

Afghanistan Up for Grabs

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If any area of the world is in need of a new small America, it is Afghanistan. There are many reasons why, but the chief of them is that there it presently has no central government. The country is up for grabs.

Therefore, it seems that, were the USA to storm the power centers, wrest control from the fighting factions, and establish a military dictatorship till a system of sane suffrage can be established, it would be the best thing that could happen to that part of the world. One wonders whether anything could be learned from the failed attempt of the USSR to dominate the country during its 10-year war of occupation there.

For a hint at the prospects in Afghanistan, take a look at the map.

Geography

Afghanistan is a Texas-sized (652,000 sq km), landlocked, mountainous land in southwestern Asia that is surrounded by 6 countries:

- Pakistan
- Iran
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan
- Tajikistan
- China

Afghanistan has natural gas, petroleum, and mineral deposits. It is mostly rugged mountains (as high as 7,485 meters), with plains in the north and southwest. Only 12% of the land is arable, 46% permanent pastures, and less than 3% forest. Forest is

being rapidly destroyed to provide fuel and building materials, and it is not being replenished. Winters are cold. Summers are hot. The land is arid to semi-arid. It is being made a desert, and less than 30,000 sq km are being irrigated. The Hindu Kush mountains on its northern border with Pakistan suffer devastating earthquakes. The country has no permanent crops, but farmers produce onions, wheat, feed for livestock, and other hardy crops, and rely heavily on sheep, goats, and cattle for dietary protein. The land is one of abject poverty for the common people.

Kabul is the capital city and sits in the northeast part of the country, 150 km from Pakistan. The population of the country is

about 55% female and growing at a 3.5% rate. Since 1.05 males are born for every female, it is obvious that the male population is being killed off by civil war and rebellion. Life expectancy is only about 45 years. Over 6 million (about a third of the population) fled to Pakistan and Iran during occupation by the USSR, thereby depleting many of the most mobile and energetic able-bodied workers. Upwards of 3 million have remained in voluntary exile.

The religion is 99% Muslim, of which 85% are Sunni and the balance Shi'a. Most people are bilingual, and speak Dari (Afghan) or Pashtu (Pakistani), with the remainder speaking languages of other surrounding countries. 31% of the population over 15 years of age is literate, and only 15% of those are female. Women of Afghanistan are preponderantly illiterate.

History

Afghanistan has been something of a cultural and ecological meeting place for the middle East and central, south, and west Asia, but the records regard its history as somewhat nondescript prior to the reign of the Achaemenian Cyrus II in the 6th century BC. Darius I the Great consolidated rule in the area, but Alexander the Great overthrew him in 327 BC and thoroughly conquered the Afghan satrapies. The Selucids of Babylon took over upon Alexander's death, and later ceded the area to the Maurya dynasty of northern India (now the area of Pakistan). Greco Bactrians and Iranians then took control of the area, establishing the capitol at Kabul about 200 BC.

From 200 BC till the 1st century AD, the Kushans ruled Afghanistan and made it a prominent center of trade and power, rated alongside Parthia, China, and Rome, and they spread the religion of Buddhism in the area. Kushan rule declined as a result of the rise of the Sasanian dynasty in Iran and moguls of northern India, but Kushans continued to function as governors. From 400 AD to 565 central Asian nomads ruled the area till they were defeated by a coalition of eastern Turks and Sasanians. From 400 AD till the serious rise of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism exerted much religious influence in the Afghanistan.

In 642 AD Islamic invaders defeated the Sasanian army in Iran, and then failed in their attempt to conquer and convert Afghanistan. However, in the 9th and 10th centuries Islam rose to strength in many small caliphates in the area of Afghanistan. Ghaznavid Muslims ruled in the 10th century, and Ghurid Muslims

in the 11th. In the late 11th century Sultan 'Ala` ad-Din Muhammad, the Khwarezm-Shah, defeated all others and became supreme ruler of the area from Chinese Turkestan to Iraq.

