ministry and were ordered to walk away when the Taliban approached the dump, so that the dump can fall into their hands without any resistance. This dump had belonged to Hekmetyar and the guards were provided till the time he was part of the Pakistani game plan. A very detailed account of Pakistani collaboration has been provided in all the chapters of the book.

²⁸ P. Stobdan. "The Afghan Conflict and India" Delhi Papers (IDSA, June 1998). According to a report in Jane's Defense weekly dated 26 August 1998, a western aid worker was quoted as observing that when Maimana fell the forces capturing it had 25 to 50 percent Pakistani personnel. The Weekly goes on to say that Western military sources believe that Pakistani religious volunteers are being coordinated by Pashtun dominated Afghan Bureau of Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Maley, 13. Also mentioned by Rubin in his notes.

³¹ Dixit, 7.

³² Maley, 20.

³³ Soukhria Haider, President of the Support Group for Afghan Women. "A Report On Afghanistan And Taliban." (Available at www.stars.coe.fr/Dossiers/Afghanistan, accessed 15 November 2000)

³⁴ Maley, 20.

³⁵ Report by Human Right Activists; "The Taliban Story", available at www.afghan-web.com/politics.html accessed on 20 September 2000.

³⁶ Maley, 78.

³⁷ Barnett R. Rubin. "The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System." (Yale University, 1995)

³⁸ Rubin, Barnett. "The Search for Peace in Afghanistan, From Buffer State to Failed State." (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995), 15.

³⁹ Rashid, 13.

⁴⁰ Rashid, chapters 12 and 13; Rubin, 3; Burns. The policy dilemmas are highlighted in these works and the oil firms garnering support to affect US policy comes out very clearly. Apparently the US was satisfied in following Pakistan's lead and suitable analysis for its independent policy was probably not done.

⁴¹ J N Dixit. "My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary." (UBSPD, New Delhi, 1996), 110.

⁴² Rashid; Rubin; and Burns.

⁴³ Elie Krakowski, "The Afghan Vortex; IASPS Research Paper on Strategy April 2000 Volume 9". Krakowski writes that Pakistani Army had developed detailed linkages with the Taliban due to support being provided by the army. Prime Minister Sharif did attempt to weaken the links between his army officers and terrorist organizations by hindering arms flows and transferring officers. The resulting resistance of these military commanders was one of many factors that triggered the October 12, 1999, military coup in Pakistan.

⁴⁴ Maley, 89. Ahmed Rashid writing on "Pakistan and Taliban" has covered lot of ground in this chapter to come to the conclusion of Islamic revolution. He has also expressed the fear of the military becoming more religiously oriented and the fall out of the madrassa culture on them. He has also extended this theme in his book "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia."

⁴⁵ Times of India, News Item available at www.indiatimes.com, accessed on 15 January 2001. The fundamentalist organizations consider the West (led by United States), Israel and Hindu India as their avowed enemies. Most of the rhetoric during the conclave was directed against these three countries.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Report accessed from www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights on 04 Jan 2001.

⁴⁷ Chris Stephen, "The Scotsman", datelined 30 November 1998; AP report titled "Bin Laden Operated Network Based in Albania", datelined 29 November 1998; Steve Rodan, "Kosovo Seen as New Islamic Bastion" in Jerusalem Post datelined 14 September 1998. Available from www.decani.yunet.com/ismilit.html accessed on 01 December 2000.

⁴⁸ Maley, 88.

⁴⁹ Waseem Hussein, "Afghan – Pakistani Relations", A Paper for Swiss Peace Foundation Institute for Conflict Resolution, available from www.isn.ethz.ch/publihouse/fast/crp accessed on 17 January 2001.

⁵⁰ Ziba, Farzin Nia, "The emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan," Amu Darya: The Iranian Journal of Central Asian Studies, (1999):.18-34.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Rubin, 224-225.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ziba, 18.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ahmed Rashid, "The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Pipeline," Focus on Current Issues (Washington, DC, October 1997). 15.

⁵⁷ Martha Brill Olcott, "Nation building and Ethnicity in the Foreign policies of the New Central Asian States," in Roman Szporluk, ed., National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the new states of Eurasia, The International politics of Eurasia, Vol. 2, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994, 211-212.

⁵⁸ Barnett R. Rubin, Testimony on the Situation in Afghanistan, in United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 8 October 1998. Available at www.foreignrelations.org/public/pubs/rubin3.html accessed on 12 December 2000.

⁵⁹ Stobdan, 153.

⁶⁰ Ziba, 19.

⁶¹ Times of India archives accessed from www.indiatimes.com on 18 October 2000.

