

Unforeseen consequences of a Soviet intervention: the movement of the "Afghans" in militant Islamism

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Astrid von Borcke

Unforeseen Consequences of a Soviet Intervention

The Movement of the "Afghans" in Militant Islamism

Sonderveröffentlichung des BIOst 1996

Preface

This essay is based on a talk given at the "Centre for Russian Studies" (NUPI), Oslo, on November 14, 1995, about the civil war in Afghanistan. Since the role Afghanistan-veterans in Islamist terrorism aroused special interest, I decided to write this essay.¹ The first part deals with the role of former Afghanistan fighters in the CIS, Bosnia and the West; a second part treats the involvement of the "Afghans" in the Islamist movements of Algeria and Egypt; a third and last part describes the role of the states involved as bases and backers. A conference sponsored by the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung on 25-27 March this year in Wildbad-Kreuth, "Destabilisierung Nordafrikas - Konsequenzen für Europa?" dealing with the role of militant Islamism was highly stimulating and provided additional insights.

Part I. The Afghanistan Intervention, the Reagan Doctrine and the Aftermath

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, completed by early 1989, had seemed like a brilliant victory for the "Reagan Doctrine" - support for a guerrilla movement to counter what since the mid-seventies had looked like a new kind of Soviet imperialism in the Third World. But this greatest covert actions program since World War II has had worrisome consequences. Already in 1992 the Afghan leader Sayyed Ahmad Galaini warned that in Afghanistan a super-Lebanon was in the making, a center of the drugs trade and international terrorism.²

Among Islamic radicals the *jihād* ("holy war") in Afghanistan had fostered hopes of a new kind of Sunni revolution with a potential impact even surpassing that of the revolution of 1979 in Shi'ite Iran. The end of the war freed mujahedin and their Islamic sponsors to continue their struggle for Islamic revolution elsewhere. A contributing factor has been that possibilities of gainful employment in war-ravaged Afghanistan are next to non-existent.³ It is estimated that some 10,000⁴ veterans of the Afghanistan war have become active in the Middle East - where Islamism became a force after the Gulf War of 1991 - and beyond: in fact, an Afghan-trained "international brigade" of fighters with organizational and personal ties spanning the globe.

¹ Attempting to present a scholarly analysis of ongoing terrorist ("underground") movements poses special problems: The information is necessarily fragmentary and "intelligence" of various security services plays a crucial role. Given the methodical problems of the investigation and the fact that the mujahedin movement had its greatest impact in Algeria and Egypt - countries beyond the scope of the Bundesinstitut, dealing with Russia and the CIS - it was decided to opt for the form of a "Sonderveröffentlichung."

² For a list of the abbreviations used in the footnotes below, see end of text.

³ Der Spiegel, 13 July 1992. An American expert confirmed: "We have made out of the region the center of world terrorism." (L'Expr, 2 Dec. 1993, p. 23.)

⁴ Therefore pragmatic Afghan leaders like Mas'ud have suggested that the most promising solution to end the civil war would be to pay the Afghan fighters slightly more than their present paymasters (Hekmatyar pays his fighters about 10 to 20 dollars a month) for not fighting.

Ongoing anarchy in Afghanistan has facilitated the use of that country as a preferred refuge and training ground for all kinds of guerrillas. In 1994 reportedly there were over 20 camps in Afghanistan, training Arab, Kashmiri, Tajik and other fighters.⁵ A Russian observer, V. Titorenko, concluded:

One has to admit that the wave of Islamism in the 1990s increasingly transcends the regional framework and has an impact on the whole international climate. This new splash of political Islam makes itself felt in all the parts adjoining the Muslim regions, including Europe and the CIS. It touches upon the geopolitical and national interests of practically all the great powers, including Russia, all the more since a part of Russia represent the northern rim of the Islamic sphere.⁶

Russia's Fear of the *Jihad*: Mujahedin in CIS "Hot Spots"

Russian military and security leaders - and President Yeltsin⁷ - at least initially had been worried by a domino theory according to which an Islamic fundamentalist offensive starting from Afghanistan and Tajikistan threatened to destabilize Central Asia and the Caucasus. Already for years the KGB had been waging war against supposed "Wahhabites" in the region, fearing destabilization in the wake of the Iranian revolution of 1979.⁸ In 1992, after the mujahedin takeover of Kabul, there took place in Tajikistan the most violent civil war in the realm of the former Soviet Union. At the time it was feared Uzbekistan might be the next candidate for Islamic revolution: Tensions in the Ferghana valley had led to clashes already before. In fact, since the end of the Cold War the Russian military had come to see the main threat in the (Islamic) south of the CIS. It was feared that Islamic movements could become a risk to Russia itself, given its Muslim population of about 12 million. Even in Moscow, with its nearly 800,000 Muslims, all the major Islamist organizations were reported present by 1992.⁹

Nagorno Karabakh

In the late summer 1993 Kabul's "strong man," Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, citing "our Hesbis,"¹⁰ told Western journalists that his long-standing rival, the fundamentalist extremist Golbuddin Hekmatyar, was recruiting Afghan mercenaries to fight in Azerbaijan. The mujahedin were paid the equivalent of a dollar (a day, it seems, i. e. slightly more than their Afghan "wage" of \$10-20 a month), and were promised to receive up to \$ 5,000 upon completion of their contracts.¹¹ In fact, Gaidar Aliyev, the dean of Azeri politics,¹² had confirmed an agreement struck already by the Azerbaijani Popular Front according to which Afghans or Afghanistan fighters who had become unwanted in Pakistan could earn money by fighting in the war against the Armenian Christians.¹³

⁴ 5.000 from Saudi Arabia, 3.000 Yemenis, 2.000 Egyptians, 2.800 Algerians, 400 Tunisians, 370 Iraqis, 200 Libyans. (See the important essay by James Bruce, Arab Veterans of the Afghan War, in: Jane's Intelligence Review, April 1995, p. 175.)

⁵ U. S. Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism. April 1995, p. 3.

⁶ Titorenko, Islamizm i interesy Rossii, Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1/1995, p. 37.

⁷ Robert V. Barylski, The Russian Federation and Eurasia's Islamic Crescent, in: Europe-Asia Studies, no. 2, 1994, p. 401.

⁸ See von Borcke, KGB: Die Macht im Untergrund. Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1987.

⁹ Colonel S. Pechorov, Krasnaya zvezda, 21 April 1992.

¹⁰ I. e. members of the "Islamic Party" (*Hesb-e eslami*) of Golbuddin Hekmatyar: Mas'ud has always endeavored to have his informants "everywhere." (See his interview in *Trud*, 22 Jan. 1992.)

¹¹ D, 7 March 1994; Moskovskie novosti, 10-16 June 1994.

Hekmatyar, although dreaming of the "export" of Islamic revolution, by then probably was interested above all in the money.¹⁴

According to the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, since September 1993 1,500 Afghans had come to Azerbaijan. They were of considerable help to the Azerbaijanis, especially during the re-capture of Goradiz, a town south-east of Stepanakert, when they attacked the Armenian forces from behind via the Iranian border.¹⁵ By the summer of 1994 the State Department of National Security of Nagorno Karabakh reported the presence of more than 2,500 Afghan fighters. Most were stationed on the southern front near the border. Able to handle many types of small arms and with extensive combat experience in mountain regions, the mujahedin were used primarily as assault units. Their "mission" was coordinated from Baku by the Afghan Waidallah. However, politically the presence of the Afghans strengthened Russia's position, insisting it had to resume control over the external borders of the CIS.

Having suffered considerable casualties in encounters with the Armenian armed forces, the "Afghan brigade" was dissolved in 1994. Henceforth, the fighters that remained turned to sabotage.

Chechnya

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Chechen capital of Grozny became a transit point for Arab veterans of the Afghan war.¹⁶ In August 1995, a spokesman of the Russian Federal Security Service reported that units from Afghanistan and Jordan - which has a significant Chechen community - were fighting on Dudayev's side.¹⁷ The number of foreign mercenaries was about 300.¹⁸ (There are some 6,000 separatist fighters in all.¹⁹) The rebel Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudayev, who had proclaimed Chechnya's independence on 1 November 1991, immediately upon his election,²⁰ in 1992, struggling against his diplomatic isolation, turned to the Muslim world. In September of that year he headed a delegation that visited Turkey, Northern

¹² Aliyev is the republic's former KGB chief and first Party Secretary who then became a member of the Politburo and deputy Prime Minister of the Soviet Union in 1982. He was promoted by Yury Andropov, probably because of his "cultural competence" in matters of Islam and close knowledge of the Iranian Tudeh Party. At the time, he was suspected of dreaming of an alliance between communism and Islamic revolution. (See von Borcke, KGB. Die Macht im Untergrund, 81.) Under Gorbachev he had to retire to his native Nakhichevan. In the acute crisis in June 1993 he had been elected first Prime Minister and then acting president.

¹³ M, 1 Febr. 1994. Mas'ud reported that Hekmatyar's fighters helped the ex-Communist Aliyev in the coup "in favor of the Russians" in the summer of 1992, i.e. in toppling Abulfaz Elchibey, the chairman of the "Popular Front" and winner of the first free elections of June 1992. (Michael Barry, Kaboul. La mise à mort, in: Politique étrangère, summer 1994, p. 86.)

¹⁴ Having sided with Saddam Hussein during the Gulf war of 1991 (the general fundamentalist line), Hekmatyar lost the financial support of the Saudis. By 1993 for the first time he may have suffered a shortage of funds. During the war Hekmatyar had been among the most powerful of the Afghan mujahedin. Thanks to the protection of ISI (Pakistan's secret service), up to 60% of the U.S. and Saudi aid to the mujahedin had ended up with his faction. However, when in 1993 Mas'ud could buy over some of his commanders, this seemed symptomatic of a shift in his fortunes. (M, 27 Nov. 1993.)

¹⁵ The emergence of a militantly nationalist and secular Azeri movement in northern Azerbaijan, personified by the Republic's second President, Abolfaz Elchibey - he had called Iran "an empire ripe for dissolution" - had caused extreme alarm in the Iranian regime in view of its own important Azeri minority of 12 millions.

¹⁶ Jordan Times, 29 March 1995.

¹⁷ ODD, 12 Aug. 1985.

¹⁸ ODD, 17 Nov. 1995.

¹⁹ ODD, 17 Nov. 1995.

²⁰ He had won 85% of the vote. (M, 25 April 1996.)

Cyprus and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Later he admitted that young Chechens were fighting with the Bosnian Muslims.²¹ Although the partly Russianized Dudayev²² had declared that he was striving for a secular-democratic state, in fact Chechnya increasingly became Islamized in the wake of the misguided Russian intervention of 1994. It was reported that Shamil Basayev, the organizer of the capture of the hospital in Budyonovsk who was very close to Dudayev, had fighters trained by Hekmatyar's Hesb.²³ In Chechnya there seems to exist a diffuse terrorist organization, which in many respects is oriented toward Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. But it has also been supplied with arms from Russian military sources. Aided by Hezbollah and the Iranian secret service, Afghan mujahedin and Iranian volunteers have continued to enter the country via Dagestan and Azerbaijan.²⁴

The Raduyev²⁵ commando, after having failed to seize the power station of Kizlyar in Dagestan, repeated Basayev's "feat" by capturing a local clinic in Pervomayskoye, following similar tactics. The 250 Chechens, dug in in the tiny village, repeatedly drove back Russia's best special forces.²⁶ Mikhail Barsukov, chief of the Federal Security Service in charge of the Russian special units, had to admit: The Chechen fighters were "a very serious unit, very well trained, very well prepared." Whilst the author has no information of a specifically Afghan role in this raid, the question arises: Who trained these men? Of course, Dudayev himself is a former Soviet general who had served in Afghanistan, but foreign instructors are likely to have been involved as well.²⁷

Events in Chechnya have aroused sympathies among fellow Muslims elsewhere. In Turkey, where the Islamist Welfare Party has sponsored training camps for Islamic fighters, young "Gray Wolves" were recruited to fight with the Chechens. A group under Mohammed Tokcan, an ethnic Abkhazian who had fought with Shamil Basayev in Chechnya and Abkhazia,²⁸ captured the Black Sea ferry "Avraziya" to show their solidarity with Raduyev, also claiming to obey orders of "commander Basayev." Moscow was furious, stressing it had repeatedly warned Turkey that there were training camps for extremists on its soil.²⁹ Russia's ruthless suppression of the Muslim opposition in the Northern Caucasus in fact has re-enforced the Islamic revival.³⁰

²¹ Iz, 30 Sept. 1992, p. 4; NG, 8 Oct. 1992, p. 3.

²² He was married to a Russian woman.

²³ Basayev, Russian TV reported, had flown to Afghanistan to meet Hekmatyar and later sent fighters to train in that country as well as in Pakistan. There had also taken place negotiations with a view to buying some of the famous Stinger rockets, but at \$ 100,000 a piece the Chechens could not afford them. (Russian TV, SWB, FE/2338/ A/1.)

²⁴ Iz, 27 March 1996.

²⁵ Salman Raduyev is married to a daughter or niece of Dzhokhar Dudayev. He was considered to be even more fanatic than Basayev.

²⁶ Admittedly, the Russian soldiers were miserably supplied in a very poorly prepared campaign.

²⁷ IHT, 20/21. Jan. 1996. Indeed, in the meantime a secret report confirmed that instructors from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, as well as Palastines have been training fighters for Dudayev. (Iz. 12 May 1996.)

²⁸ ODD, 18 Jan. 1996.

²⁹ ODD, 18 Jan. 1996. In Turkey, there live an estimated 5,000 to 40,000 ethnic Chechens.

Basayev attracted renewed attention when he led a Russian TV team to a radioactive parcel buried in one of Moscow's public parks and threatened: "We are completely prepared to commit acts of terrorism that will be tangible for Russia." (T, 4 Dec. 1995.) He also has threatened Western Europe, allegedly profiteering by just remaining an onlooker to what is happening in Chechnya.

³⁰ Andrei Illarionov, Moscow News, 2-8 Febr. 1996.