In 1220 the yellow hordes of Ghengis Khan defeated Muslim rulers and overran the area until the death of Khan in 1227. Squabbling Muslim chieftains tried to regain control Tamerlane (Timur) soundly defeated them in the 14th century. From 1404 to 1507 the Timurids, patrons of art and education, brought the area peace and prosperity. In the 16th century, Babur, a descendant of Timur and Ghengis Kahn, established the Moghul Empire that controlled eastern Afghanistan and India till the middle of the 19th century. During the 16th and 17th centuries Afghanistan was parceled between the Moghuls of India and the Safavids or Persia, and there were many border disputes.

During the 18th century tribal leaders elected Durran to be shah. He and his heirs ruled Afghanistan until 1815. In 1809, the British, fearing an alliance between Napoleon and the Czar of Russia, signed a friendship treaty with the Afghan Shah Shoja, but rivals routed his troops from Kabul, forcing him to retreat to British safety. The Barakzay brothers took control in 1826, Dost Khan in 1837, and his descendants ruled until 1929. The next king, Nader Khan, ruled till he was assassinated in 1933, and his son Zahir Shah ruled till 1973 when he abdicated and a republic was proclaimed.

In 1840, the British, in their quest to keep the Russians out of Afghanistan, defeated Dost Khan in 1840 in the first Anglo-Afghan war. However, he regained control, killed Shoja, and ousted the British in 1843, later signing a friendship treaty with them in 1857. In 1881, the British, still fearing Russian encroachment into India, defeated the Afghans again after the second Anglo-Afghan war, a 3-year conflict.

During the last part of the 19th and early 20th century, Britain was allowed by treaty to dominate Afghanistan's foreign affairs for a fee of 160,000 pounds a year, and thereby kept Russia out of India, using Afghanistan as a buffer zone. The advent of World War I found broad support among the Muslim population for the Ottoman Turks against the British. King Habibolla managed, however, to keep the country neutral. He introduced needed social reforms, introduced electricity and automobiles to the country, founded a newspaper, and improved education. Radical Muslims assassinated him in 1919 for his pro-British stance. His son Amanollah took over and declared Afghanistan's independence from British influence and rule. Exhausted by the rigors of World War I, the British Indians were unable to effect a sound defeat and granted Afghani independence in 1919.

Amanollah immediately began to institute plans for emancipation of women, education, road building, and other reforms. Opposed by hostile Muslim fundamentalists, he abdicated in 1929 and headed for exile while a period of anarchy and banditry ensued. After coming to power in 1933, Zahir Shah maintained a low profile till 1964 when he established a constitutional monarchy. Zahir

abdicated to Daud Khan after a bloodless coup in 1973, and Daud declared a republic with himself as president.

But the "republic" was actually more like a communist dictatorship. During the years from the time Afghanistan stopped being a British protectorate and won its independence under an Islamic monarchy in 1917, up to the 1973 coup, another, more sinister power was building in the country: Communism. The Soviets lusted for control of the country so as to have easier access to Pakistan and India, both under British control at the time. Continuous intrigue by the Soviets resulted in the establishment of Communist factions vying for power until they overthrew the monarchy in 1973.

For the next few years, dissident Islamic and Communist factions plotted and killed each other to seize control. Finally, the USSR, which then owned the neighboring states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, invaded from the north in late 1979 to "stabilize" the country. Fundamentalist Muslims dominated Afghani military resistance to the Russian takeover. Furthermore, the USA, UK, Pakistan, and China provided the resistance with enormous financial and military support, training such militant radicals as the infamous bin Laden. Of chief importance in the victory of the resistance were the ground-to-air missiles that allowed them to shoot down attacking Russian jet bombers and helicopters. The USSR was ousted ten years after it entered, leaving the country impoverished, tattered, hopelessly in debt, poorly governed, and controlled by fundamentalist Muslim factions in early 1989.

Taliban Government and Present Status

But then, the civil war resumed, and, as of 2001, the fundamentalists were still fighting moderate Muslims, and many factions squabble over who will control the state. With the fall of the Communist government, Afghanistan renewed its Islamic course. The fractious faction government banned the sale of alcohol, and forced women to cover their

heads in public and adopt traditional Muslim dress. Modern Afghanistan is thus a nightmare for women, whether professional or peasant, for they are not allowed any civil liberties, not even the right to work, dress as they please, or choose their mates.

