



# SMALL WARS JOURNAL

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## SWJ Magazine -- INTERIM New! & Improved? 😊 (BETA)

This is an interim edition of an article that has been peer-reviewed for its content and quality, and accepted for publication in SWJ Magazine.

The article, its author, and its audience deserve better editing and formatting than we have provided at the moment, i.e. none. It is being released in this format because the Small Wars Community of Interest needs this material, and this is the way we can get it out without further delay (which, in some cases, has already been substantial).

The throughput of our publishing has not kept pace with the enthusiasm of our audience and the productivity of our contributing authors. We're working on that, but the author's ideas are ready now. So this article is provided "as is" for the moment. Revised versions of this article for edits, format, and presentation will be posted when they are available and as site improvements are made.

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*Transmittal note:*

*Please find attached comments I delivered upon returning from the NorthWest Frontier Province in Pakistan in the mid eighties when I was working on a US Aid Project with CIA ties. I was sitting next to the Chariman of the Department at Columbia University on the flight home and I was sharing with him some of my thoughts about Fundamental Islam and these were so different from the conventional wisdom at the time that he invited me to address his graduate seminar at Columbia. Later as part of an OSIS project through the FMSO (Foreign Military Studies Office) at Ft. Leavenworth I posted these comments as an OSIS document. I have recently reviewed these comments and find them still valuable and wanted to share them with your audience.*

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*This is a talk given at Columbia University Dept. of Political Science, Southwest Asia Seminar in the summer of 1986 after my return from Peshawar and The NorthWest Frontier Province of Pakistan. This document has also been filed with the OSIS project out of the Foreign Military Studies Office, Ft. Leavenworth*

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## **UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA: AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, AND REVOLUTIONARY ISLAM**

United States foreign policy, sometimes ill-conceived and confused for the past decade, continues to face the bewildering challenges of the Islamic World in South Asia. The forces unleashed by the ascendancy of Khomeini in Iran and the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia the following year, are now converging to gravely effect the United States future in this distant part of the world.

Peshawar, the capitol of the North West frontier province of Pakistan, is located twelve time zones from my home in California. This was considered by many to have been the loveliest town in Pakistan. Prior to the arrival of the Afghani refugees there were 75,000 Pakistanis living in this former British Garrison town. There were wide boulevards, the air was clean, and the pace of life relaxed. After the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, done as a response to a staged internal call from the existing leftist government, the people went through a response consisting of first waiting and watching. The Russians promised land reform, women's rights, and universal education. They also brought political reprisals against many of the educated and more highly evolved citizens, in a land characterized by rural tribalism, Islam, and primitive development. Following the initial watch and wait period, many of the upper and middle class people who could leave did so. This left the fundamental Moslems and the poor rural people. They rejected women's right and land reform as out of hand when considered against their Islamic background. Led by the Mullahs who moved into the power void created by the

exit of the more educated class, the fundamental Moslems developed a Jihad and are called Mujahideen. Mujahideen who are killed in a Jihad are recognized as martyrs.

In addition to the Jihad, by last estimate two million Afghans took refuge in Iran and three million fled to Pakistan and one million are thought to be dead in Afghanistan. About two and a half million of these exiles lived in Peshawar and the North West Frontier Province. So Peshawar was transformed into a bustling and hustling city. Still with only one main road, Grand Trunk; with air fouled of diesel, wood burning stoves, and fecal dust; polluted water, overcrowded bazaars, severe frenetic noise, competing Mullahs over the many mosque loud speaker systems, the pace of life that appears like a 33 1/3.p. played at 45 or even 78 rpm's!

Throughout the metamorphosis, the Mujahideen have become romanticized and popularized in the press and even have become the subject of numerous popular books including Ken Follet's popular novel, Lie Down with Lions. United States aid to the Mujahideen and to the regime of President Zia of Pakistan has greatly increased this past decade. Now, after eight years, the Russians seem to have had enough. Gorbachev has called for an end to the "bleeding wound" of Afghanistan.

