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# INTELLIGENCE NOTE

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**PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN: THREE WAYS TO CONFRONTATION**

*Return to POL*  
Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to move slowly, steadily, and perhaps inexorably toward confrontation over the Pashtunistan issue.

Each of the three players--Kabul, Islamabad, and the Pathan population of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province--is acting under strong domestic compulsions which are largely unrelated to the issue itself but which will continue to fuel rising tensions. Although the situation is not yet critical, there are no signs that any side of the triangle is disposed to seek accommodation.

Domestic Compulsions. In Kabul, President Daud is locked in contests of strength with rival elements of his own government and with other centers of Afghan power. Daud, a leading proponent of the thesis that Afghanistan is the political manifestation of the Pashtun people and that Afghanistan therefore has a legitimate interest in Pakistan's Pashtun areas, probably would not push his irredentist policies to confrontation with Pakistan on the basis of his convictions alone. Given his uncertain domestic position, however, the issue may become the only point of agreement between him and his own government and between the government and the Afghan people. Daud already has locked himself into what is tantamount to an ultimatum to Pakistan over its actions in its

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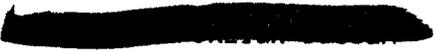
tribal provinces, and his domestic future may depend on his ability to maintain an aggressive posture.

Wali Khan, the political leader of Pakistan's Pathans and head of the opposition National Awami Party (NAP), has waged a long and unsuccessful struggle against the expansion of central government authority in Pakistan's tribal provinces. Bhutto's government, through maneuver and coercion, has systematically reduced Wali's power. Wali's statements over the past several months attest to Pathan frustrations; they also suggest he may have concluded that the invocation of the Pashtunistan issue is his only remaining hope to retain his position and that concern over a possible clash with Afghanistan over this issue may induce Bhutto to make new concessions -- notably the restoration of governments in the two tribal provinces to NAP control.

For his part, Bhutto has demonstrated little tolerance for any form of opposition and, mindful of Bangladesh, is especially intolerant of opposition based on ethnic lines. The introduction of the Pashtunistan issue into Pakistan's domestic equation not only confirmed his suspicions of Pathan secessionism but also provided him the pretext to take repressive measures against his political opposition. In order to nip the issue in the bud both at home and in Kabul, Bhutto feels that he must consistently react forcefully in response to NAP or Afghan statements on Pathan rights.

International Repercussions. Since raising the Pashtunistan issue on the day of the coup, the Daud Government has:

- issued a series of public statements and private demarches alleging



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Pakistani "provocations" which could lead to "serious consequences" and to which Afghanistan "cannot remain indifferent":

- delivered a strong attack at the Algiers nonaligned conference on Pakistan's treatment of the Pathans;
- arrested and detained a body of Pakistan's Frontier Scouts which strayed across Afghanistan's borders.

In response, Pakistan has:

- announced that nomadic Afghan tribesmen, who normally winter in Pakistan, will not be permitted to enter without "travel documents," which have never been issued to them before;
- reinforced its border with Afghanistan by deploying two fighter squadrons to Quetta, two infantry battalions to the Quetta border, and army units to replace border guards elsewhere; indeed, President Bhutto confirmed to Ambassador Helms that he was abandoning Pakistan's policy of rear deployment for the army;
- reactivated a dormant army roadbuilding project close to the border.

Wali has contributed to tensions by implying publicly that he is moving toward secession and that he would seek outside assistance in a confrontation with Bhutto. Bhutto's reaction has been to arrest about 500 of Wali's NAP supporters.

Status and Prospects. Kabul's "forward policy" has so far been implemented with words, but the rhetoric has been inflammatory and provocative. Pakistan's reaction, while short of belligerence, has been reinforced



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with military moves. Both governments have assured us that they seek a peaceful solution and good relations, but neither has made moves to seek from, or to give to, the other assurances of peaceful intent. At present, Afghanistan and Pakistan are heading toward confrontation, and their domestic compulsions appear sufficiently strong to drive them farther down this road in the coming months.

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