The Taliban government, brought to power through the support of Pakistan and prior support of the USA in the Afghani's conflict against the USSR, is predominantly in control of the population areas. Because its members are all Muslim, they have declared themselves to be the only legitimate governing body of Afghanistan. They have therefore named the country "The Islamic State of Afghanistan", and usually refer to it as the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". The country used to be a republic. Now it is a country that is administered by factions and has no central government. Because of this, it is "up for grabs" by the most powerful faction.

Aside from being a nexus of trade and travel for surrounding countries of massively different cultures and religions, Afghanistan seems to have nearly nothing going for it. It

has not been a development center for art, culture, education, industry, science, technology, medicine, or enlightened religion. Greeks, Persians, Romans, Mongols, Moghuls, British, and Russians have conquered it. It has been plagued with tribal disputes that keep it from forming an enduring and benign government. And it remains fiercely Islamic, persistent and successful in regaining its independence time after time after time, and insistent upon harboring the worst kind of Islamic terrorists. Its forests are meager and cannot provide housing for people. Such a small amount of its land is arable that its agriculture, still produced by relatively primitive methods, cannot support a huge population.

So. What is so special about Afghanistan?

British East India Company and Opium

Queen Elizabeth I chartered the British East India Company (BEIC) in 1600 to force the Dutch to share in their profits from Far East trade. In the mid 1700's Britain was firmly rooting its British East India Company (BEIC) in highly profitable trade with Asia, from Eastern Africa, through India, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, and China. The English monarch was one of the biggest investors in the business, and thrived. In the late 1600's the company formed alliances with Indian Moghuls and by the mid 1800's its military force completely controlled the Moghul Empire. In the 1700's, the BEIC began hiring mercenary troops to protect its trade routes, partners, and facilities from Moghul brigands who wanted to oust the British and keep the trade profits for themselves. The BEIC, recruited, trained, and disciplined Indians who became very effective and proud to wear their uniforms. They were not part of the British government, but mercenaries hired by the BEIC. In time they and their British officers comprised an army of over 2 million, a bigger military force than the crown itself had.



In the 1700s the BEIC discovered very interesting agricultural crops in India: hemp and poppy. The hemp fibers were great for producing rope. Natives harvested the plants naked, and resins from the leaves turned their skin a shiny, darker hue. Scraped from the skin into small earthen dishes and burned as incense, the hashish smoke produced a euphoric high. Opium was produced from the poppy flowers, and provided a sense of ease and relaxation when smoked that washed away the worries and fears of the smoker. These early recreational drugs released users from the anxieties and harshness of primitive living.

The BEIC saw a great opportunity in its commercial distribution, but Queen would have none of it in England. So, the BEIC began buying it from farmers in India and distributing it to China, much to the dismay of the Chinese emperor, and delight of the British Queen, and sales positively boomed. The Chinese and others in the Far East had an insatiable appetite for the drugs, in spite of all efforts of the emperor to keep it out of the country. By the mid 1800's Queen Victoria

had become immensely rich from her profits and the crown spent lavishly on monuments, buildings, and property in foreign lands. The market demand was so huge that the BEIC began looking for any other areas in which to cultivate crops AND be the exclusive customer for them.

Enter Afghanistan.

During negotiations with Shah Shoja in 1809, the BEIC agents noticed the ideal poppy-growing conditions in Afghanistan, and in their treaty were granted concessions on certain agricultural products, and began small-scale production of poppy and hemp there. At the end of their first war in the 1840s, production took on serious proportions as Far East markets heated up.

Ever since then, opium and hashish have been Afghanistan and Pakistan's leading cash crops, and the cause of incessant bickering and power struggles between Muslim factions to get their share of revenues. The BEIC reverted to the crown in 1874, making Queen Victoria the most powerful drug lord in the world. When the British were permanently ousted from Afghanistan in 1919, the England lost control of the supply of hashish and opium, but not their distribution channels.

Nevertheless, the "chain of title" of the opium and hash trade has since passed from the British into the hands of Sicilian, Columbian, Russian, Vietnamese, and other Mafia drug brokers, but in 2000 Afghanistan was the world's leading supplier of opium. That was its main cash crop, and it still is a major supplier of high-quality hashish to world drug markets. They received plenty of assistance from Muslim growers in Pakistan and Iran,



and growers in Burma, Vietnam, Laos, China, and Mexico.