Tajikistan

Uzbek president Islam Karimov in 1993 reported that "Islamic extremists" from North Africa were supporting anti-government forces in Tajikistan.³¹ In 1994 he told a Davos meeting that the Tajik Islamic forces were oriented toward Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Libya, which provided them with money and gave moral support.³² According to information by the Russian Border Troops, Hekmatyar in 1994 had at least 20 of his instructors working for the Tajik opposition.³³ Among them has been a son of the notorious Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, the spiritual guide of Egypt's terrorist movements *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, "The Islamic Group," and *al-Jihad* ("The Holy War").³⁴ In September 1993, Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev warned:

What is happening on the Tajik-Afghan border is part of a general offensive by extremist political forces that are using Islamic slogans as a cover, but in fact has nothing to do with religion. Algeria, Egypt and Tajikistan are elements of a single mosaic.³⁵

Sources in the Tajik government initially estimated the number of mujahedin involved in the republic's civil war of 1992 at no more than 500-700 men.³⁶ Later really large numbers of Tajik fighters got their military training in Afghanistan. Allegedly by now there are about 12,000 men in the armed opposition.³⁷ From Taloqan, the capital of Mas'ud's northern province of Takhar, military operations have been conducted by the "Commander-in-Chief" of the "United Tajik Opposition," Said Abdullah Nuri.³⁸ However, again it has been above all Hekmatyar's *Hesb* that began by training the great majority of these fighters: by the summer of 1993 reportedly several thousands, whilst Mas'ud had trained but a few hundred.³⁹

Dushanbe pointed to covert Pakistani involvement as well. Mas'ud confirmed that in the region of the Afghan-Tajik border Pakistan's military intelligence service ISI (the military "Interservices Intelligence Directorate," had been active.⁴⁰ After a visit of the new Tajik president Imamali Rakhmonov to Pakistan in 1994 relations between the countries seemed to have improved. But the new Tajik regime, based on a monopoly of power of men practically exclusively from the southern region of Kulyab, originally the allies of Leninabad, by now is under extreme pressure.⁴¹ While the Afghan and Islamist connections of the armed opposition and clashes on the border are problems indeed, it is overly simplistic to put all the blame for Tajikistan's troubles on

³¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty News Brief, 18 Nov. 1993, p. 7.

³² IHT, 2 Febr. 1994.

³³ Igor' Rotar', NG, 4. June 1994.

³⁴ See below, part II.

³⁵ Izvestiya, 11 Sept. 1993.

³⁶ Keith Martin, Tajikistan: Civil War Without End? Radio Liberty, Research Review, 20 Aug., 1993.

³⁷ NG, 22 April 1995, prilozhenie.

³⁸ It was reported that in training the rebels manuals had been used which had been brought out by the Afghan Ministry of Defense, in 1992-93 under Mas'ud. The Tajik fighters allegedly even wore the uniforms of Mas'ud's troops. Mas'ud, although foremost an Afghan nationalist, probably owed some support to his ethnic kin, all the more since he had enjoyed decisive logistical support from Tajikistan during his war against the Soviet occupation. Still, although Mas'ud's and Rabbani's political grouping, the *Jam'iyat-e eslami* ("Islamic Society"), naturally had sympathized with the democratic-Islamic opposition in Tajikistan, Mas'ud has not been an advocate of destabilizing the neighboring republic. In fact, he flatly denied any role there during the civil war of 1992, not to speak of Central Asia (and contrary to Hekmatyar he does not indulge in telling lies). It was symptomatic that the main leaders of the Tajik Islamist opposition, when they had to flee, turned not to the Tajik war hero Mas'ud, but to Pakistan and Hekmatyar in Jalalabad, to Saudi Arabia and Iran. However, the *Ettehad-e eslami* of Rabbani's militant Wahabite ally Sayyaf, strong in the Kabul region, has been active in the border region as well.

³⁹ Central Asian Monitor, 4/1993.

⁴⁰ Sandy Gall, An Interview with Commander Ahmed Shah Masud, in: Asian Affairs, June 1994, p. 144.

international Islamism and "foreign powers," allegedly wishing "to wipe Tajikistan off the map." These forces have tried to make use of a revolutionary situation the roots of which go deeper, and it were policy failures of the Communist regime that were the immediate prelude to civil war. Besides, it is an open question whether continuing instability can be fought with repression alone, as the Rakhmonov regime has been trying to do. Russia and the CIS - including the Uzbek president Islam Karimov, initially the foremost advocate of Russian intervention against an alleged Islamist menace⁴² - by now have been pressuring the Rakhmonov regime for an accommodation with the opposition: so far without success.

Eastern and Southeastern Europe: Supporting Bosnia's Muslims

Whilst there seem to be no reports about specifically Afghan veterans operating from Eastern Europe, the Islamic movement has made its appearance in this part of the world as well: Thus, the Algerian GIA has its propaganda infrastructure in Poland.⁴³ In 1995 the Romanian intelligence service SRI for the second consecutive year warned that Islamic fundamentalists are a growing threat to the country.⁴⁴

The imposition of an arms embargo on ex-Yugoslavia victimized the Bosnian Muslims. Muslim countries, although cautious not to get involved in the fighting directly, came to support the Bosnian Muslims politically, financially and to some extent even militarily,⁴⁵ with Tehran, thanks to Croatia's mediation, turning into their main arms supplier (and Washington, otherwise implacably hostile toward this regime, for once tacitly collaborating with it). The Saudis, in regional and ideological competition with Iran, are reported to have delivered humanitarian aid for \$ 500 million and military aid for \$ 300 million.⁴⁶ Muslim fighters appeared from Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Turkey, South Africa, Iran and, above all, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Peshawar).⁴⁷ The Bosnian government itself has preferred to keep silent about this support.⁴⁸ However, already in 1992 *Pravda* reported that there had appeared an "Islamic Legion for Operations in Bosnia and Hercegovina." Its soldiers were trained in Sudan. A "giant portrait of Hekmatyar over a Muslim command post north of Sarajevo" was noted.⁴⁹ By 1993 a couple of hundred "mujahedin" served with the 7th Brigade of the regular Bosnian Army. They were not controlled by the authorities of Sarajevo.⁵⁰ A mujahedin company operated alongside the regular

⁴¹ The it too much enduring anarchy, soaring criminality, the economy has collapsed and there is increasing fractional strife, most ominously with former Uzbek supporters. Yeltsin already warned the regime on 16 January 1996 that it could not count on indefinite Russian support. However, Evgeny Primakov, the former security chief and present foreign minister, Moscow's foremost authority on Islamic countries, again made the point that a Russian withdrawal from Tajikistan was not feasible, since that would lead to the destabilization of the entire Central Asian region. One reason is that there are no further fortified borders.

⁴² Karimov made use of this alleged threat to consolidate his very authoritarian type of regime.

⁴³ Here the GIA newsletter, *Jihad News*, is published by Abdallah Anas. He is the son-in-law of Abdallah Azzam, a Palestine scholar and Muslim Brother who, with Saudi support, had played a key role in recruiting Arab volunteers to fight with the Afghan resistance. (Bruce, loc. cit., p.176.)

⁴⁴ ODD, 20 Nov. 1995.

⁴⁵ Yves Heller in: M, 23 Nov. 1995.

⁴⁶ Prof. Udo Steinbach, director of the Hamburg "Orient Institut," at a conference by the Hanns-Seidel Stiftung, Wildbad-Kreuth, 26 March 1996. IHT, 16 Jan. 1996.

⁴⁷ Titorenko, loc. cit., p. 36.

⁴⁸ Only the discovery of a training camp for terrorists by IFOR in a ski chalet near Sarajevo early this year induced the Bosnian Ministry of the Interior to come forth with a public statement, claiming that the chalet had served as a base for Iranian instructors training specialists in counter-terrorism.

⁴⁹ L. Kuznecov, *Pravda*, 24 Sept. 1992.

⁵⁰ M, 17 Dec. 1993.

Bosnian army in Zenica north of Sarajevo. The city's Vatrostalna factory for three years served as the mujahedin headquarters in Bosnia.⁵¹ By early 1995 some 1.000 Muslim fighters from a dozen countries were reported to be fighting in Bosnia, showing outstanding bravery and taking high casualties.

In Dayton the Bosnian president, Alija Izetbegovic, had to accept that these fighters would be withdrawn by 19 January 1996. Days before the deadline allegedly the last group, about 130 men, was reported to have left for Croatia.⁵² But some 300 Muslim fighters remained.⁵³ The U.S. Army and IFOR, NATO's "Implementation Force," consider them a "passive threat," all the more since 150 to 200 Iranian *Pasdaran* ("Guards of the Revolution"), who had been assigned mainly to the all-Muslim (and often fundamentalist) brigades,⁵⁴ are still in Bosnia.⁵⁵ One of the tasks of a CIA undercover operation, meant to track political and military opponents of the Dayton agreement, is to prevent that these fighters cause problems.⁵⁶ After the sentencing of the Egyptian extremists' spiritual guide, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, in New York in January, it was feared that militants might seek revenge.⁵⁷ A huge explosion on December 18, 1995, when a car bomb Muslim fighters had been working on went off, was a warning that IFOR might have to reckon with terrorist attacks. In fact, the result of the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia and its "ethnic cleansing" seems to be that Bosnia has returned to the *umma*, the Moslemic world community, again. The regime has embarked on a program of Islamization, turning the country into the only Muslim state in Europe. This is bound to add to its ideological importance in Muslim eyes; at the same time it bodes ill for the future of its fragile stability.

The Afghans' Impact on Asia

Kashmir

Over Kashmir India and Pakistan⁵⁸ fought two wars and in 1990 they were said to have come close to a nuclear confrontation. By now about 12.000 people were killed in this civil war in which Afghans have come to play an increasing role. Already by 1991 the Afghan *jihad*-culture had permeated all the main Kashmiri insurgent factions. The *Hisb ul-Mojahedin*, championed by Pakistan's ISI, had pushed the "Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front" (JKLF) inside Kashmir

⁵¹ Jordan Times, 29 March 1995; IHT, 30 July 1993; IHT, 17 Jan. 1996.

⁵² IHT, 17 Jan. 1996; ODD, 1 Febr. 1996.

⁵³ Anthony Lewis, IHT, 28 Jan. 1996. Some had taken on the Bosnian nationality, e. g. because they had married local women.

⁵⁴ IHT, 4 March 1996.

⁵⁵ ODD, 24 Jan. 1996. Iran has also undertaken training (and indoctrinating) Bosnian soldiers, apparently a couple of hundred men. Later, they could provide valuable liaison services between the two countries. (IHT, 4 March, 1996.)

⁵⁶ IHT, 15 Jan. 1996.

⁵⁷ Indeed, in the meantime the chief of the Egyptian *Gama'a's* terrorist operations, suspected to reside in Sudan, had a highly unusual videotape forwarded to the London Arabic newspaper *al-Hayat* from Afghanistan in which he called for taking Americans as hostages in order to free the Sheikh.

⁵⁸ Pakistan, which has occupied one third of the country, thinks India appropriated Kashmir in 1947 by means of a legal trick. It views Kashmir, which it claims all for itself, as a symbol of politics in a world hostile to Islam. India, on the other hand, regards Kashmir as determining the future of its own federal system. It has never carried through the UN-supervised plebiscite about self-determination promised about half a century ago. Wide-spread fraud during the elections of 1987 triggered a separatist movement.

into adopting an overtly Islamic stance.⁵⁹ By now there are an estimated 1,000 fighters in the country, overwhelmingly veterans of the Afghan war, again with Hekmatyar's fighters in the forefront. Although Rabbani, too, has declared his solidarity, Mas'ud's fighters do not seem involved.

India regards Pakistan's ISI as the prime instigator behind the Afghan-led "international brigade" in Kashmir. Brigadier Arjun Ray, commander of the 15th Corps at Srinagar and controller of internal security in the valley, claims that ISI is spending \$ 3.3 million a month to finance the militants. Among foreign mercenaries, Afghans are at a premium because of their reputation as fierce fighters who never surrender. Accordingly, they are paid best. However the Afghans' presence is resented in this closely knit society and there is public disillusionment with the militants, who to a considerable extent have become criminalized. Allegedly the public is overwhelming the security forces with information. By now there is a mood in favor of national independence, something neither Pakistan nor India want to acknowledge.

Xinjiang

In April 1990 there took place an armed uprising by a Muslim minority at Baren in Western Xinjiang.⁶⁰ The Uighur Islamists are reported to have received weapons from Afghanistan and Pakistan,⁶¹ as well as guerrilla training in Afghanistan.⁶² Peking is worried because of the strategic importance of the region. In the underpopulated north-west,⁶³ the greatest part of China's oil, mineral and nuclear power resources are concentrated - together with its Muslim population.⁶⁴ Besides, Xinjiang is China's gateway to the newly emerging markets of Central Asia. Fearing increased separatism in its outlying national regions, China began expanding its military contingents in Xinjiang, risking border tensions with neighboring states.⁶⁵

The Philippines

The Philippines have been able to re-establish democracy and an open society, but in the provinces semi-feudal arrangements persist. This makes for social tensions, and there are considerable law and order problems.⁶⁶ When in 1992 the Moro National Liberation Front began peace negotiations with Manila, a hard-line splinter group broke away from it: the *Abu Sayyaf*.⁶⁷ It is named after the Afghan mujahedin leader Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, the problematic "Wahhabite" ally of the new regime in Kabul.

The *Abu Sayyaf* group wants to establish a fundamentalist state in Mindanao, the island in the southern Philippines with its Muslim population. The movement started out in 1991 with less than 100 members. By now it has grown into a force of some 600 regulars.⁶⁸ Many of its

⁵⁹ Anthony Davis in JIR, July 1993, 328. The ties between the JKLF, the *Hizb ul-Mujahedin* and Hekmatyar's *Hesb*, active also in Kashmir, since the summer of 1990 had been mediated by the *Jama'at-e eslami*, Pakistan's most powerful fundamentalist party.

⁶⁰ Davis, loc. cit., p. 328.

⁶¹ C. Hollingworth, IHT, 9 Sept. 1993.

⁶² Davis, loc. cit., p. 328.

⁶³ It makes up 60% of China's land mass, but less than 10% of its total population live her.

⁶⁴ The precise number of these Muslims is unknown. One figure reported was 17.6 million in 1990.

⁶⁵ Moskovskie novosti, 12 Jan. 1992.

⁶⁶ Ph. Bowring, IHT, 20 Jan. 1996.

⁶⁷ Bruce, loc. cit., p. 170.

⁶⁸ IHT, 26 May 1995.

members are young men who have worked and studied in the Gulf states⁶⁹ where they became exposed to Islamist ideology. Often they have received religious training in Pakistan, followed by basic and advanced military training. The group's leader, Abubakar Janjalani, had studied Arabic and Islamic teachings in Saudi Arabia and in Libya. (In the latter country, presumably, above all guerrilla warfare.) He then recruited disgruntled Moro Front members and Muslim Filipinos who had fought in Afghanistan. The movement has been financed by the usual Arab and Mideastern backers of international Islamic terrorism.⁷⁰ It has been receiving weapons from Afghanistan, as the Filipino Interior Secretary reported.⁷¹ Abu Sayyaf has been waging its *jihad* against the Christian settlers of the island, making use of bombs, assassinations, kidnappings for ransom and extortion payments from companies and businessmen.⁷² On 4 April 1995 it attracted international attention with a spectacular attack on the small Christian town of Ipil, massacring 47 (or, according to another report, 53) people.⁷³ In 1995 Manila began working on an extradition and legal assistance treaty with Pakistan.