What should be the foreign policy of the United States today, in this part of the world? The N.W.F. P., a part of Pakistan as determined by the Durand Line, has never been accepted by the Pathan tribe people living here. Pathans comprised the largest of the five ethnic groups comprising Afghanistan. These are the people who warred successfully against Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and later the British. But the Pathans themselves are divided into three major groups. There are those of Afghanistan, those of the N.W.F.P., and those wild people of the Northern areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. These three groups are not at peace with one another, and the separated tribes continue their age old battles. Indeed, this warlike group of people are not even united within a tribe as attested to by the continuing inter and intra tribal conflicts. Pakistan administers vast areas and populations under its tribal agencies, whereby Pakistan doesn't involve itself in the local government, thereby acknowledging and accepting the tribal control of its lands. This agency form of control dates back to the British who for practical and political reasons had established it during their colonial rule.

The Afghans, refugees, and Mujahideen, are divided by tribes, by ethnic groups, by language, by religious sects within Islam, and by political parties. There are seven recognized political parties of the initial 20 of Afghanistan refugees. In reality, they are all radical. There are many Shiite sects, making up only 20% of the population and some 5-7 Sunni sects. Americans made a quantum leap forward with their understanding of the area some years ago when they learned to distinguish between Shiite and Sunni sects, but due to the American mind this division is somewhat over emphasized as there is no homogeneity or agreement among the Shiites and the Sunnis themselves are capable of being every bit as radical and revolutionary as the Shiites. Languages include Dari,

Pashto, Urdu, Buneski, and others. There are five ethnic groups of Afghanistan refugees. The number of tribes, based on the geographical isolation of many valleys and villages is nearly infinite. The Afghans are clearly not a unifiable people. It is probably just this fragmentary nature of the Afghani which is responsible for the failure of the Soviet Union in its dealings against them.

Pakistan, the neighbor to the south, is about the size of Texas, with a population of 90 million. President Zia is the military head of state; he lacks a party, controlling the army and government. Although Pakistan has the highest standard of living in South Asia with a per capita income of approximately \$500 dollars per year, poverty is widespread and the infant and maternal mortality rates are staggering. President Zia's international stature has increased as the Mujahideens success increased, for Zia has given the Afghani refuge, support, and training. He now receives upwards of multi-billion programs of U.S. aid. Most of this is in the form of military aid. In fact, the budget proposed while I was in Peshawar earmarked about 80% of the funds for defense. And this is for a country whose neighbors include Russia, Iran, China, and India. It is doubtful that Pakistan could defend itself against Russia or India (Pakistan has lost all three wars against India since partition) so the conclusion grows amidst the problem of poverty that the defense spending is only to bolster the power of the Zia government. Indeed while I was present in Lahore after the announcement of the budget, there were large scale protests throughout the country resulting in a general strike leading to the withdrawal of an added VAT tax to support further defense spending.

Add to the above the fact that the Pakistani's are growing weary of having 3 million refugees. True, the refugees are well managed, they've merged well given their common ethnic and language characteristics, indeed a million Afghani's would migrate annually to Peshawar each winter, the Transhumance, still they've brought with them increasing violence, and a society based on the Kalashnikov (AK-47), the Friday after Ramadan, Eid, there were 14 stray bullet shootings treated at Lady Redding Hospital in Peshawar, alone. Also there is the problem of increasing heroin and hashish use throughout the society. This is partly in response to the eliminations of alcoholic beverages from the society under the conservative Islamization supported by President Zia. The preponderance of Pakistanis though, no longer only the left but the very middle and upper classes, feel that Russia is ready to leave within 11 months, and that the only impediment to this negotiated settlement, with or without King Zia Shah, is the persistence of the United States in providing the Mujahideen's with military support. This view discounts the motivation provided to Russia to negotiate a settlement by U.S. assistance to the insurgents. The typical Pakistani may soon feel that the United States continues this support as part of the cold warrior stance. It is recognized that this may be a war that Russia can't win, but that the Mujahideen's can't win either. Just as many United States leaders felt that the Iran-Iraq conflict is something to continue to aid United States interest in the area, so it is viewed that the continued Afghan-Soviet Union conflict serves United States aims by exposing to the third world the true aggressive nature of the Soviet Union and the ultimate antagonistic nature of Marxism with respect to Islam. A possible extrapolation of the rapidly developing anti-United States sentiment throughout Pakistani society could be the ultimate overthrow of President Zia and a cooling of