So much for "fundamentalist" Muslim religious purity in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. It is against their religious laws to drink alcoholic beverages, but their consciences did not seem to be much affected by moral restrictions on distributing or using hash and opium, until recently, and then only in Afghanistan.

The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 allowed opium production to spread from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran to Afghanistan's newly liberated neighbors to the north, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The opium suppliers found a ready market and eagerly accommodated trade routes through Russia to European markets. Consequently, heroin consumption has dramatically increased in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and all countries along the trade routes to Western Europe and the UK.

Consumption has also increased along the trade routes from Pakistan to Thailand and Burma.

Thus the subjects of the British queen are paying heavily for the sins of her British East India Company 200 years ago, and that payment is widespread heroin addiction. And a new scourge arose in the 1980's in Asia and Europe to mark the trail of the spread of heroin consumption through intravenous injection and the sharing of needles among addicts: AIDS. The AIDS epidemic in Burma and Thailand caused upwards of 20% of the population to be infected with the virus. In the new millennium, however, widespread smoking of heroin has begun to replace injection, and the spread of Aids has relaxed somewhat.

No More Opium Production in Afghanistan?

In July 2000, the fundamentalist Islamic Taliban government outlawed poppy farming

in the 95% of Afghanistan they control. US officials are not allowed in the country for

verification, but the Taliban claims to have destroyed opium refineries in 2001 and jailed thousands of farmers till they agreed to stop farming opium poppies. In 1999 and 2000, Afghanistan produced nearly 5000 tons of opium annually, and the Taliban stockpiled much of the 2001 crop in order to drive up the price of heroin worldwide. Similar amounts can be produced in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to feed the burgeoning world demand for heroin. Meanwhile, farmers who now raise onions and cattle feed, are earning 1/4 of what they used to earn from poppy farming, and so the countrysides are gripped by crippling poverty.

Since there is no organized and recognized central government in Afghanistan, and since

factions there are hostile to the USA and other western governments, there is no official channel by which these countries can supply or control foreign aid to the poverty-stricken communities of Afghanistan. For this reason, opium production, while enriching only those tribal factions that control the farming and refinement, is the only way Afghanistan can raise money through international relations or trade. There simply is no other cash crop of equivalent value, so, were opium growing allowed by law, a farmer would have to be insane to grow anything else. Since opium production has been virtually stopped in Afghanistan, then the opium issue does not provide an invader with a moral imperative to oust the Talibans from government.

Fundamentalist Islam and International Terrorism

However, the issue of international terrorism definitely does provide a moral imperative, particularly in the wake of the use of commercial aircraft by fundamentalist Muslims as weapons with which to destroy the World Trade Center's twin towers and the Pentagon. Afghanistan is, without question, one of the world's most prominent refuges for terrorists like Usama bin Laden, primarily because he has the same agenda that all fundamentalist Muslims: destruction of western civilization and its supplantation with Islam.

Islam is a huge world religion because it teaches devotion to Allah (God), submission to his will, expression of caring and generosity to orphans, widows, and the poor, and tolerance of other religions. Islam has brought unity of ideals in devotion to God, education, art, social fairness, and other elements of culture to profoundly primitive people of the world, elevating those people far above their miserable state under the dominion of malignant despots, dictators, and warlords in the dark and Middle Ages. Its roots are the same as those of Judaism, both claiming origin in Abraham. However, its followers also testify that Muhammad was his prophet and final messenger of truth to this world, and they, like Jews, do not believe

Jesus was anything more than a lesser prophet.

The main religious texts of Islam are the Qur'an (Koran), the direct writings and statements of Muhammad, received in the 7th century as a result of messages or revelations supposedly from God through the angel Gabriel, and the Hadiths, or proverbs and wise sayings of Muhammad recorded by his associates.

There are two major sects of Islam, Sunny (orthodox) and Shi'a (breakaway), who contend with one another over the line of succession of Islamic religious leadership. There are also many factions of both sects who contend with one another over finer points of interpretation of the Koran and Hadiths.