Turning Against the West

Ramzi Ahmed Yousef: Manipulator of the Movement?

It turned out that the *Abu Sayyaf* movement was also enlisted to become one of the key support groups of the terrorist network established by the shadowy "Ramzi Ahmed Yousef" (Abdul Basit),⁷⁴ a man from Baluchistan operating from Peshawar, the capital of Pakistan's Pushtun-populated, raucous North West Frontier Province, a center of the non-governmental organizations active during the Afghan war (and beyond). He operated with an Iraqi passport.⁷⁵ Yousef ran a hard-core group of Middle Eastern and Asian Muslim extremists, many of them "Afghans."⁷⁶ He was the chemist getting the explosives ready for the New York World Trade Center bombing. Using his Afghan connections, he had taken up contact with the *Abu Sayyaf* group, with the intention of using the Philippines as a "launch pad" for a world-wide terrorist campaign against the U.S. According to a Pakistani newspaper, he was also behind the blowing up of the shrine of Imam Reza (a Shi'ite saint) in Mashhad in June 1994, which killed over 100 people and wounded 70.⁷⁷ Besides, he planned to assassinate the Pope during his visit to Manila in January 1995. He further intended to blow up a series of 11 American planes: However, the one plane actually attacked, Philippine Airlines Flight 434, on which a bomb went off on 11 December 1994, nevertheless managed to land safely.⁷⁸ Yousef may also have participated in an abortive plot against the Israeli embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. Furthermore, the idea was raised

⁶⁹ More than 4 million Filipinos are working overseas. (IHT, 20 Jan. 1996.)

⁷⁰ IHT, 26 May 1995.

⁷¹ The weapons are shipped via Pakistan or overland through Asia to the Vietnamese coast, usually Sabah. (Arab News, 30 April 1995.) Next to drugs, weapons are the main export "commodity" of war-ravaged Afghanistan.

⁷² U. S. Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism, April 1995, p. 34.

⁷³ IHT, 26 May 1995.

⁷⁴ Alexandre Dastarac et M. Levent, *Le Monde diplomatique*, avril 1996, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Laurie Mylroie, "The World Trade Center Bomb. Who is Ramzi Ahmed Yousef? And Why it Matters," in: *The National Interest*, winter 1995/96, p. 3-15.

⁷⁶ Bruce, loc. cit., p. 459.

⁷⁷ T, 17 April 1995, p. 30. Indeed, in Tehran Sunni extremists from Peshawar had been suspected and not, as officially claimed, militants of the socialist-leaning *Mujahedin-e khalq* ("People's Combatants"). The Baluchis are anti-Shi'ite. The bombing may have been the response to the destruction of Sunni mosques in 1992. (IHT, 4 Aug. 1994.)

to crash a light plane loaded with explosives into the CIA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. Benazir Bhutto reported that in 1993 Yousef had also planned to assassinate her.⁷⁹ U.S. authorities came to view Yousef - about whom all too little is known - as the kingpin in an international Islamic terrorist network.⁸⁰ Whilst Yousef made use of his Afghan connections, he himself may not even be a member of the fundamentalist movement: Should he indeed have been an Iraqi intelligence officer, as has been suspected by at least one observer,⁸¹ this would mean that the secular dictator Saddam Hussein made use of the connections and the image of the Islamist movement⁸² in order to take his revenge on their common enemy, the U.S. But his case is a warning to what extremes the existing potential of terrorist elements and know-how can be carried.

The American government had promised two million dollars reward to anybody helping to get hold of Yousef. After having gone from Thailand to Pakistan, from where he intended to proceed to Iran, he was apprehended in Peshawar at the Su Casa Guest House.⁸³ On 8 February 1995 he was extradited by the Bhutto government to the U.S.⁸⁴

The World Trade Center Bombing

Behind the spectacular World Trade Center bombing of February 1993 immediately Islamist forces were suspected. Ultimately their "main enemy" remains the West, "global arrogance," i.e. above all the U.S. It was reported that Hekmatyar already in 1987 concluded an agreement with Tehran that he would use his connections within the U.S. intelligence community to build up a network of agents in the West, especially the U.S. and Canada.⁸⁵ By late 1993 there were 17 Islamic fundamentalist centers in the U.S. and it was estimated that there were a couple of hundred "sleeping agents" in the country as a whole.⁸⁶

With the bombing of the World Trade Center - causing six deaths, 1,000 injured and enormous material damage⁸⁷ - the U.S. for the first time became victim of a massive, foreign-inspired terrorist act. It turned out that similar attacks had been planned to take place on the same day against the UN, the FBI headquarters and the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels! Again the perpe-

⁷⁸ The landing succeeded despite a large hole in the fuselage. However, one Japanese passenger was killed and almost a dozen others were injured. (T, 20 Febr. 1995, p. 20.) The affair was meant to be a trial run to see whether a bomb could be smuggled through Manila airport. (T, 20 Febr. 1995, p. 20.)

⁷⁹ T, 17 April 1995, p. 30; Arab News, 22 March 1995.

⁸⁰ Bruce, loc. cit., p. 460.

⁸¹ Mylroie, loc. cit.

⁸² For an explanation of the seemingly strange cooperation between fundamentalists and agents of Iraq's secular regime, it might not be irrelevant to know that Hekmatyar has had a close relationship with Saddam Hussein. Besides, since the Gulf War of 1991, Saddam and the fundamentalists had converged in their common anti-Americanism.

⁸³ When he had been working on explosives in his hotel room in Mindanao, a fire started and he fled, leaving behind a computer with information about his itinerary, which led to his arrest.

⁸⁴ This may explain later terrorist attacks in Pakistan itself, as the killing of a CIA technician and a secretary of the U.S. embassy in Karachi in March 1995.

⁸⁵ L'Expr, 2 Dec. 1993, p. 22.

⁸⁶ There are as many as 200 Arab "Afghans" in the New-York-New Jersey area alone. (T, 20 Febr. 1995 L'Expr, 2 Dec. 1993.

⁸⁷ It could have been much worse, for the plan, apparently decisively assisted and enhanced in scope by Iraqi intelligence officers, had been to make the tower of the building collapse into the neighboring skyscraper, and the collapse of the two largest buildings of the city could have caused some 10 000 victims.

trators had been trained in Afghanistan.⁸⁸ And again, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, in the eighties the valued collaborator of the CIA in recruiting mujahedin for the Afghan *jihad*, reportedly had given the act his "Islamic" blessings: He has wanted to "terrorize the enemies of Islam" and "shake the earth under their feet."⁸⁹ Whilst his personal role could not be proven directly, at least it was incontestable that the majority of the men involved had come from the New York based Islamic organization *al-Kifah* in which he had been active. The technical mastermind was Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, apparently aided by Iraqi agents.⁹⁰ The conclusion of a competent observer: This was a message to Washington by Islamic extremists that they could hit the U.S. at its heart and a warning not to meddle in Middle Eastern affairs.⁹¹

The Jihad's "Spiritual Guide:" Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman

Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, who played a background role in these events as in so many before, was the fanatical preacher of Egypt's terroristic Islamist organization *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* ("Islamic Group"), revered also by its even more radical rival movement, *Al-Jihad*.⁹² He (and his sons) had been active in the Afghan War. He had been presented to the American ambassador in Islamabad by none other than Hekmatyar.⁹³ He was also involved in the assassination of Rabbi Meir Kahane in New York.⁹⁴ In Egypt it has been suspected that it was covert CIA protection that allowed him to enter the U.S. at all.⁹⁵

Dr. Osama Baz, security adviser to president Mubarak and one of Egypt's most influential government officials, reported that a suspect, Mahoud Abouhalima, a member of the Islamic Group (*al-Gama'a al-Islamiya*), had confessed that the bombing plan had been hatched out among former Afghan veterans. It was approved by Persian speaking men, apparently Iranian intelligence officers, and Sheikh Rahman.⁹⁶ Ahmad Ajaj, another Afghan veteran involved in the coup, had entered the U.S. on a false passport, carrying bomb-making manuals and other materials. A third man, the Sudanese Siddiq Ibrahim Siddiq Ali - Rahman's repentant body guard - had fought with Abouhalima in Afghanistan in 1988-90.⁹⁷ He confessed that the sheikh had issued a *fatwa*, a religious judgment, to assassinate Egyptian president Mubarak who was due to address the UN. According to this witness Sheikh Rahman had declared the bombings of the UN and other targets in the U.S. permissible according to Islam.⁹⁸

⁸⁸ Central Asian Monitor, 2/95, p. 38.

⁸⁹ IHT, 2 Oct. 1995.

⁹⁰ Two Iraqis showed up days before the bombing to assist the plotters. (IHT, 17/18 July 1993.)

⁹¹ See Martin Kramer, *Islam & the West* (including Manhattan), in: *Commentary*, Oct. 1993.

⁹² Sheikh Rahman had already been suspected of moral responsibility for the murder of Sadat in 1981 by men of *al-Jihad*, but this could not be proven.

⁹³ Later, in August 1993, Hekmatyar offered refuge to the blind Sheikh, at the time facing possible deportation from the U.S.

⁹⁴ IHT, 28 June 1993.

⁹⁵ Between 1986 and 1990 CIA officers had reviewed all of the Sheikh's seven applications to enter the U.S., and he was turned down only once because of links to terrorism. (IHT, 23 July 1993.) Later the State Department blamed a failure in the computerized index of dangerous aliens: The name had been spelled differently in the Egyptian warning than in this list. There exist 40 different ways of transcription! (NZZ, 25/26 July 1993.)

⁹⁶ IHT, 17-18 July 1993.

⁹⁷ T, 20 Febr. 1995, p. 21; Bruce, loc. cit. p. 176.

⁹⁸ T, 20 Febr. 1995, p. 21.

Spill-over of the Algerian War: GIA Attacks in France

In December 1994 four members of the Algerian GIA - the "*Groupe islamique armée*," Algeria's terrorist movement in which "Afghans" have played the crucial role - hijacked a French Airbus in Algiers. After the terrorists had shot some hostages, Algiers, pressured by the French, finally let the plane proceed to Marseilles. There, after drawn-out negotiations to wear out the terrorists, a French elite unit of the gendarmerie managed to storm the plane. It turned out that the terrorists had planned to load the plane with excess jet fuel and explode it over Paris. In 1995 France, viewed by the GIA as its enemy because of its support for the military regime in Algiers,⁹⁹ experienced a whole series of nine terrorist ambushes for which the GIA is blamed. This caused 10 deaths and 130 injured.¹⁰⁰ Again it was reported that some of the young men carrying out the ambushes had been sent to Afghanistan and Bosnia for training.

Merely a "Peripheral" Phenomenon?

In the CIS and Russia the mujahedin take-over of Kabul in the spring of 1992 initially conjured up new threat scenarios: fears of destabilization, a "war of civilizations," a geopolitical revolution. By now it has become clear that Russia itself does not face any kind of global, coordinated Islamist offensive: Even in the case of Iran, vis-à-vis Russia and the CIS reason of state very soon prevailed over revolutionary messianism.¹⁰¹ The Tajik movement on closer investigation showed to be much more of a nationalist and traditionalist reaction (the key role has been played by Sufis!) than a genuinely fundamentalist, not to speak of a "Wahhabi" movement. Tatarstan, having gained autonomy, has shown no fundamentalist leanings at all. While the Chechen rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev tried to play the "Islamic card," the Islamic Conference Organization has been reserved.

Among the Turkic people of Central Asia with nomadic traditions - the Kirghiz, Kazakh and Turkmens - fundamentalism has even less appeal. Above all, in Afghanistan - originally quoted again and again as the main source of danger - the new Kabul regime under Rabbani and Mas'ud, precariously hanging on to power, in fact has turned out to be rather traditionalist-pragmatic. Russia and even Dushanbe are increasingly counting on its cooperation in preserving stability in Tajikistan, all the more since Kabul's fundamentalist antagonists, the Taleban, appear much more ominous.

Thus, while specialists and events themselves have come to correct exaggerated fears of a "geostrategic" Islamist offensive - and the movement specifically of the Afghanistan veterans in turn has been merely "peripheral" (Olivier Roy) to the basically national Islamist movements of the region -, nevertheless it is incontestable that Islamism and Islam still do concern Russia very much, more so than Europe, for the simple reason that the southern CIS in important cultural

⁹⁹ The driving force had been Interior Minister Charles Pasqua. Under president Chirac France became more cautious; but after Zeroual's electoral victory, relations were normalized.

¹⁰⁰ M, 17 Jan. 1996.

¹⁰¹ The turn took place already under Khomeini himself. It was facilitated by the fact that Russia and the Soviet Union, in contrast to the U.S., had hardly had any crucial impact or appeal on Iranian cultural and political life, and thus did not endanger the new regime's legitimacy. Besides, Tehran has striven to overcome its international isolation; it has every interest in the stability of its northern borders; being a multi-ethnic empire itself, Iran has to fear ethnic conflicts; finally, there is a need for economic, technical and military cooperation with Russia. Thus, while Iranian Mullahs initially may have contributed to the mood, slogans and tactics of the Tajik opposition, Tehran's official policy has been cautious and it has even mediated between the new regime in Dushanbe and the opposition. The rapprochement with Russia recently has made further progress.

respects is also part of the Middle East. Moscow has reached understandings with Arab countries and Turkey to ward off Islamism. But the new view gaining adherents is that Russia should by no means try to pose as a bulwark between Islam and the West (as military leaders at first demanded). It should rather play the role of mediator or even try to exploit the opposition between Islam and the West to its own advantage.

Part II. Veterans of the Afghan War in the Islamist Movements of the Near East. Russian and Western Risk Assessments

"The only thing that the U.S.A. and the West have declared war against is ... the Islamic movement," the radio station of the Afghan fundamentalist Golbuddin Hekmatyar recently claimed.¹⁰² However, Israel apart, initially only CIS leaders and Russian military and security circles sounded outright alarm about a "fundamentalist" challenge. In 1994 the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service declared that Islamic extremism posed a threat to the whole international community. Europe and the U.S., fixated on Russia and without any ready strategy how to react to the turbulent events in North Africa, the Caucasus and Central Asia, initially were reserved. Experts pointed out that the Islamist movements posed a danger above all to their "own" governments (which, however, like Egypt could be of great strategic importance to the West). The well-known orientalist Olivier Roy stressed in 1994 that Islamic fundamentalism was no geostrategic factor: Since the beginning of Islamic activism in the Middle East the West never before so clearly had been master of the situation.¹⁰³

While pan-Islamic visions of a new caliphate joining all Muslims are obviously utopian in a world of states - already the earlier pan-Arabism ran aground on these realities -, it is less evident that Western approaches to the region, focusing above all on establishing free markets, will be the way out of the crisis faced by these states and societies: At the very least in a crucial short- and medium term marketization and its concomitant social costs are likely even to deepen the crisis. The increased influx of Western, especially U.S. culture (and trash culture) could enhance the reaction. Modern means of communication (and the illusionary world of the movies) provide visions of much more opulent life-styles and may contribute to breeding resentment and inferiority complexes. Thus, what in reality remains of the Islamist challenge is not a global, coordinated offensive, but a challenge, perhaps no less daunting, of managing political and social instability in what aptly has been called the "arc of crises," requiring not only considerable means, but also empathy for foreign cultures and psychological tact.