⁶² P. B. Sinha, "Islamic Militancy and Separatism in Xinjiang", Strategic analysis, vol. 20, no. 3, New Delhi, June 1997, 451.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Linda Benson, as quoted in George Wehrefritz, "Troubled Frontier," Newsweek, February 24, 1997.

⁶⁵ Rashid, "Taliban", 128; John Cooley, "Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism." (Pluto, London, 1999).

⁶⁶ Ahmed Rashid, "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism," Foreign Affairs, (November-December 1999) p.22.

⁶⁷ Sinha, 452. Sinha has provided detailed account of the rise of militant movement in Xinjiang, the Chinese response so far and future prospects, which imply troubled times in the province.

⁶⁸ Sinha, 452.

⁶⁹ Reuters, News Report datelined Kabul, 12 December 2000, Accessed from www.yahoo.com/news on 15 December 2000.

⁷⁰ B. Raman, "Continuing Unrest in Xinjiang: The Pakistan and Afghan role", South Asia Analysis Group Papers (Institute of topical Studies, Chennai, March 1999).9.

⁷¹ O. N. Mehrotra, "Madrasa in Pakistan: The Chief Promoter of Militancy and Terrorism" Research Paper, IDSA, New Delhi, February 2000, accessed from www.afgha.com on 18 October 2000.

⁷² Rashid, "Taliban", 60.

⁷³ The Durand line was drawn by the British (Sir Mortimer Durand) on the maps to define the boundary between India and Afghanistan. From 1947 onwards, after the partition of India, this divided the Pashtun and Baluch people between Afghanistan and Pakistan. No regime in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, has accepted the legitimacy of the Durand line as the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

⁷⁴ Manoj Joshi, "Islamic Reformism and Militancy in India", available at <http://isim.leidenuniv.nl/newsletter/1/regional>, accessed on 18 October 2000.

⁷⁵ Tara kartha, "Tools of Terror: Light Weapons and India's Security" (Knowledge World, New Delhi, 1999). Eqbal Ahmed, in "Roots of Violence" (Making Enemies, Creating Conflicts: Pakistan's Crisis of State and Society, Zia Mian and Iftikar Ahmed, Ed.: Mashal, Lahore, 1997). Ahmed Rashid, "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia" (Yale University Press, 2000). Numerous news reports have been quoted in all the above books on the involvement ISI in diverting Taliban cadre for Kashmir. Mehrotra has also cited periodicals from both India and Pakistan to substantiate his research paper. Times of India archives accessed from www.indiatimes.com and Dawn published from Karachi available at www.dawn.com have large number of articles on the issue.

⁷⁶ Ahmed Rashid, in an interview for Atlantic Unbound, The Atlantic Monthly, August 2000.

⁷⁷ The Kashmir Times, dated 30 August 2000, accessed from www.indiatimes.com.

⁷⁸ Rashid, "Taliban", 137.

⁷⁹ Omaid Weekly, Afghan News, dated, 5 October, available at www.omid.com/english_section/news_archive, accessed on 22 December 2000.

⁸⁰ Report of the United Nations Commission on Narcotics Drugs, available at www.undcp.org accessed on 20 December 2000.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Report of the UN available at www.undcp.org, accessed on 22 October 2000. Also quoted in United Nations Information Service, 10 September 1999.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Barbara Crossette, "Afghan Heroin Feeds Addiction in Region", New York Times, 1 March 2000. The report notes that Afghanistan "is also becoming a major manufacturer of heroin, which is contributing to a rise in addiction throughout the region." Another report specifies the opium production for 1999 as 5,070 tons, or about 75 percent of the global yield (Barry Bearak, "Distress in the Opium Bazaar: Can't Make a Profit", New York Times, 3 March 2000).

⁸⁷ News accessed from Afghan News portal at www.afgha.com, accessed on 22 December 2000.

⁸⁸ BBC news available at www.monitoring.bbc.co.uk, accessed on 22 October 2000.

⁸⁹ Alfred McCoy, "Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in Global Drug Trade," (Lawrence Hill & Co., 1991).

⁹⁰ Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," in Maley, *Fundamentalism Reborn*, p.85-87.

⁹¹ Chouvy, P. "Taliban's Drug Dilemma: Opium Production vs. International Recognition", Central Asia-Caucasus briefings available at www.caciaanalyst.org accessed 20 September 2000.

⁹² News archived from www.frontierpost.com.pk/afghan, accessed on 22 December 2000. According to the State Department's 1994 Report on International Drug Trafficking, about 20 per cent of all heroin consumed in the United States comes from Pakistan and its northern neighbor.

⁹³ Rashid, "Taliban", 120-121.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Rashid, "Pakistan and Taliban", in Maley, 87.