The meaning of "fundamentalist" with regard to Muslims is strict adherence to Islamic law, including prohibition of mind-altering substances like alcohol and heroin, insistence on dress code for women (covering their entire bodies and head in black cloth with only hands and eyes visible) and their abject subservience to men, and militant destruction of any entity that opposes Islamic dominion. Fundamentalists derive their moral imperative

from strict interpretation of the Koran. Furthermore, they pick and choose which of the Hadiths they believe.

Fundamentalists believe they are not only entitled to die in a religious war in the name of Allah, but that such a death justifies any and all activities that may be required to elevate Islam to supreme reign over all nations and religions. They believe they will reap heavenly rewards of young girls, fresh water, jewels, and luxury if they die in a holy cause. Thus, many fundamentalists are willing to die in a just religious cause, particularly if they are miserable, impoverished, or beleaguered by harsh social conditions.

Various of these fundamentalists strive in every Islamic nation, particularly in the moderate ones, for suzerainty or control of the government or its policies. Some rulers, such as the kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, lend a kindly ear to the pleas of fundamentalists and turn a blind eye to their activities so long as they do not threaten the hegemony of the rulers or endanger their international or domestic relations in such a way that the danger can be traced back to the rulers. Those wealthy Muslims who finance terrorist activities are only too glad to enlist the support of Muslim fundamentalists who will die for them. It is therefore easy for wealthy "closet" fundamentalist Muslims to pretend to be moderate and relatively benign and friendly to western governments and western civilization while actively supporting, financing, and fueling terrorism by

Attack Afghanistan?

There are many reasons to believe a foreign power should and could be successful in taking control of the country, providing adequate resources are deployed, but there are significant dangers. Furthermore, history's lessons of the long-term failures of foreign powers in subduing and retaining control of Afghanistan present a bleak picture of both the benefits and chances of enduring success.

fundamentalists who are more open and honest about their intentions.

Yassar Arafat is such a person. While possibly not filthy rich, he does control considerable resources. While he pretends to want peace, he foments riot, rebellion, and terrorist destruction at every opportunity that poses no immediate threat to his position. Indeed, if he did not support such terrorism, other fundamentalists would have assassinated him long ago.

There was a brief period in history, from 1917 to 1991, in which international Communism threatened the world with terrorist acts and revolutions, and it is still alive and well in the government of China. But that is truly brief compared to the 1350-year history of Islam, during which it has come to dominate a fifth of the world's land mass and the thinking of two billion people. While Islam has spread to every corner of the globe and is said to be the fastest growing religion, the nexus of Islamic fundamentalism is still in the North African and mid-eastern countries in which it was born and into which it spread by military conquest in its early years.

And now, the landlocked country of Afghanistan is dominated by fundamentalist Muslim factions, chiefly the Talibans, and it therefore provides a safe haven to Islamic terrorists who have one bone after another to pick with western governments, peoples, and civilization.

First of all, were a foreign non-Muslim force to invade, the Muslim factions would stop their bickering sufficiently to present a quasi-united front to any invading army, just as it did to Russia. The mountainous terrain makes Afghanistan a difficult land for soldiers to conquer, and a relatively easy place for guerillas to defend. An attacking force would have to use

Second, all Muslim factions combined have significant financial wealth from past

production of opium with which to buy weapons like missiles, mines, and supplies with which to stave off attackers. In fact, much of Afghanistan is already heavily mined, because the mines left from the Russian war of the 1980's still litter the countryside.

Third, the production of over 4,000 tons of opium per year can bring enormous wealth, for heroin is distributed at a price of \$50,000 to \$150,000 per kilo, depending on market conditions. Most likely, farmers will support any attacking force that promises to let them produce opium in its previous or higher quantities. All that is necessary is to convince the farmers that the invaders will indeed allow them to farm opium poppies, and that may be easier said than done, for the Taliban controls communications and travel in the country.

Fourth, Iran, Pakistan, Turjikistan, and Uzbekistan are already substantial opium producers. The halt in production of opium in Afghanistan has pushed additional wealth to them. They are not likely to do anything to destabilize their own revenue, so they most likely will not support Afghanistan if another force attacks it.