France as well as Italy and Spain, the European countries that would be most immediately affected by any Islamist upheavals, soon became concerned, worrying about potential refugee streams and ensuing repercussions on their security situation. The EU has begun to activate its Mediterranean policy. The U.S., relatively unaffected at home and in an isolationist mood anyhow, has assumed a pose of relative detachment, pleading for inclusion of the moderate opposition,¹⁰⁴ while at the same time turning to bilateralist policies, even stretching out feelers to the Islamist movements in Egypt and Algeria.

¹⁰² 8 May 1995. SWB. FE/2299 A/1.

¹⁰³ FHSA, 24 Oct. 1994.

¹⁰⁴ Critics have pointed out, however, that such Islamic moderates a) don't exist; b) if they did exist, they would not have the power to enforce any possible agreements; and c) such a policy would only serve to undermine the existing regimes and with them whatever there has been of stability.

However, CIA director John M. Deutch recently warned to expect a "tremendous growth" in terrorism worldwide over the next 10 to 15 years.¹⁰⁵ Following the end of the Soviet Union there had been a marked decline in terrorism.¹⁰⁶ But by now "religious" terrorism has begun to take the place of former secular terrorism, with acts of terror committed by radical Islamic groups in particular on the rise.¹⁰⁷ And in most crisis areas - in the Near East, the CIS and by now even to some extent in the West - it have been veterans of the Afghan war who have contributed decisively to raising its level of sophistication and destructiveness.¹⁰⁸ Numerically the "Afghans" in these various "hot spots" have not been any grand presence. But that does not mean that one should simply overlook them. Terrorism is the preferred weapon precisely of tiny minorities who hope thus to achieve publicity and blackmail established governments.¹⁰⁹

"Afghans" in the Algerian Civil War

Currently the main thrust of Islamic revolution has been experienced by Algeria, where a *de facto* civil war broke out in January 1992, after the army denied power to the FIS (*Front islamique du salut*), the victors of the 1991 elections.¹¹⁰ The core of the hard-line fundamentalist movement is made up by an estimated 1.000 to 1.500 former Afghanistan fighters.¹¹¹ There have been "Afghans" in the FIS itself, as Kamar Eddin Kharbane.¹¹² But above all, it was the arrest of the main FIS leaders and the emigration of others which, by cutting lines of control and communication, led to the "Afghanization" of the movement.¹¹³ The "militarization" of the civil

¹⁰⁵ Ethnic and religious differences would become "a growing source of international terrorism." Transnational groups involved in terrorism, organized crime and narcotics traffic would present a continuing threat. This would have an "immense impact on how we conduct our foreign policy..." (IHT, 20 Dec. 1995.)

The European heads of government at their meeting in Turin also called for an improvement in the fight against organized crime, terrorism and the drugs trade. (Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, 30/31 March 1996.)

¹⁰⁶ Culminating in the mid-seventies, terrorism declined abruptly since 1991: In 1987 there still had taken place 650 terrorist attacks, by 1992 it were only 361.

¹⁰⁷ United States Department of State, Pattern of Global Terrorism, April 1995, p. III.

¹⁰⁸ Op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ E. g. the *Narodnaya volya*, the "Party of the People's Will," the Russian terrorist movement of the late 1870s that managed to terrorize what at the time had seemed to be the world's mightiest police state, killing the tsar in 1881, at any one time had consisted of no more than some twenty people! (See v. Borcke, "Violence and Terror in Russian Revolutionary Populism: the Narodnaya Volya, 1879-1883," in: Wolfgang Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld, Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe. London 1982, pp. 48-62.) This "party," which deeply impressed Lenin, inspiring his claim that with an organization of revolutionaries he could unhinge Russia, in crucial respects was the precursor of modern movements of political terrorism. Even the Islamist underground in its *modus operandi* shows some striking resemblance. Hekmatyar himself at one point admitted he had learned from Bolshevism..

¹¹⁰ Since the late 1980s the country has been in acute economic and social crisis, ultimately also a crisis of legitimacy and identity, the consequence of the oligarchic and corrupt FLN (*Front de libération nationale*) regime, ruling since independence in 1962, and its failed modernization effort inspired by the Soviet model. By the late 1980s 70% of the 17 to 23 year old young men were unemployed (T, 9 Jan. 1995, p. 23.), an acute threat to social peace: In October 1988 severe urban rioting erupted, the reaction to shattered social and political expectations. Prime Minister Chadli Benjedid tried to use the crisis to press through overdue reforms. One fatal step was the legalization of the FIS. (He apparently thought he could head a government also under FIS rule.) Making use of its network of mosques and charitable organization, the FIS, on 26 December 1991, in a first round won a plurality of 189 seats and was postured for a sure majority in the second round. In January 1992 the military stepped in and in the following February proclaimed martial law.

¹¹¹ Bruce, loc. cit., p. 175.

¹¹² M, 17 Dec. 1993, p. 10. Kharbane, vice president of the FIS executive council, had been an army officer who later became a mujahedin commander in Afghanistan. (Bruce, loc. cit., p. 175.)

¹¹³ L'Expr, 9 Dec. 1993, p. 10.

war, in which by now an estimated 40,000¹¹⁴ to 50,000 people were killed, goes to a significant extent to the account of the GIA ("*Groupe islamique armée*"), led by former Afghanistan fighters. These youthful and often illiterate retournees have been committed to destroying the secular government.¹¹⁵ GIA fighters are largely responsible for the systematic attacks on unveiled women,¹¹⁶ the educational institutions,¹¹⁷ journalists¹¹⁸ and writers - a tactic amounting to depriving society of its capacity for articulation - and since September 1993 on foreigners,¹¹⁹ threatening the regime with international isolation.

The electoral victory of Liamine Zeroual, the Minister of Defense, on 16 November 1995, was a surprise. While declaring war on the terrorists, he at the same time seemed ready to negotiate with the opposition in the interest of national reconciliation. He proclaimed a policy of *rahman* (mercy) toward repentant militants and promised legislative elections (without setting a date). In a relatively fair election, which the main opposition parties boycotted, he received 61,01% of the vote, and this time the rate of voter participation, disregarding the threats of the extremists, was a stunning 75,69%¹²⁰ - a massive demonstration for peace. This has made key leaders of the FIS, like Rebah Kebir (35), representing the FIS executive in Germany, signal readiness for dialogue. The extremists, on the other hand, largely deprived of an echo in the heavily censored Algerian media, have tried to compensate by ever more spectacular attacks.

The result of the civil war has been stalemate: The chances that the guerrillas can be crushed by purely military means are not too good; but neither have the highly factionalized rebels the

¹¹⁴ IHT, 25/26 Nov. 1995.

¹¹⁵ Successive leaders of the GIA were: Tayeb al-Afghani, a former smuggler and Afghanistan veteran, arrested in November 1992; Sid Ahmad Mourad, alias Jaafar al-Afghani, killed by the police in March 1994; and Abu Abdullah Ahmad, alias Sherif Gousmi, killed in September 1994 at the age of 26. (Jordan Times, 29 March 1995.) A key qualification for GIA leaders, drastically lowering their life expectancy, is that they must take part in operations in the field. In 1994 one of the leading "brains" of the movement, Mohammed Said, became leader, with Jamel Zitouni responsible for military leadership. (M, 4 Oct. 1994.)

The GIA was founded in the early nineties, but otherwise neither the structure nor the cadres of the GIA are known. There is a hard core, but it seems the name is used by a multitude of armed groups. The government's secret services also have played a shady role in, indulging in provocation and disinformation. (Ali Habib, M, 11 Oct. 1995.)

¹¹⁶ The emancipation of women, a crucial prerequisite of social modernization and democratization, is viewed by the fundamentalists as the greatest threat to cultural "identity." Already the family code of 1984, making considerable concessions to their world-view, tried to reduce women once more to non-autonomous dependants and in fact "objects." The Islamists have made the re-imposition of the traditional role on women their key demand, feeling that by this kind of "*Gleichschaltung*" of women they will also gain control over society. (Sophie Benis, M, 2 Nov. 1994.) Thus, FIS president Abassi Madani in 1989 declared: A female should emerge from home only three times in her life: "when she is born, when she is married, and when she goes to the cemetery." (T, 9 Jan. 1995, p. 16.)

¹¹⁷ 600 schools and several universities were burned down. (T, 6 March 1995.) The rural mujahedin in Afghanistan, seeing in schools the breeding ground of Marxism and Westernization, followed a similar strategy.

¹¹⁸ In 1994 29 Algerian journalists were murdered and by now there are 48 victims among journalists of all orientations, plus 15 people who had been employed by the media. (M, 13 Febr. 1996.) About 150 left the country. Almost all overseas news organizations withdrew their correspondents and Algiers no longer issued any press visas. (T, 9. Jan. 1995, p. 22.) Those Algerian journalists who have kept working have to lead the lives of conspirators.

¹¹⁹ By early 1995 76 foreigners had been murdered (T, 9. 1. 1995, p. 20.) and over 80% of resident foreigners had left the country. (T, 6 March 1995, p. 19.) The foreigners still working in Algeria are mostly from Eastern Europe.

¹²⁰ M, 26/27 Nov. 1995. The Islamist FIS triumph in 1991 was based on a mere 40% voter participation. (IHT, 18/19 Nov. 1995.)

strength to defeat the army. What they can do, however, is to try to ruin the state by a strategy of attrition. The consequences for the economy have been devastating,¹²¹ taxes go uncollected, civil life is paralyzed, a "brain drain" has taken place,¹²² criminality and especially the drugs trade are soaring, etc. Western secret services had already seen the regime on the brink of collapse. However, Zeroual's election victory has given his regime new legitimacy and international recognition. Besides, the militant Islamist movement itself shows signs of increasing fragmentation: The GIA has begun fighting the AIS ("*Armée islamique du salut*"), the military arm of the FIS, which it suspects of being ready to enter into negotiations with the government.¹²³ Besides, the leaders of the GIA are fighting among each other. In fact, the "emirs" of the GIA have begun to operate without recognizing any higher authority whatsoever. Whilst making for even more violence for the time being, this trend could presage the exhaustion of the movement.

However, hopes that Zeroual might indeed initiate overdue reforms - he has kept his political aims studiously vague - have been dampened, given the conservative nominations for the government.¹²⁴ After his first hundred days in office there still were no visible steps toward the hoped for break with the past. It is not clear to what extent he is ham-strung by the clique of generals, who in fact had been ruling the country and who are split into "exterminationists" and "accommodationists." But only the offer of a dialogue in view of meaningful solutions can rally society as well as possible dissenters from the militant opposition itself. Until now it has been the public that is the main victim, being terrorized by both sides, the terrorists and the all too indiscriminate government repressions. By now, Zeroual has opened negotiations with the legal opposition - but not with the FIS.

The seemingly most obvious way out, an accommodation between the military and the more "moderate" Islamists - assuming that such "moderates" can be found and that they have the power to enforce a compromise - would inevitably take place at the expense of the modern, Francophone elements of society and, above all, of urban middle-class women.¹²⁵ U.S. recommendations to follow such a line - tacitly applying the logic of an open and market society with its processes of negotiations and adjustment - tend to overlook the experience with Fascism and National Socialism¹²⁶ which came to power "legally." The only "advantage" of an Islamist victory could be that such a government, thanks to greater social acceptance, might be better able to impose the hardships going with inevitable economic adjustments.

"Afghans" in Egypt

The next most bitter battle between militant Islam and an entrenched secular establishment in the Near East in which "Afghans" have also played a crucial role has been going on in Egypt, the

¹²¹ The damages caused in 1994 by sabotage were estimated at one billion dollars. (T, 6 March, 1995.) Nevertheless, in 1995 the economy reportedly began to show signs of recovery. Meanwhile the militants have announced they will attack the oil and gas sector, providing 95% of foreign currency earnings.

¹²² By early 1995 50.000 professionals had left the country. (T, 9 Jan. 1995.)

¹²³ La presse de Tunisie, 8 Jan. 1996.

¹²⁴ The nomination of the brilliant 43 year old Ahmed Ouyahia - since February 1994 the director of the president's office - to become the youngest prime minister in the country's history seemed promising. However, the former diplomat retained (or had to retain) 12 ministers of the previous administration.

¹²⁵ Interestingly, a Louis Harris survey among Algerians living in France showed that 80% think the crisis will be settled by talks; 11% feel the military will win and only 1% expect a fundamentalist victory. (Daniel Pipes, "Between Peace and Jihad," in: Freedom Review, Jan.-Febr. 1996, p. 50.)

¹²⁶ In fact, among modern ideologies, these are the ideologies with which Islamism shows the closest affinity.

birthplace of the Islamist movement. (Here in 1928 the Muslim Brotherhood was founded.)¹²⁷ The loosely organized fundamentalist underground calls itself *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* ("The Islamic Group"), a name that for the first time appeared in 1977.¹²⁸ Initially the *Gama'a* provided the "roof" for all fundamentalist currents. It is reported to be organized on two levels, one official, operating under an *emir* ("commander"), another secret and known only to the leader.¹²⁹ Since March 1992 - when after the return of the "Afghans"¹³⁰ it began attacking Copts and policemen, later turning on foreign tourists - the *Gama'a* has spearheaded a campaign against the government.¹³¹ Half of the seventy men condemned to death by special courts are members of this grouping. Its cadres are above all young men who fought in Afghanistan.¹³² According to authorities in Cairo, the *Gama'a* has been financed from sources in Iran, by wealthy Gulf Arabs, expatriates in Europe and Islamic institutions in Saudi Arabia,¹³³ and Iran is suspected of also having had a hand in its operations.¹³⁴ The bastion of *Gama'a* has been the poor province of Asiut in Upper Egypt.¹³⁵

At the time of the Afghan war more than 4.000 fundamentalists received training in Egyptian camps in order to fight with the mujahedin.¹³⁶ After that war had ended in 1989, Islamic sponsors - organizations and individuals - that had poured millions of dollars into the Afghan resistance began re-directing some of their funds to radical Islamic movements in the Arab world.¹³⁷ Since 1990 Arab "Afghans" began to return to Egypt and soon became a force to be reckoned with. Several hundred of these veterans - the most "professional" among whom had been trained by the CIA in Hekmatyar's camps¹³⁸ - have been active in fundamentalist groups, notably *Talaeh al-Fatah* ("Vanguard of the Conquest"), the "New Jihad," led by Ayman Al-Zawahri.¹³⁹ Last not least, "Afghans" have served as links between domestic leaders and those remaining in exile. The Egyptian government responded by cutting direct telephone connections with Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁴⁰

¹²⁷ There is the usual crisis scenario: A population boom outpacing the rate of economic growth, with 75 % of university graduates and young people with higher education unemployed. Since the 1991 Gulf war there has been a remarkable erosion of public confidence: The regime is regarded as authoritarian, arrogant, incompetent, corrupt, insensitive and simply too long in power. The lack of political participation is resented. As a consequence of privatization, an IMF condition, ten to 15 families control most of the economy. A "clique of sons" of the powerful (including of the president) have abused their positions to enrich themselves.