relations with United States. In addition, Islam and Pakistan is approaching Khomeni in its fundamentalism, and the Islam of President Zia, could at any time take a stringent turn against the United States. This may only require the nudging of a United States attack against an Islamic state, say in support of a Kuwaiti tanker under United States flags in the Persian Gulf. Arguing against the change in Pakistan United States relation is the current situation where Pakistan's basic defense is under the United States umbrella. Pakistan is aware of this and seems to be committed to developing atomic weapon capabilities in violation of United States nonproliferation policy. If this develops Pakistan would certainly feel less inclined to remain under United States policy and its defense umbrella.

The culmination of an anti United States posture by the Mullah's and by the Pakistani populists, based on both Islam and on the feeling that the victims of the ongoing United States support of the Mujahideen are the persistent Afghani refugees and even more so the Pakistanis who themselves have been invaded by 2 1/3-3million Afghani's, would not be a pretty proposition for the United States. So I am left with the view that as romantic as support of the Mujahideen may be, the time has come to help negotiate peace in the conflict. Afghanistan before the invasion was in the sphere of Soviet influence; Let's support self determination for Afghanistan, but accept that this nation, bordering Russia, may well remain in the same political sphere it was in before the invasion.

Specifically we must support peace here, to save our friendship with Pakistan. At the same time we must review the strategic importance of Pakistan. In this troubled and bewildered part of the world, we must recognize ahead of time that the United States life must not be committed and lost in this area and that well thought out diplomacy is our real strength here.

Generally speaking, we must recall our time in Vietnam, and in Lebanon, and the Stark incident in the gulf in addition to the Soviet experience with the Afghani Jihad, and we must conclude that we cannot place the United States troops or ships in a Jihad situation, one where the troops are out numbered by troops willing, even desiring to die for their cause, without a strong US Foreign policy and without the commitment to defend ourselves. There are no defenses against suicide car bombs or suicide small boats armed with surface to ship missiles. Our Judeo-Christian culture, Islam or otherwise, that worship death in the name of holy war. Then there is the issue of nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. Pakistan seems to be committed to going nuclear. This must be opposed at all levels. There is too much instability in the country and government to allow for this nightmare to develop. Israel's may have had a week of bad press, but now everyone is happy with that action. In short, we need to be able to formulate a U.S. foreign policy in South Asia which will continue our relations with Pakistan, promote a resolution of the Afghani, Russian war, and avoid placing U.S. troops in a Jihad situation, and prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons in Pakistan or other Islamic nations.

The final challenge to policy makers in the area, lies not in the response to Afghanistan or to Pakistan, but in recognizing the threat to world peace in what is called Revolutionary Islam. By this is meant those groups common to Lebanon, Iran,

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere in the Islamic world where the rhetoric of Jihad is preached and the Kalishnikov reigns. It is not to declare a Crusade, the Christian world against the Islamic world, but to recognize the despotic nature of the leaders of this powerful minority within Islam and to realize that appeasement will be no more successful now that it was at Munich in 1938.

The challenge is how to respond to revolutionary Islam. Iran has shown its ability to absorb terrible casualties and economic difficulties. We don't want to put ourselves in a Jihad battle, and the use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable. What then is to be done?