Fifth, bin Laden comes from a wealthy construction family in Saudi Arabia, and has the financial support of fundamentalists among the princes, sheiks, monarchs, tribal leaders, and war lords in Arabia, the emirates, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Palestine, and, of course, Afghanistan. While the governments of all those countries deny any participation in or support of the September 11, 2001 bombings of the Pentagon and World Trade Center in the USA, and while all have written or spoken condolences for that devastating and tragic loss, all of them in their hearts applaud the bravery, cleverness, resourcefulness, patience, and effectiveness, of Usama bin Laden.

Why? Because military conquest by stealth, open war, or terrorism is characteristic of Islam, and it has been for over 1300 years. And because the USA in its support of the government of Israel, has helped called a screeching halt to the spread, entrenchment, and hegemony of Islam in Palestine. By aiding Israel, the USA has virtually declared war on Islam, and therefore on all Islamic countries. Since it is not an open or specific declaration, none officially can call it what it really is.

USA Declares War on Terrorism

And now, the congress, senate, president, and people of the USA have declared war on "international terrorism and its supporters", and garnered the verbal support of all western nations, Central and South American nations, most Islamic nations, and even China. USA leaders have acknowledged that first they have to identify the culprits and supporters who perpetrated the 911 bombings, and they have stated that they will rip them asunder as needed to bring them to justice.

While those leaders have been careful to keep a low profile on the subject of Islam and have warned others not to take reprisals on Muslims in general, the declaration of war on terrorism is in reality a declaration of war on Islamic fundamentalism and on the passages

of their holy books that offer heavenly rewards for heroic deaths in the name of Allah or encourage militancy in any respect.

Will this prove to be the death knell of fundamentalist Islam and fundamentalist interpretation of its holy books, of the vast oil and drug empires Islamic states sit on, or of the USA and western civilization? It will take enormous and consummate skill to keep the war on terrorism from being construed by two billion Muslims as an attack on their belief in God. But make no mistake; it is an attack on elements of their religion that have been a thorn in the side of the world for nearly 14 centuries.

What is Required for Victory

In order to defeat an enemy in a typical war, the enemy must be beaten by overwhelming military force, and then the enemy's land must be possessed and controlled so that the enemy does not resume the behaviors for which it was engaged to begin with. In order to make serious headway, the enemy's supply of weaponry and resources with which to fight and resist have to be cut off or dramatically diminished. Its foreign allies and supporters must be neutralized or beaten. In the case of Afghanistan, military and government leaders and chief financial people must be identified and killed or imprisoned, their bank accounts sabotaged or raped, their foreign assets seized, their opium fields and other sources of terrorist financing confiscated or burned, and their munition and weapon factories, depots, and supply routes disabled or destroyed.

And that is just the beginning. The opium production would have to be destroyed in neighboring countries, too, and that includes Pakistan, Iran, Turjikistan, and Uzbekistan, and possibly even in China. Without the participation of the governments of those countries, stopping Afghanistan's threat to world peace and freedom from drug use will be a big task. Since it is possible that much of the terrorist financing comes from oil revenues in the mid-east, it may be necessary to halt all shipping and piping of oil from those areas, making it impossible for further revenues to be earned. Doing that may require massive military intervention into the territories and economies of Islamic countries from Africa to Bangladesh. That is a daunting prospect, and will require all the capital and military resources of the western world. Because of the massive wealth of drug empires, and the support of Islamic states for each other, the undertaking may eventuate in another world war.

Since Afghanistan is 99% Muslim, any attacker will have to tolerate *sub rosa* financial support from other Islamic countries, particularly if those also produce opium. It is possible that the hope of shifting opium production from Afghanistan to Pakistan, Iran, and its neighbors to the north will stimulate those governments to assist in the destruction of Afghanistan by another foreign power. However, Afghanistan also serves as a major trafficker of opium because it is square in the overland trade route from Pakistan and Iran into Russia.

It is not typical for one Muslim country to invade and conquer another. It just isn't "cricket" to do that. The reason for this is that Islam, in spite of all its good points, encourages its followers to ban together against all so-called infidels and infidel nations, even if the infidel nations are in the right in a conflict with an Islamic state. Somehow, Islamic states may not lend their support to neighboring Islamic states in their times of trial, but they almost never attack them, and that is strictly *because* they are Islamic.