¹²⁸ The movement was founded by students in Cairo and Asiut. Initially president al-Sadat was willing to tolerate it, regarding it as a useful counter-balance to the Communists and Nasserists.

¹²⁹ L'Orient-Le Jour, 7 July 1995. According to American information, however, there is no discernible leader and the movement consists of a series of more or less independent groups. (U.S. Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism. April 1995.)

¹³⁰ KStA, 19 April 1996.

¹³¹ IHT, 5 July 1993.

¹³² L'Orient-Le Jour, 7 July 1997.

¹³³ IHT, 17/18 July 1993.

¹³⁴ Bruce, loc. cit., p. 176.

¹³⁵ U. S. Department of State, op. cit., p. 16.

¹³⁶ Titarenko, loc. cit., p. 37.

¹³⁷ Carlyle Murphy, Egypt: An Uneasy Portent of Change, in: Current History, Febr. 1994, pp. 78-82.

¹³⁸ Alain Gresh, Le Monde diplomatique, Dec. 1993.

¹³⁹ Zawahri is a surgeon by training who was among the first to go to Afghanistan. He still has close ties with Afghan leaders. (Jordan Times, 25 May 1994.) Recently his group organized the bomb attack on the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad of November 1995.

¹⁴⁰ But as late November 1993 it could not halt the flow of faxed communiqués to the Cairo offices of foreign news media. (Murphy, loc. cit., p. 81.)

The *Gama'a* still has some 200 men in Jalalabad, the capital of the (Pushtun-dominated) province of Nangahar in eastern Afghanistan, until recently a Hekmatyar stronghold. Among Hekmatyar's protégés has been Mohammad Shawki al-Islambouli, the brother of the fundamentalist lieutenant Khaled al-Islambouli who led the group that assassinated president Anwar al-Sadat on 6 October 1981. Mohammad Shawki was sentenced to death *in absentia* in December 1992 for plotting to overthrow the Mubarak regime and planning the assassination of other Egyptian leaders. In 1990, he was host to Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman¹⁴¹ when the spiritual leader of the *Gama'a* visited Afghanistan.

The strongest, most active and broadest-based opposition to Egypt's secular government has been *al-Jihad* ("The Holy War"), responsible for Sadat's murder. Thanks to the military trials following the assassination, much information about the structure, ideology and leadership of Egypt's most radical Islamic groups came to light.¹⁴² The *Jihad* was almost liquidated by the government, but later it was revived by an influx of Afghanistan veterans. It operates under a self-appointed, scattered leadership council and the security forces have been practically unable to penetrate these groups.¹⁴³ Between the *Gama'a* and the *Jihad* there have been differences over tactics, competition for funds and personal rivalries. *Jihad* has concentrated on building up networks in the armed forces, the police and other state institutions¹⁴⁴ and has specialized in technically sophisticated attacks on high-level government officials.

By late 1995 terrorism in Egypt had caused some 900 deaths.¹⁴⁵ In 1993/94 the terrorists succeeded in severely reducing the country's income from tourism, its most important source of foreign currency.¹⁴⁶ In February 1994 the *Gama'a* started attacking Western banks. Already after the murder of the chairman of parliament, Rifaat Makhgub, in 1990 the regime came to view fundamentalism as a threat. Investigations had unveiled the extent of the movement: *Al-Jihad* consisted of no less than 35 groups spread all over the country.¹⁴⁷ The militants apparently had infiltrated the security services, including the very subdepartment in charge of the fight against political terrorism!¹⁴⁸

Since April 1994, Mubarak, a Soviet educated officer, has responded with ruthless repression.¹⁴⁹ In 1994 it was reported that the Egyptian intelligence agencies had increased their cooperation with western services.¹⁵⁰ This line has apparently been not without success. From April to August 1994 there was a marked decrease in assassinations. In October 1994 the World Population Conference could take place in Cairo without an incident. Contrary to a prevailing mood in the

¹⁴¹ Bruce, loc. cit., p. 176.

¹⁴² IHT, 10-11 July 1993.

¹⁴³ Tammy Arbuckle, Egypt's Catch 22. Islamic Militants Threaten a Secular Ally, in: International Defense Review, 12/1993, pp. 941-944.

¹⁴⁴ Murphy, loc. cit., p. 79.

¹⁴⁵ T, 11 Dec. 1995.

¹⁴⁶ Income from tourism fell from 2.1 billion dollars in 1992 to 1.3 billion in 1993. (T, 4 April 1994.) Tourism provides employment for 10,000 people. (M, 10 July 1993.)

¹⁴⁷ V.K. Mikhaylov, Etot mnogoliky Kair, in: Azija i Afrika, 10/1994, p. 40.

¹⁴⁸ This was suggested by the murder of police general Rauf Kheirat exactly one week after one of the leading terrorists, Hamid Mahmud Rashuan, had been killed in a fire-fight with the police in Asiut in April 1993. (Mikhaylov, loc. cit., p. 41-42.)

¹⁴⁹ Thus the police can shoot without warning, torture of detainees is reported, family members are arrested to force fugitive militants into surrender, verdicts of court martials are without appeal, except for clemency by the president (who has backed up the courts). Already in 1993, when 29 militants had been executed, it was pointed out that this had been the largest number of hangings for political crimes in modern Egyptian history. (Murphy, loc. cit., p. 80.) By early 1996, 48 men had been executed. (Ec, 3 Febr. 1996, p. 33.)

¹⁵⁰ M, 27 Aug. 1994.

West, repression can work, at least in the short and medium term, as Syria's Assad had demonstrated in February 1982 when he liquidated the *al-Talia al-Mukatila*, the military wing of the Muslim Brothers.¹⁵¹ If the attack on Mubarak's life in Addis Abeba last June has raised questions about Egypt's success in its struggle with terrorism, the Egyptians could point out that this took place outside the country. Terrorism, the weapon of ruthless minorities, can never be totally excluded. For the time being the state seems to have triumphed over political Islam, but society has become increasingly Islamized in turn.

For the regime, like other governments in the region not sure of their legitimacy, had felt compelled to make concessions to the Islamist mood. Thus, already since 1980 (Sadat's times) Islamic law had been declared the main (and later even "exclusive") source of law. At the forefront of the movement in favor of re-Islamization has been the university of al-Azhar under its spiritual leader, Sheikh Gad Al-Haq.¹⁵² The educational system, by strictly separating the sciences from the humanities, has facilitated an all too uncritical spirit among graduates in the sciences who have become a main recruiting ground for the Islamists. The fundamentalists have been careful not to enter into any genuine debate what their slogan "Islam is the solution" will mean in practice. However, as the Tunisian historian Muhammad Talbi warned:

Aussi longtemps que nous porterons le passé dans notre inconscient sans le soumettre à notre jugement critique, nous continuerons à traîner derrière nous des fers, des chaînes et des croyances d'époques révolues, des reliquats dégradés qui empoisonnent notre personnalité collective, la paralysent et bornent sa liberté de mouvement.¹⁵³

The fundamentalists have opted for the very effective tactic of winning popular support by making up for the defaulting state¹⁵⁴ in social services. Besides, they started a systematic "march through the institutions," especially in professional associations¹⁵⁵ and thus to some extent managed to gain control over the intellectual elite of the country.¹⁵⁶ For the past two years the

¹⁵¹ Anthony Davis in: JIR, July 1993, loc. cit., p. 327. However, by now his regime, too, is eagerly building mosques.

¹⁵² Again, the policy vis-à-vis women is the barometer. Besides, fundamentalists have used such unsavory methods as declaring Western-leaning, cosmopolitan intellectuals heretics, thus in fact giving them free for murder. Only now a law has been passed excluding the possibility of starting legal proceedings against a secularist. The case of the theological scholar Abu Zaid gained special notoriety. He had demanded one should differentiate between "religion itself and human understanding of religion," between the "religious feeling inside the heart of a Muslim or Christian and the political manipulation of these ideas." (IHT, 27 July 1993.) He called for an interpretation of the Koran "in its historical context" (FHSA, 28 June 1993) and pointed out that its actual *message* has to be understood. Ultimately, this was tantamount to questioning the role of the clergy. The fundamentalists retorted that he had rejected the divine nature of the Koran and religious tradition. A zealot undertook legal action to force the wife of the scholar to divorce her "heretic" husband. (See Navid Kermani, "Die Affäre Abu Zaid," in: Orient, 1/1994.) Abu Zaid has risked his life. Presently he is a guest professor in Holland.

Meanwhile president Mubarak has appointed sheikh Tantavi as a successor for sheikh Gad Al Haq, who died recently. The 67 years old Tantavi is known for his moderate, even "progressive," views.

¹⁵³ Quoted by Emmanuel Silva, *Mythes politiques arabes*. Paris: Fayard 1995; quoted in *Le Monde diplomatique*, Dec. 1995.

¹⁵⁴ IMF lending policy with its demand for a balancing of the budget has contributed to the collapse of state social services.

¹⁵⁵ These organizations enjoy special prestige, given the lack of genuine social participation in political life. The take-overs were won thanks to absenteeism of many members during the crucial voting. By now such votes require the presence of 50% of the membership. (M, 14 July 1994.) Thus, the Islamists lost control over the syndicates of the doctors, lawyers and engineers.

¹⁵⁶ The literary elite has begun to fight back. A noteworthy debate about civil society is an example. See: "Ägyptens neue Aktivitäten zur Unterstützung der Zivilgesellschaft und des demokratischen Wandels und die 'Konfrontation der Intellektuellen'," in: Orient, 4/1993, pp. 542-550.

state has tried to reverse these trends. In addition to repression, a concerted information and propaganda campaign has been started, making use of the media. In fact, as an ideological, intellectual movement Islamism already has become increasingly contested.

Since the summer of 1994 the regime has launched an offensive against the Muslim Brothers, declared illegal already in 1965, but tacitly tolerated since 1976. Mubarak and Interior Minister al-Alfi have come to regard them as merely the other face of Islamic extremism.¹⁵⁷ Before the November 1995 elections the regime took measures to exclude them from political life.¹⁵⁸ However, the elections, which under the supervision of Interior Minister Hasan al-Alfi led to a seemingly near-total triumph of Mubarak's followers, winning 97% (!) of the seats, were marred by fraud and violence to such an extent that the Egyptian Human Rights Organization demanded that they be declared invalid. But the bulk of the military still seems to be solidly behind Mubarak.¹⁵⁹ Tourism began to increase again.¹⁶⁰ In the longer run, however, a political course of mere repression could be undermining the regime's legitimacy, endangering that very stability the government is trying to assure.

What is felt to have been the failure of the Europe-inspired nation state in the region has made people look for another venue to find cultural, national, and personal identity, integration, recognition and, above all, power. In the process, Islam has also become a political myth in the Sorelian sense: the expression of the determination to act.¹⁶¹ However, Egypt, the only genuine "nation" in the region, should have a fairly good chance to weather the Islamist storm.¹⁶² But the dangers are obvious: a steady descent into deeper levels of pauperization and the lapse of the country's best into apathy and despair. Constraints and failures of the regime may be blamed, but the "Afghan" returnees have contributed their share to sharpening the crisis, with the potentially contradictory result of both, reinforcing authoritarianism and reliance on the military, on the one hand, and simultaneously increasing latent pressures for genuine reform, on the other.

Merely a Regional Risk?

In France, Italy and Spain worries about the stability of North Africa have come to eclipse those about post-Soviet Eastern Europe and Russia. Incontestably, for Europe the Mediterranean region is of crucial importance.¹⁶³ France has supported the Algerian regime, without approving all its methods. But under President Chirac initially it distanced itself somewhat. America, anxious to avoid once more becoming a "Great Satan," publicly has been rather non-committal,

¹⁵⁷ M, 14 July 1994.

¹⁵⁸ Thus, many of their leaders (who had planned to vie for seats in parliament on an individual basis) had been jailed beforehand. Energetic younger Muslim Brothers have responded by launching a new party early this year, deftly called the "Center" (*al-Wasat*), professing strictly legal, non-violent methods of political struggle. Again, the regime has responded with repression.

¹⁵⁹ Murphy, loc. cit., p. 81.

¹⁶⁰ In 1995, three million tourists visited Egypt, an increase of 20% over 1994. (Ec, 3 Febr. 1996, p. 33.)

¹⁶¹ Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, New York 1961.

¹⁶² The country, writes the Egyptian scholar Fuad Azimi, "is too wise, too knowing, too tolerant to succumb to the reign of theocratic zeal. Competing truths, whole civilizations have been assimilated and brokered here." ("The Sorrows of Egypt," in: *Foreign Affairs*, 1995, p. 88.)

¹⁶³ The Mediterranean links three continents and 22 countries (including ex-Yugoslavia). Here are the world's most densely used sea-lanes with more than 220,000 ships passing through yearly. Europe receives 50% of its oil imports over these routes. (Dr. Gunther Schmid, "Sicherheitspolitische Szenarien und Optionen für Europa," lecture at the conference of the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, Wildbad-Kreuth, 27 March 1996.)

stressing the Algerian conflict cannot be resolved by force and pleading for inclusion of opposition parties. At the same time it has conducted its own bilateral policies.¹⁶⁴

There are experts who have claimed that events in Algeria - where before Zeroual's striking electoral victory of last November an Islamist victory to not a few observers had appeared only a matter of time - will hardly destabilize the whole region. The Islamists as yet have to show their problem-solving competence on the national level; they would inherit the systemic dilemmas of the previous regime; they, too, would have to continue the country's oil and gas exports and must deal with the outside world. Nevertheless, the worst case scenario of an Islamization of Algeria - there are no ready solutions to the country's (and the region's) economic, social, psychological and political problems in the near future - would affect the whole Maghreb and Egypt, even if each country has its own specific problems and antidotes.