⁹⁶ "Afghanistan Crisis-regional implications and effects on Pakistan's polity", available at www.jammu-kashmir.org/KIN/afghanistan/usingh, accessed on 20 November 2000. In an interview published in "In Focus: US Security Challenges and Issues in South Asia," Volume 5 Number 7, March 2000; erstwhile Prime Minister Sharif has been quoted as saying "three months after my election as Prime Minister in November 1990, General Aslam Beg, then Army Chief of Staff, and General Asad Durrani, then Head of the Military's Inter-Services Intelligence Bureau (ISI), told me that Armed Forces needed more money for covert foreign operations and wanted to raise it through large-scale drug deals.

⁹⁷ UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Report of the Secretariat, 17 December 1998; available from www.undcp.org accessed on 10 December 2000.

⁹⁸ Accessed from www.fas.org/irp/congress/2000 on 18 October 2000.

⁹⁹ Accessed from www.fas.org/irp/congress/2000 on 18 October 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Major General Vinod Saighal, "Dealing with Afghanistan-Pakistan", USI journal, July-September 2000, pages 431-432.

¹⁰¹ The Hindustan times available at www.hindustantimes.com, accessed on 17 January 2001.

¹⁰² Chris Stephen, journalist for 'The Scotsman', available at www.decani.yunet.com, accessed on 12 January 2001.

¹⁰³ Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, "Anticipating the Future" (Simon & Schuster, Nov 2000).

¹⁰⁴ Rashid, "Taliban", pages 183-190. Also see Waseem Hussein, "Afghan-Pakistani Relations: The Afghan Perspective", a paper for Swiss Peace Foundation-Institute for Conflict

Resolution, available at www.isn.ethz.ch/publihouse/fast/crp accessed on 17 January 2001.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 216.

¹⁰⁶ Maley, 89. In this part of the book Rashid ends his contribution by saying "The threat of an Islamic revolution in Pakistan has never been greater."

¹⁰⁷ Leonard Schapiro, "Totalitarianism" (Macmillan, London, 1972).

¹⁰⁸ Maley, page 22.

¹⁰⁹ Rashid, pages 44-45, 85, 133-139 and 197. The instances of Saudi support and furthering of Wahabbi cause have also been mentioned by Rashid in his chapter in Maley, *Fundamentalism Reborn*. This issue also finds mention by Rubin in his testimony to the senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Robert D. Kaplan has also mentioned it in his three-part article published in "The Atlantic Monthly", from July 2000 to September 2000.

¹¹⁰ Benazir Bhutto, ex prime minister of Pakistan, in a speech to 'The Royal Institute of International Affairs', London, on 10 September 1998, made the comments quoted hereafter in the context of the US support:

"For a long and bloody decade, from 1979 through 1989, the West -- and was particularly the United States -- used Pakistan as a surrogate in its final confrontation with the Soviet Union. Billions of billions of covert aid was channeled through Pakistan to the Mujahadeen. The Pakistan/Afghan border became a porous fiction. My country became the staging area for the West's final assault on the tottering Soviet empire. My country, which was totally unfamiliar to the drug culture, became a nation of heroine addicts. My country, which had no tradition of lawlessness, was so overridden with weapons in every neighborhood.....when I visited the United States early in my first time as Prime Minister of Pakistan, in 1989; I vividly recall discussions with then President Bush about the political situation in Afghanistan. The United States had made a military decision to arm and strengthen the fiercest fighters in the Afghan resistance -- the forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. I cautioned Mr. Bush that he was creating a veritable Frankenstein by aligning the United States with the most extremist of the Mujahadeen groups. I cautioned the West that by strengthening the most extreme and fundamentalist of the resistance, it was weakening the political position of the rest of the resistance coalition. The pragmatists and the moderates were shunned aside by the United State's single-minded efforts to strengthen the most extreme of the seven Mujahadeen factions. And I cautioned that this element of the Mujahadeen was not only religiously fanatic, but viscerally anti-Western. I warned that we must look beyond the inevitable military victory against the communist regime in

Kabul, and work toward setting up a successor government that was broad-based and moderate. But because the United States chose not to opt for a political settlement involving all seven elements of the Mujahadeen, peace was not restored to Afghanistan. Indeed in the decade since the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the people of Afghanistan have not seen a single day of peace. The extremists were so emboldened by the United States during the eighties are now exporting their terrorism to other parts of the world. To the extent that they use heroine trafficking to pay for their exploits, international terrorism and international drug trafficking intersect.”

Speech by Benazir Bhutto, available from <http://ppp.org.pk/speeches/speech20.html> accessed on 17 January 2001. This brings out the complexity of perceptions. Rashid in his writings has been consistent that it was Bhutto and Babar combine, which canalized the support to more fundamentalist groups. *It has been a common ploy to blame the US when the situation gets out of hand.*

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