Thus, a pseudo-religious connection between Islamic states really amounts to a political and military connection, and the common religious thread in their ostensible beliefs is the cause of the political alliance. Muslim leaders tend to think that other Muslim leaders of other states cannot really be all that bad because all Muslims are at least to some extent submissive to the will of God. Furthermore, Islamic law (again, a social and political component of the religion) is recognized by all Islamic states, for that is what makes them "Islamic" states.

About Usama bin Laden

But, Usama bin Laden might need little help from the Taliban or other Islamic state leaders in order to hide forever from Terrorist hunters. His net worth is at least \$250 million, and all fundamentalist Muslims will

offer him safe harbor if he desires it. Born in 1957 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and educated in economics and management in Jedda at King Abdul Aziz University, he earned his fortune running the family construction

business. While active and aggressive from an early age in support of Islamic fundamentalist aims of uniting the world under monotheism, he decided to recruit and train resistance fighters to join the Mujahedin in Afghanistan against the Russian invasion of 1979. He returned to his construction business when Russia was ousted in 1989, and downplayed any US responsibility for his success.



in which he has openly declared war on US forces in Arabia and the holy lands, and a number of terrorist groups signed them.

Bin Laden is believed to be responsible for several bombings in Saudia Arabia, Yemen, and Pakistan, and several

In 1994 officials Egypt, Algeria, and Yemen accused him of financing terrorism, so Saudi officials revoked his passport. Moving to Sudan, he used his construction company to provide logistic support to the National Islamic Front and to train terrorists. Sudan revoked his passport for harming their image, and he went underground. He has been reported to emerge in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan since then. He has issued three Fatwas, decrees of Jihad,

assassination attempts on heads of state of Jordan and Egypt, and is believed to have masterminded the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, as well as the 911 destruction of the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon. In a 1998 interview he said "... Can the America government explain to its people when a SAM missile is launched against a passenger military airplane with 250 soldiers aboard? Can they justify their deaths?" It is not mere coincidence that four USA commercial aircraft were flown into or at their targets in the WTC and Pentagon bombings of 911. He has made good on his threats.

Death for Terrorism, or the USA?

As terrorists, their supporters, and any Afghanis with common run for the borders to Iran and other surrounding countries, the western world can only wonder whether any terrorists will remain in Afghanistan for the USA to identify and destroy. But even if such a search and destroy mission makes little sense, it might make good sense to destroy the supporting Taliban faction that claims to be the legitimate government, and shut down the illicit trade in hemp and opium in Afghanistan once and for all. A benign and intelligently run republic that constitutionally separates religion and state would be a boon to the area. The USA could build a military base there from which to quell Islamic, Communist, and Mafia expansion or drug farming in surrounding areas, but unless invited in by a friendly people or friendly rulers, that is just not the American way, and, let's face it, it might be illegal.

There are few territories in the world that are so unstable and poorly managed that they are up for grabs the way Afghanistan is. Palestine was another until the Hebrews began returning home in the 1930's and formed their government in 1948, and the world is only too aware of the difficulties they have had settling and controlling the land. At least they have the force of religious conviction to give them every bit as much heart and determination in dominating the land as the Muslims there do. But that would not be the case of an American intervention in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, anything short of wholehearted and full-scale military conquest of Afghanistan will be effete, ineffective, and doomed to early failure. There would be trouble with drug lords, Mafia, Islamic extremists, and neighboring countries. Everyone in the area would complain, and all the Islamic governments of the world would moan the loss of another Muslim stronghold.

Up for Grabs, Ripe for Americanization

But ultimately it would be the best thing for the natives. An American system of government, rigorous enforcement of laws barring terrorism and other forms of extremism, severe import/export duties on trade goods passing through the country, excellent universities, modern agriculture and husbandry methods, tourism, perfect settings for the film industry, and American military bases there could boom the economy, and make Afghanistan THE place to visit or live. The consequent industrialization from a new science and technology base would make it a

great place to build fortunes legitimately and to assist the flagging cultures of surrounding countries. It is just the thing needed to loosen the iron-fisted, terrorist-backed grip of Islam and the similar vestiges of Communism on the area and bring its people into the 21st century.

Afghanistan IS up for grabs, and the USA now has an appropriate motive for grabbing it.

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