Whilst the worst-case scenario for North Africa is by no means inevitable, recent developments still give reason enough for concern. While Islamism as an ideology may already be past its prime, as a mass movement it still is likely to gain in strength, given the plight of the common people. It is very difficult to defeat terrorism completely, and it can influence delicate political processes at critical junctures, as Hezbollah and Hamas have been demonstrating again this year. In the countries dealt with here, the "Afghan" fighters have played a crucial role in making such struggles particularly deadly, last not least by provoking indiscriminate reprisals by the security forces.¹⁶⁵

Given the implicitly anti-Western thrust of the Islamist movement, Western interest are likely to be hurt by advances of the movement: After all, it has been Western power and culture which has undermined these civilizations; since the demise of the Soviet Union the U.S. has become the regional hegemonic power; and the Western culture the Islamists rebel against has been decisively shaped by American standards and images, which, to make matters worse, are often perceived through the prism of American trash movies.

Russia, trying to prove its great power status and beginning to reassert its presence in the Near East,¹⁶⁶ will be tempted to take advantage of such tensions. Ultra-nationalist circles in Russia already have played with the idea of an alliance with Islam and Islamism precisely because of their common anti-Western orientation. The GRU, Russia's military intelligence service (which has survived intact all the reformist upheavals), recently produced a paper, recommending alliances with such Islamist movements as might come to power, as one option to counter NATO's expansion to the East.¹⁶⁷

Yet, as to the "Afghans" in Islamic terrorism, their very "successes" might be their undoing in the end. In all the countries of the region the Islamists have the best prospects precisely in free elections; but the "Afghans" have provoked reactions leading to the regimes' increasing reliance on the military. Besides, as Algeria has shown, the rebels are losing public support.

¹⁶⁴ The Islamists have their own representatives in the U.S. and via non-governmental organizations strive to influence the UN as well. The Algerian terrorists seem to have spared U.S. citizens deliberately.

¹⁶⁵ Regimes in the region even have played on the "Afghan threat." E. g. former Algerian internees reported that it had been tried to force them to don Afghan garb, apparently with a view to shooting a propaganda film (*Le Monde diplomatique*, March 1996); but this does not mean that the "Afghan" movement has no base in reality.

¹⁶⁶ With the nomination of Evgeny Primakov, Moscow's foremost orientalist became Foreign Minister early this year.

¹⁶⁷ INOBIS paper, *Segodnya*, 10 Oct. 1995.

Part III. States Backing Islamist Movements

The only more or less effective means of coping with international terrorism is by depriving it of its sources of finance and safe havens, ultimately states tolerating it (deliberately or because they cannot do anything about it) or even promoting it. With respect to the movement of Afghan war veterans these states have been Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, to a lesser extent Iran and Sudan. Why have they done so and what should be done about this?

The Role of Kabul. The Civil War in Tajikistan and Russia's Change of Policy

When in the spring of 1992, under the immediate impression of the mujahedin take-over of Kabul, the Tajik president and ex-Communist Party chief Rahmon Nabyev saw himself in critical confrontation with a new Islamic-democratic opposition, he claimed that this was a fundamentalist challenge that ultimately would threaten the whole of Central Asia. Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov and most Russian military leaders agreed. However, in reality Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, the military power behind the new Kabul regime, has been preoccupied above all not with the "export of revolution," but with preserving a united Afghan state and rebuilding a national army. It has not been the new ISA ("Islamic State of Afghanistan"), but rather the very lack of effective central power that has turned Afghanistan into the world center of international terrorism and the drugs trade.

Tajikistan to some extent is the one exception to the careful course of the Rabbani-Mas'ud-regime. The predominantly Tajik *Jam'iyat-e eslami* ("Islamic Society"), the political grouping of Rabbani and Mas'ud, had sympathized with the opposition against the provocatively reactionary and oligarchic *Nomenklatura* regime under Nabyev. But Mas'ud stressed that his cadres and fighters had not been active in the neighboring republic.¹⁶⁸ However, after the influx of the mass of 60,000 to 100,000 refugees into Northern Afghanistan, fleeing the terrorist repressions of the victorious Kulyabi "Popular Front,"¹⁶⁹ Mas'ud's "capital" Taloqan (province of Takhar) became the base of the military "high command" of the armed Tajik opposition under Said Abdullah Nuri.¹⁷⁰ Yet Mas'ud and Rabbani, seeing the Tajiks as the main victims in ongoing regional power struggles, have shown genuine interest in containing the inner-Tajik conflict.¹⁷¹ This political line has paid off for Mas'ud now. In the struggle against the Pakistan-sponsored Taleban ("religious

¹⁶⁸ Sandy Gall, "An Interview with Commander Ahmed Shah Masud," in: Asian Affairs, June 1994. p. 144.

¹⁶⁹ On the civil war see v. Borcke, Der tadschikische Bürgerkrieg: Lokale Tragödie oder geopolitische Herausforderung? Berichte des BIOst 19-1995.

¹⁷⁰ Nuri had been in charge of the publications of the Tajik *Qaziyat*, the Muslim spiritual administration under Turazhanzadeh. At the time he had by no means always seen eye to eye with the Islamists.

¹⁷¹ After the crisis in relations with Russia in the summer of 1993, caused by an especially grave border incident on 13 July that year, Mas'ud assured Russian foreign intelligence chief Evgeny Primakov that he would do all in his power to prevent something similar from happening again. (See von Borcke, Spannungen an der afghanisch-tadschikischen Grenze und das russische Krisen-Management (Teil II). Berichte des BIOst 29-1994.) By the end of 1993, Rabbani visited Dushanbe and since 1994 the Rakhmonov regime has counted on Kabul's mediation in its fight with the armed opposition. In the spring of 1995 Kabul, with Russian moral support, hosted a first meeting between the Tajik president and Said Abdullah Nuri. (FHSA, 20 May 1995.)

students") Mas'ud has come to receive military and technical aid not only from Tehran and India,¹⁷² but also from Dushanbe and Russia - a potentially significant shift in Russian policy.¹⁷³

Hekmatyar and ISI: Visions of Islamic Revolution in Central Asia

It has been the extremist Golbuddin Hekmatyar, Mas'ud's rival since common student days in Kabul, who would like to spread his version of Islam all over Central Asia.¹⁷⁴ His protectors in ISI, Pakistan's military Interservices Intelligence Directorate, also have had visions of creating a new "Islamic bloc" in the region, thus finally gaining that "strategic depth" Pakistan's military has been dreaming of. New opportunities perceived in an emerging Central Asian market with its enormous energy and mineral riches have become an additional incentive. ISI, monopolizing Afghan policies during the war, has striven to establish a satellite regime in Afghanistan, under Pushtun predominance. The intelligence service supported Hekmatyar, its *de facto* agent since 1975, until 1994 (at least). ISI has also continued to play some role in the Tajik guerrilla war.

Pakistan has been enjoying the support of its military ally Saudi Arabia and, by pointing to a possible Tajik-Tehran alliance, it has been able to mobilize support from certain Gulf states as well. Tajikistan's (former) Minister of Defense, Aleksandr Shishlyannikov, reported in 1994 about the fighting in the strategic Taval Dara region, the gateway between Dushanbe and the eastern Pamir region: Involved had been fighters from Saudi Arabia, Iran, some Baltic states (Lithuania) and Afghan mujahedin.¹⁷⁵

After the Soviet intervention of December 1979 and up to the early 1990s, ISI had been the main conduit of U.S. aid, about 3.2 billion dollars.¹⁷⁶ Besides, Pakistan and its Saudi allies recruited an estimated 25,000 fighters to support the Afghan mujahedin, most of them among hard-line fundamentalists.¹⁷⁷ In 1994 it was reported that there were three camps for paramilitary training

¹⁷² A brother of the former Afghan Communist leader Babrak Karmal, a Tajik (in December 1979 the Soviets brought him to Kabul to replace the bloody dictator Amin), is said to have helped bring about the new alliance with India. (Until recently Kabul had kept its distance, since New Delhi, as Moscow's close ally in Soviet times, had supported the Communist regime and in particular Najibullah.)

¹⁷³ Russia is now reported to be building a military airport for Mas'ud in Taloqan and sending supplies. A new road in the east, avoiding both Mazar-e Sharif and the Salang tunnel - controlled by the Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum - is to resupply starving Kabul. Russian together with Indian technicians have been working at Bagram, Mas'ud's military airport, and Mas'ud's new airpower has contributed decisively to his victories over the Taleban since the spring of 1995. This seems to point to a new policy of the Yeltsin regime, perhaps already reflecting the re-orientation toward Central Asia and the Middle East called for by some (conservative and "realist") circles. For Yeltsin's Moscow, initially focusing on re-entering the community of "civilized" nations and therefore following an "Atlanticist" line, in fact had opted for simple withdrawal from Afghanistan and Central Asia. The course was not sustainable, given the ominous events in Tajikistan in 1992 and its own conservative opposition.

For a while Moscow had largely let Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov formulate its policies for the region. Karimov has been supporting the Uzbek Dostum, Najibullah's former militia chief, who has kept his southern border secure. The Uzbek president now might prefer a renewed reconciliation between Dostum and Mas'ud. In fact, Dostum, feeling slighted by Rabbani and Mas'ud and therefore since late 1993 in alliance with the anti-Kabul opposition, must be profoundly suspicious of the Pushtun fundamentalist Taleban. However, having had negative experiences with all sides involved in the Afghan civil war - none of the factions is ready to concede Dostum that share in power he thinks is his due -, he has preferred to keep his options open.

¹⁷⁴ St. Coll, IHT, 30 April 1992.

¹⁷⁵ NG, 2 Nov. 1994.

¹⁷⁶ ISI also channelled the aid to the Afghans from Saudi and Gulf sources, probably of at least the same order of magnitude. This role permitted ISI to try to guide and even "fine-tune" mujahedin operations.

of Islamist fighters in Pakistan.¹⁷⁸ The U.S. just recently pointed to Peshawar and its all-male *Al-Da'wa* ("The Call") University with its over 2,000 students as a training center and sanctuary for Islamic fighters.¹⁷⁹ This establishment was founded in 1985 by the "Wahhabite" Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, in Kabul in an "*alliance de convenance*" with Rabbani and Mas'ud.¹⁸⁰ The institution was closed down by the government.

Pakistan's Dilemmas: Search for a New Alliance with the U.S. and Fundamentalist Constraints

The Bhutto government has been anxious to avoid being branded a state sponsoring terrorism. Under pressure from Egypt and the U.S., Pakistan in early 1993 ordered the Afghan Arabs, often working for "non-governmental" organizations, to leave the country. Since July 1994 Islamabad has an extradition agreement with Egypt to return wanted "Afghans" among the 1,200 former Afghanistan fighters still believed to be in Peshawar. (Another estimate even speaks of some 2,800 activists, based near the Afghan border.)¹⁸¹ Pakistan, a poor country, is striving to renew the profitable economic relationship of the 1980s with the U.S.¹⁸² and perhaps even to begin a new kind of strategic relationship, all the more since the support of the Taleban, which has seriously alienated Iran, has risked to isolate Islamabad regionally.¹⁸³ Bhutto has presented her country as a "front line" state in the struggle against extremism and terrorism. After the destruction of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad on 19 November 1995 the government arrested 200 Islamic activists and rounded up various fundamentalist parties.¹⁸⁴ The policy is by no means easy, given the fundamentalist currents in the country¹⁸⁵ and its military.¹⁸⁶ The main fundamentalist party, the *Jama'at-e islami*, has been a close ally of ISI. Besides, already for geographic reasons the mountainous border region with Afghanistan poses enormous problems of control and the "tribal

¹⁷⁷ Ted Galen Carpenter, The Unintended Consequences of Afghanistan, in: World Policy Journal, 1993, p. 79. These Arab Afghanistan fighters came above all from Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the occupied territories where the tradition of clandestine radicalism and armed struggle are strong. Generally, they were connected with the extremist offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood.

¹⁷⁸ NG, 1 Oct. 1994.

¹⁷⁹ D, 22 March 1995. In 1994 Interior Minister Nasirullah Babar had raised the same accusation against the Saudi-sponsored International University in Islamabad.

¹⁸⁰ Rabbani, who during his stay at Cairo's al-Azhar university had come to be close to the Muslim Brothers, has known the extremist professor Sayyaf ("the Executioner") since his days at Kabul University. Mas'ud probably has been interested in Sayyaf above all as the Saudi's main Afghan conduit for funds, otherwise, as to personal make-up, the two men do not seem to have anything in common.

¹⁸¹ Bruce, loc. cit., p. 177. By November 1995, some 15 Egyptians had been extradited. (Arab News, 25 Nov. 1995.)

¹⁸² Pakistan, ranking 132nd among 173 countries in the UN Human Development Index (T, 13 Apr. 1995), during the Afghan war had received over \$ 7.2 billion in military and economic aid. This plummeted in 1990 to the present level of 13.5 million a year, due to the Pressler amendment, penalizing its urge to become a nuclear power. The Clinton administration by now has conceded that withholding a series of fighter-planes (28 of 71 F-16 ordered had been built), for which Pakistan already had paid \$ 368 million, is not fair and Washington now is ready at least to return the money. Economic assistance has been raised to some \$ 20 million a year with a view to helping Pakistan in the struggle against terrorism and drugs.

¹⁸³ Alexandre Dastarac et M. Levent, Le Pakistan privé de jeu régional, in: Le Monde diplomatique, Apr. 1996, p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ Ec, 25 Nov. 1995, p. 64.

¹⁸⁵ Nawaz Sharif, Bhutto's predecessor in office, in 1993 had also planned a crackdown on Islamic militants but then backed away. Although the fundamentalists are a minority of merely some 3 % of the electorate, experience has taught them that they can have their way by mobilizing largely illiterate masses. By now they are supported by a considerable body of Islamist legislation as well.

zones" in the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan have traditionally enjoyed considerable autonomy,

Since the fall of 1994 Islamabad has sponsored a new surrogate intervention in Afghanistan by means of the Taleban.¹⁸⁷ The strategy, at least initially, seemed to enjoy the passive support of the U.S.¹⁸⁸ However, by now their flagrant violations of human rights can no longer be overlooked.¹⁸⁹ Pakistan may discover that it has unleashed a "Frankenstein," since the Taleban, uplifted by their victories,¹⁹⁰ have come to be less amenable to its guidance.

There are obvious frictions between the Bhutto government and ISI and the military: Already in 1989 Bhutto had deposed its old chief Hamid Gul, a key figure in formulating the country's Afghanistan strategy, who nevertheless has retained considerable influence.¹⁹¹ His successor Javed Nasir, also suspected by the U.S. of dreaming of Islamic revolution in Central Asia, suffered the

¹⁸⁶ The military has ruled this "Praetorian state," founded in 1947, for a quarter of a century directly and still to a large extent determines government policy in security matters. Whilst the old military leadership was from the upper class and cosmopolitan in outlook, a new generation of middle class officers is intensely nationalistic and of much more limited vision.

¹⁸⁷ Manipulating the Taleban movement that originated in Qandahar in southern Afghanistan was the idea of Interior Minister Nasirullah Babar, a retired general and old "Afghan hand" who already had been a close adviser to Benazir's father, in alliance with the pro-Bhutto *Jama'at-e ulema*, the rival organization of the *Jama'at-e eslami*. Seemingly out of nowhere (in fact from the military base of Quetta in Baluchistan and Peshawar), the Taleban made their first appearance in October 1994, fighting free a truck convoy meant to open the new trade relationship with Central Asia. Pakistan by now is repairing the road between Qandahar and Herat and has begun setting up new telecommunication and banking facilities in the Taleban controlled areas. Since the fall of 1995 ISI, initially cool toward the Taleban, has joined. Its chief protégé Hekmatyar had shown himself a political and military failure since 1992. When the Taleban advanced upon Kabul in February 1995, he had to flee precipitately from his headquarters in Char Asyab - about 25 km south of the capital, from where he had rocketed the city -, reportedly because his Pushtun fighters began joining the Pushtun "religious students." Thus, his *Hesb* seemed to have become militarily irrelevant. However, one should never underestimate Hekmatyar, a master of political intrigue: By early March of this year he had entered a military agreement with his former enemies in Kabul against the Taleban whom he had found unwilling to join his anti-Rabbani alliance.

¹⁸⁸ Allegedly the CIA had given a green light. Robin Raphel, Undersecretary of State for South and Southeast Asia, incongruously called the obscurantist Taleban "moderate."

¹⁸⁹ Amnesty International has presented a devastating report. The Taleban, led by village mullahs (traditionally in low esteem in the country), with mostly no education beyond that of the (Saudi financed) Koran schools in Pakistan, now apply their anachronistic precepts, excluding girls from education, prohibiting women to work outside the house, Islamic "*hudud*" punishments (amputations for theft, stoning, etc.), which are preferably used against political opponents after summary "trials," etc. In protest, UNICEF has stopped working in regions under Taleban control.

¹⁹⁰ They swiftly gained control of the fragmented Pushtun south. More strikingly, after Ismail Khan, the master of Herat, a former officer and a Rabbani ally, had already advanced upon Qandahar, the Taleban, in a surprising lightning campaign, captured the traditionally Tajik Herat region. Reportedly, their fighters were under the command of Pakistani military and ISI officers. (SWB, 8 Sept. 1995, FE/2403 A/2.) Perhaps even more important, they disposed over ample funds in dollars (from traders and smugglers in Quetta and Qandahar and probably also from Saudi and Gulf sources), enabling them to buy over local commanders. Herat, however, is considered by Tehran its own strategic backyard and Iran now is helping Ismail Khan to train about 8,000 men for a reconquest of his fief. The chief of the *Pasdaran* came in person to supervise these efforts. Hamid Gul already warned: An attack against Herat would mean war with Pakistan. (2 March 1996, SWB, FE/2551 A/1.) Government troops gained a new foothold in the region this spring. (M, 17 Apr. 1996.)

¹⁹¹ Mas'ud suspected ISI and Hamid Gul (together with Islam Karimov) behind the "fourth battle" for Kabul that started on New Year's Day 1994. His "old friend" (during the war ISI had fought regular battles against Mas'ud) again showed up at crucial moments when the Taleban offensive on the capital was prepared, trying to create a united front of Rabbani's opponents.

same fate. Last fall 36 officers were arrested and there were rumors they had planned a coup to start an "Islamic revolution." Pakistan has severe problems of governability. Consequences of the Afghan war - an overwhelming drugs mafia as well as the role of former fighters and an overabundance of weapons¹⁹² - are a crucial aspect of its security challenge. Without U.S. help the Bhutto government will hardly be able to cope with all this.

Saudi Arabia: Paymaster of the Militants

The foremost paymaster of the Islamist wave has been the feudalistic-plutocratic Saudi monarchy, for years in close military alliance with Pakistan, plus some Gulf states. The Saudi regime, going back to a [fundamentalist] Wahhabi founder, has presented itself as guardian of the Two Holy Mosques¹⁹³ and striven to spread the creed.¹⁹⁴ In their Afghan policy, in the hands of security chief Prince Turki al Faisal, the Saudis have been "fed by ISI."¹⁹⁵ In 1993, pressured by Egypt, Riyadh introduced sharper controls over transfers of funds for "charitable" purposes. However, to quite some extent Saudi financial aid to the fighters has hidden behind "private" organizations and sponsors that can hardly be fully controlled. An example is the millionaire Osama bin Laden.¹⁹⁶ In fact, financing all kinds of "mujahedin" for the Saudis also has been a way of buying off potential opposition: The absolutist family regime feels its legitimacy becoming increasingly undermined in the modern world. By now it faces its own fundamentalist opposition at home, condemning its role as the main conduit for U.S. influence in the region, its nepotism and moral double standards.

Iran: The Leading Outlaw State?

Iran has not been the key player in the "Afghan" movement. Tehran initially had concentrated its support on the Afghan Shi'ite minority and this strategy limited its influence. Until 1988, during the eight years of war with Iraq, it had been preoccupied above all with more vital priorities.¹⁹⁷ Among the Sunni mujahedin Khomeini's regime had favored Hekmatyar.¹⁹⁸ In 1987 reportedly an agreement was struck that Hekmatyar would make use of his connections in the American intelligence community to build up a network of agents in the West, above all the U.S.¹⁹⁹ After a

¹⁹² Military assault weapons have become so prevalent that they have penetrated Pakistan's traditions and altered daily life in its cities. The combination of economic frustration and guns has proved most deadly in Karachi, a city of ten million, where last year killings almost doubled to 2,095. (IHT, 15 March 1996.)

¹⁹³ This has been especially stressed in view of the challenge posed by the crypto-democratic Iranian revolution.

¹⁹⁴ E. g. during the Afghan war it donated thousands of Korans to be smuggled into Soviet Central Asia. Later it has financed an immense mosque-building program in the region.

¹⁹⁵ As Mas'ud put it. (Gall, loc. cit., p. 148.)

¹⁹⁶ During the Afghan war Laden (37), operating out of Peshawar, had recruited Muslim zealots to fight with the mujahedin. He became a close associate of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman. (Bruce, loc. cit., p. 460.) After having funded subversive activities also in several Arab countries he was deprived of his nationality. (Al-Ahram Weekly, 9 June 1994.)

¹⁹⁷ Although the Khomeini regime could have had an end to the conflict in 1982, it had continued to fight for the Islamic Revolution, ultimately with a view to spreading it worldwide. (Prof. Udo Steinbach, *Gibt es eine islamistische Internationale?* Lecture at the Hanns-Seidel Stiftung, Wildbad-Kreuth, 26 March 1996.)

¹⁹⁸ In 1979 Hekmatyar several times met Khomeini in Tehran. (Boris Gromov, *Ogranichenny kontingent. Moskva 1994*, p. 226.) However, in the mid-eighties Hekmatyar turned away from this all too open alliance as a condition for Saudi financial support.

¹⁹⁹ L'Express 22 Dec. 1993.

possible breach in 1988,²⁰⁰ there was a renewed rapprochement in 1992 when Hekmatyar allied himself with the Shi'ite *Wahdat* ("Unity") party against Rabbani and Mas'ud.

However, Tehran's attitude towards the Afghans in general has been ambivalent (and vice versa). The mass of Afghan refugees has been a severe burden.²⁰¹ Mas'ud until very recently felt Tehran had been "very, very hostile" toward him.²⁰² The offensive of the Taleban, deeply worrying Shi'ite Iran, has made the crucial difference: Tehran now expressly supports the Kabul regime's (by no means unreasonable) claim to be at least a party to any future political settlement.²⁰³

Next to Israel, it is Washington that - because of Tehran's role in international terrorism and its humiliation in 1979 - since the end of the Soviet Union has come to see in Iran its new global enemy number one and main sponsor of international terrorism.²⁰⁴ According to Russian information, in 1994 there were three paramilitary training camps in Iran.²⁰⁵ Afghanistan veterans, after having been expelled from Pakistan, frequently would go to Iran.²⁰⁶ Yet, while Iran's human rights record is abysmal, its role as the continued main sponsor of international terrorism has been controversial.²⁰⁷ However, under pressure from Congress - America has a strong Jewish constituency,²⁰⁸ - and above all the speaker and 1995 "man of the year," Newt Gingrich, the Clinton Administration allotted \$ 20 million for CIA operations against Iran to "moderate" its conduct.

²⁰⁰ During an "anti-Zionist" demonstration in Tehran, Hekmatyar's followers had carried a picture of their all too ambitious leader alongside one of Khomeini. The mullahs reacted by issuing a *fatwa* condemning Hekmatyar to death for heresy. Or was it make-belief??

²⁰¹ The influx of almost three million Sunnites (in Iran a discriminated minority) was in itself an enormous problem, all the more since Iran did not receive the foreign and international support Pakistan did: Destabilization of the eastern province of Khorasan has been feared. Afghans were also accused of stealing jobs from Iranians and contributing to a rise in crime and rape. By December 1995 almost 1.4 million Afghans had returned (or had been made to return) to Afghanistan. (Tehran Times, 28 Dec. 1995.)

²⁰² Michael Barry, Kaboul. La mise à mort, in: *Politique internationale*, summer 1994, p. 86. During the war Mas'ud had rejected Iranian help tied to the condition that he condemn America. Tehran, Mas'ud reported, had expected Nijibullah to stay in power and was very unpleasantly surprised by his take-over of Kabul. (Gall, loc. cit., p. 143.) On the other hand, his political "boss" Rabbani, a theologian, is said to have had good connections also in Iran.

²⁰³ Pakistan has trouble accepting this. Again, as in 1992-94, the main "problem" is Mas'ud who will hardly abdicate to withdraw to the Panjshir valley, as the Taleban suggested. In the contrary, Mas'ud, the military power behind the regime, guarantees that Kabul will never become a mere satellite of Islamabad.

²⁰⁴ J. Hoagland, IHT, 17 Aug. 1995. In the words of Secretary of State Warren Christopher: "No other country employs terror more systematically as an instrument of national policy - to destroy the peace process, to intimidate its neighbors and to eliminate its political opponents." (IHT, 9 May 1995.)

²⁰⁵ NG, 1 Oct. 1994.

²⁰⁶ From there they could proceed to Sudan or northern Iraq, where Kurdish resistance groups have accommodated them, before being filtered out to Arab countries. (Bruce, loc. cit. p. 178.)

²⁰⁷ *The Economist* reported that outside Iran there was little hard evidence that Tehran controls militant Islamic groups other than *Hezbollah* in Lebanon (Ec, 6 May 1995, p. 12.), financed by Tehran to the tune of some 60 million dollars annually (KStA, 16 Apr. 1996) (of which the greatest part is used for social welfare purposes). However, incontestably, Tehran has tried to systematically liquidate prominent opposition figures abroad, and emigrés feared that in view of the parliamentary elections this spring the number of such assassinations would even increase. (IHT, 7 March 1996.)

²⁰⁸ Iran's hand is suspected in anti-Jewish terrorist outrages, namely a bombing in London and the attack on the Jewish Joint Center in Buenos Aires in July 1994, which killed 86 people and injured 200 (KStA, 5 Dec. 1995), both of which took place after hard-liners gained the upper hand again in the regime. (Already in October 1992 Rafsanjani reportedly had lost control of the intelligence services. The Ministry of Intelligence under Ali Fallahian, formed out of several different apparatuses, is dominated by the hard-liners.) (Intelligence News Letter, 4 Febr. 1994.) However, the proof seems by no means convincing to all.

In fact, there are also uncontrollable Iranian "private" organizations that under "charitable" cover have been conducting their own revolutionary foreign policy.²⁰⁹ Again, the question is to what extent the official government of Rafsanjani - who made several unsuccessful overtures to the U.S. to normalize relations - has been in full control of policy, given competing centers of power and the by no means transparent role of the various security services.²¹⁰ The pragmatic Rafsanjani, wishing to re-integrate Iran into the community of nations, started his term in 1993 professing preference for a moderate foreign policy²¹¹ and tried to better coordinate the direction of Iran's security policies by some institutional changes. Europe therefore for the past three years has sought to maintain a "critical dialogue" with the regime, feeling that isolating it is the worse alternative. However, the recent series of Hamas suicide attacks in Israel, meant to undermine the peace process (which Tehran opposes), although hinting at a rift in Hamas itself, threatened to jeopardize that line, since both Israel and the U.S. point to an Iranian hand involved²¹² (even if the evidence has not satisfied their allies). Russia, on the other hand, has come to have increasingly close relations with Iran. On the occasion of the visit of the Iranian Foreign minister in Moscow, Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov even announced that both countries would cooperate in the battle against terrorism.²¹³

Sudan: Mediator of Movements

In August 1993 the U. S. Department of State put Sudan, since the military coup of 1989 transformed into what is probably the most Islamized state in the world, on the list of states sponsoring terrorism. In February of this year, also the UN Security Council accused Khartoum of supporting terrorism and demanded the extradition of three Islamists suspected of having been involved in the attempt on Mubarak's life last summer. In 1994 it was reported that there was one guerrilla training camp in Sudan.²¹⁴ The country is said to harbor large numbers of Muslim

²⁰⁹ Most notable are the the *Bonyad-e musta'azafin* ("Foundation of the Deprived") and *Bonyad-e 15 Khordad* ("Foundation of 15 Khordad" (Khordad = Persian month: 22 May - 21 June). The former has provided funding for Islamic movements throughout the Middle East, the latter offered the reward to kill Salman Rushdie. Rafsanjani, unable to recall the *fatwa*, tried to dissolve the foundation, without success. (Ahmed Hashim, *The Crisis of the Iranian State*. Adelphi Paper 296, 1995, p. 30-31.) These vast conglomerates, with secret budgets and bank accounts in Europe, are under secretaries appointed by the "spiritual leader," Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei. (IHT, 6 Oct., 1994.)

²¹⁰ It is extremely difficult to ascertain the exact roles of the Ministry of Information and Intelligence, the Military Intelligence and the *Pasdaran* intelligence units. Western intelligence agencies believe that their operations are based on instructions from highest government levels. (Hashim, *op. cit.*, p. 32-33.)

²¹¹ Islam would grow better in a peaceful environment, he declared. "We try to be present in the world as a center of culture, not by violence and terror." (FHSA, 5 Aug. 1993.) Given the fact that this has not been an easy course to defend in the regime, he probably meant it. At least, the Russian Foreign Ministry seemed convinced of this.

²¹² It was reported that at the beginning of March representatives of Hamas and other terrorist groups had met in Damascus with top Iranian officials. (IHT, 7 March 1996.) According to Palestinian sources the chief leaders of Hamas are in Sudan or Iran. (F. Chipaux, M, 6 March 1996.) In fact Hamas, which is much better organized than the PLO ever was, has strong support from Islamist movements in the neighboring countries, including Jordan, which, according to Israeli and Palestinian security sources, has been the main conduit for the money smuggled in. (IHT, 16/17 March 1996.) French officials pointed out that much of this money has come from Muslim donors in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. itself. Thus, the leader of Islamic Jihad, Abdallah Shallah, had taught at the University of Tampa in Florida. (IHT, 15 March 1996.)

²¹³ MN, 14-20 March 1996.

²¹⁴ There are several refugee camps that just had an "open day" for foreign journalists to prove Sudan's innocence; but there is at least one valley, the Dshebel Abyad, a vast desert about 400 km to the north-west of Khartoum, which is forbidden even to overflight. (M, 13 March 1996.)

extremists, among them hundreds of "Afghans." Ironically, a good number of the militants had been trained as guerrillas in Afghanistan with the support of the CIA.²¹⁵ Cairo and Algiers claim that weapons sent by Iran to the militants in their countries are channelled via Sudan.²¹⁶ Hasan al-Turabi, the leader of the National Islamic Front and *éminence grise* behind the military dictatorship, a former university dean with diplomas from Oxford and the Sorbonne, has prided himself on his equally good relations with all Afghan groups.²¹⁷

Above all, Turabi has organized yearly international meetings in Khartoum where representatives of all the important radical and nationalist movements of the Near East could meet.²¹⁸ For a considerable time Tehran's staunchest ally, he has even been suspected by the U.S. of having inspired the World Trade Center bombing.²¹⁹ However, Turabi himself has declared that he wishes to "put Islam back in the center of world civilization" and recently urged dialogue with the West.²²⁰ Again, Sudan is a very weak state, in its 13th year of a murderous civil war against the Christian and animist south and wrestling with enormous economic and social problems. Sponsoring the Islamist cause and mediating between Islamist groupings has been a way to play an international role far beyond its "normal" capabilities.

Conclusion: The Failure of both Superpowers in Afghanistan.

What is to be Done?

Terrorist opposition movements might have arisen in the Near East in any case, given the crisis of the state system and societies. However, returning Afghanistan veterans gave these - essentially national - movements a new kind of sophistication in the techniques of violence, and the use of modern means of communication has added an internationalist thrust. In the process, not only regional governments have become threatened, but potentially vital interest of the West as well.²²¹ Whilst the Afghanistan-fighters have become above all a national problem for the countries with militant Islamist movements - and in such cases outside powers can merely give advice, exert political influence and provide economic and in special cases even military support - it is possible (and overdue) to aid in the reconsolidation of statehood in Afghanistan, a crucial step on the way to eliminating a critical center of regional destabilization.

There are various lessons to be drawn from the Afghanistan war and civil war. Moscow's fiasco in Afghanistan had dramatically demonstrated the costs of a failed intervention: The Afghan war decisively contributed to the end of the Soviet empire and with it of the Soviet system as well, as mujahedin leaders like to stress. But the apparent winner, the U.S., then gave a lesson in the ultimate costs of a covert intervention and surrogate warfare, followed by total abstentionism: For since 1989 Washington had simply abandoned Afghanistan to its fate.²²² The surrogates, once supported simply because of their fighting spirit, later turned elsewhere. Political mistakes

²¹⁵ NG, 1 Oct. 1994; Bruce, loc. cit., p. 178; M, 20 Aug. 1993.

²¹⁶ IHT, 15/16 April 1995.

²¹⁷ In 1992-93 he visited Afghanistan twice, trying to mediate between the warring factions. (M, 23 Nov. 1993.)

²¹⁸ L'Expr., 25 Aug. 1994, p. 10.

²¹⁹ L'Expr, 1 Sept. 1994, p. 6.

²²⁰ Jerusalem Post, 12 April 1995. Nevertheless, Sudan was accused by Egypt of having supported the attempt on Mubarak's life in June 1995, but the outside world has as yet seen no convincing proof.

²²¹ If Algeria turns Islamist, France - with at least 4 million Muslims living in the formerly metropolitan country (the additional number of illegal immigrants can at best be estimated), almost 70% of whom are from Algeria -, Italy and Spain, indeed even the EU as a whole, would be directly affected, at least by an enormous stream of refugees which in turn could have an impact on internal and external stability and security. Besides, Egypt has been a close ally of the U.S., helping along the Near East peace process.

contributed to this turn. Above all, Washington deliberately overlooked that wars and civil wars are about who will exercise power in the end. Given the hopeless Afghan Interim Government, hand-picked by Pakistan and incapable of functioning effectively, any political settlement on acceptable terms seemed impossible. For the U.S. were not willing to compromise with the already largely re-Islamized ex-"Communist" regime of Najibullah, Gorbachev's preferred option.²²³ Therefore, the Geneva accords simply left out the issue of Afghanistan's political future. This was compounded by further U.S. errors of judgment.²²⁴ Wittingly and unwittingly, the U.S. contributed to that anarchy in Afghanistan that has turned the country into a base for extremism, terrorism and the world's leading drugs producer with effects reaching far beyond its borders.

If in the struggle with terrorism it is most important to deprive it of its state bases, it is clear that the states playing the crucial role in the movement of the "Afghans" are all weak or even, in the case of the "ISA" in Afghanistan, next to non-existent. It is high time, therefore, finally to let a new state consolidate itself in Kabul. In practice, Mas'ud, the military power behind the Rabbani regime and ISI's *bête noire*, is the decisive player in any such process:²²⁵ He is not tainted as the stooge of foreign powers (even if Hekmatyar's propaganda has tried to present him as an agent of Moscow and the KGB!!); he gained genuine legitimacy by his key role in the struggle against the Soviet occupation; he has a creditable administrative record in the province of Takhar; he is by

²²² Of course, initially the costs of a covert, limited engagement seemed incomparably less than those of any alternative course. Not to react at all to the Soviet intervention of 1979, given the signs of reviving Soviet imperialism since the mid-seventies, was a non-option, all the more since in some quarters there were fears that occupied Afghanistan might turn into the bridgehead on Moscow's way to the Persian Gulf. Any direct military confrontation seemed precluded by the nuclear "balance of terror." Covert actions thus remained the only possibility.

However, the "lessons" of deliberately discarding the issue of re-building the weak Afghan state may be especially relevant after the "lessons of Somalia," arguing against peace-keeping that turns into an attempt at nation-building. (The U.S. military, traumatized by its Vietnam experience, wants to avoid by all means getting bogged down in far away places while losing domestic support.) However, world order does not come about spontaneously (e. g. simply by market forces, the market itself presupposing certain enforceable "rules of the game" to begin with). As a peace settlement in Mozambique and developments in the Near East show: Only constant constructive engagement by leading powers over several years finally could bring peace. Some analogous process, reigning in the free-for-all competition of the regional powers, seems urgently called for with respect to Afghanistan.

²²³ The former *Khad* (security) chief was a master at the games of tribal politics. In a surprising performance - made possible by the lack of unity among the mujahedin factions - he managed to keep his regime afloat for three years after the Soviet military withdrawal. Only Yeltsin's cut-off of all aid inevitably led to the collapse not only of the regime (unable to pay its militias any longer), but also, as Najibullah had warned, of what there had been of a state. Yet even Mas'ud, originally the Soviets' main opponent, but also a circumspect strategist, in the end might have accepted a compromise: In any case, it was striking that during the last years the "Lion of Panjshir" had largely spared Kabul. In early 1992 he struck a deal with the regime's military (i. e. above all the Tajiks among the officers).

²²⁴ In 1989, after a *Hesb* commando had murdered thirty of Mas'ud's best commanders, the U.S. had all military supplies stopped. The consequence was that the power of the field commanders, the only force with a nascent sense of national identity and a penchant for pragmatism, was undercut. But Hekmatyar - who in alliance with ISI had followed a course of *divide et impera* in the resistance - continued to get ISI's military support, even receiving weapons from the 1991 Gulf war! Mas'ud nevertheless managed to capture the capital, but then, in trying to defend the city, he had to become a party to Kabul's destruction: Hekmatyar continued to shower the city with his rockets (again with continued logistic support from Pakistan), in order to prevent the consolidation of the new state, in the process causing a further 25,000 dead.

The involvement of the regional powers, by sponsoring their clients, has made for further disintegration of a country that, having been a patchwork of ethnic groups speaking over thirty languages and dialects to begin with, critically lacked national unity and consciousness. (However, ongoing Pakistani meddling could kindle a new national consciousness.)

no means a fanatic.²²⁶ Above all, Mas'ud has been the only mujahedin leader with a national vision: the political reason²²⁷ why Hekmatyar, a pure power politician, has consistently waged war on Mas'ud (until the Taleban became the greater immediate threat to his ambitions). And so did ISI, bent on preventing a new Afghan nation state form arising out of the war. However, Islamabad's attempts to exclude Mas'ud and his Tajiks from power - who rightly feel that they have borne the main burden of the war - in favor of restoring a Pushtun monopoly of political power is a prescription for permanent conflict. The war has changed the ethnic (and social) balance of power, irreversibly. Only some kind of "federative" arrangement seems realistic in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's present wager on the (Durrani-Pushtun) Taleban has created a serious conflict of interest with Iran and has led to one more stunning realignment of alliances in Afghanistan: a military agreement between Rabbani-Mas'ud and Hekmatyar.²²⁸ A reconciliation between Russia and its formerly foremost opponent, Mas'ud,²²⁹ although adumbrated since Mas'ud assumed state power, is part of this shift. Iran is coordinating its policies with India and China, Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati declared; and Russia would join, too, "thereby creating a strong alliance against America in the region."²³⁰ U.S. non-policy with respect to Afghanistan - following Islamabad's lead or, since 1989, having turned away - thus has contributed to driving the originally rather pro-Western Mas'ud, Afghanistan's most outstanding field commander and the *jihad's* only genuine military strategist, into an alliance with Tehran and Russia at a time when U.S.-Tehran relations are at a new, critical low; when the situation in Iran itself, where the

²²⁵ Dostum, the master of Mazar-e Sharif, knows that his ethnic background - not to mention his role as Najibullah's main hatchet-man - precludes his becoming the national leader. (Traditionally, the Uzbeks have ranked very low on the Afghan ladder of social prestige.) Ismail Khan of Herat was defeated by the Taleban, even if it is reported that, with Iranian help, he is preparing his return. The (Ghilzai) Pushtun Hekmatyar, likened by Afghan intellectuals to a native Hitler, does not even enjoy the backing of the majority of the Pushtuns. Significantly, he could not make any of the leading cities his headquarters. The times for a kingdom, for quite some time preferred by the majority of Afghan refugees, are likely to be *passé*. A mullah Rabbani (or any other present Taleban leader), lacking in administrative competence and even genuine military achievement - not to speak of any remotely adequate political program and rudimentary experience in international affairs - while at the same time defending a fundamentalism that in its extremism is alien to the country's more tolerant Hanafi tradition, seems a very improbable figure for such a national mission. Who else is there? Mas'ud, on the other hand, has not the bearing of a dictator. In the war he proved to be a master of complex negotiations and coalition-building. Having focused on military priorities, in contrast to Hekmatyar, he has not even shown much personal political ambition.

²²⁶ As he put it, he wants a moderate Islamic government, "I repeat the point and emphasize: a moderate Islamic government." (Gall, loc. cit., p. 151.) He had a similar statement sent to the Paris paper, *Le Monde*. In fact, already during his student days he was a moderate Islamist. Mas'ud was repelled by the "fearsome intolerance" of the (Afghan) communists. His lack of fanaticism was obvious when in the early seventies the Afghan Islamist movement split over the policy vis-à-vis women, the consequence of Hekmatyar's acid attack on a female student for not wearing "proper" Islamic dress (officially abolished in the capital). One consequence has been that Mas'ud has been in constant conflict with ISI and the fundamentalist "International."

²²⁷ Besides, a quasi-"racist" reaction plays a role: The Pushtuns, raised in something of an Indian caste-spirit, simply cannot stomach to see Tajiks at the helm of the state, although the Tajiks already had played a leading role in the country's administration and culture.

²²⁸ The agreement was signed on 7 March 1996. (SWB, FE/2556 A/1.) While Mas'ud has always tried to cooperate with the *Hesb-e eslami*, knowing that he needs Pushtun support as well, his personal relations with its leader Hekmatyar could not have been worse.

²²⁹ The Soviet Union had launched about a dozen campaigns against Mas'ud's stronghold, the Panjshir valley, including Panjshir VII, its greatest military offensive since World War II. At the same time, the Soviet military leadership undertook the greatest efforts to come to some accommodation with Mas'ud, but he refused.

²³⁰ 6 March 1996, SWB, FE/2555 A/1.

radicals had been on the ascendant once more, seemed uncertain;²³¹ and when Russia, too, could be on the verge of a major international re-orientation away from the West. Thus, Afghanistan could have become a critical issue in what may turn out to be an important regional power realignment.

The lesson seems to be: Simply letting a civil war take its course²³² is hardly an acceptable option either in today's "global village." The role of the "Afghans" in militant movements of the region and beyond has been one price to be paid for the policy of abandoning a country that historically and geostrategically had been the crossroads of Asia and in the age of imperialism deliberately had been retained as a neutral buffer.

The Central Asian region today is struggling to play some world-role again, at least in a geo-economic sense, and to exploit its natural resources shows that this will be no empty dream - provided an exit from the Afghan embroglio is found at last. This fact should add urgency to finally working for a constructive wind-up of the Afghan war and its consequences. After the signs of a Russian accommodation with the new regime in Kabul, there are now first signs that the U.S., too, again takes interest. Should a stabilization of that country finally be achieved, the outgrowths of anarchy - terrorism and the drugs trade - are likely to become manageable as well.

²³¹ Next year Rafsanjani's terms as president comes to an end. However, in the elections to the Majles, the parliament, this March, the clerics have suffered a major set-back: Before they had 67 seats, now they retain only 14, and it was the daughter of Rafsanjani who received the second-largest number of votes.

²³² In Lebanon it took 15 years and a massive Syrian intervention to end such a war.

Abbreviations

D = Dawn (Karachi: reprint in Nahost-Informationsdienst, Hamburg); DW = Deutsche Welle, Monitor (Köln); L'Expr = L'Express (Paris); FHSA = Fernseh-Hörfunkspiegel Ausland (Bonn); IHT = International Herald Tribune (New York, Paris); JIR = Jane's Intelligence Review; KStA = Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger (Köln); M = Le Monde (Paris); NG = Nezavisimaya gazeta (Moscow); NZZ = Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Zürich); ODD = Omri Daily Digest (Prague); Sp = Der Spiegel (Hamburg); SWB = Summary of World Broadcasts, BBC Monitoring (Caversham Park, Reading); T = Time Magazine (New York).