The Makings of a Crusade: Constructing the Muslim Threat in the Mid-1990s

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The promise and contradictions of the unipolar period stood brightest at its outset in the mid-1990s. For those of a globalizing, market-oriented, socially liberal outlook, Bill Clinton's rise to power marked a period where the United States could take on an activist liberal role in international affairs. Russia, under the shaky grip of Clinton's vassal Boris Yeltsin, was no longer a contender; China, it was believed, would embrace American values and leadership. The fact was that this liberal internationalism rested firmly on American goodwill: democrats and despots took it for granted that they must go cap in hand to Washington to further their interests. International institutions like the United Nations courted American leadership, which could be graciously proffered or haughtily withdrawn. Yet the 1994 legislative victory for Clinton's ultranationalist opposition, led by Newt Gingrich, made clear that American leadership was not necessarily synonymous with the values of cosmopolitan internationalism that it advertised.

In the absence of communism, the United States found a new enemy in what was often styled as "Islamic fundamentalism," later known as Islamism. Identified as a serious threat since at least 1979, the inescapable reliance on precisely those types of "fundamentalists" in bleeding out the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s ensured that it would take a decade for this hostility to become mainstream. The February 1993 plot against the World Trade Center in New York, and sentencing of Islamist preacher Omar Abdel-Rahman for sedition, paved the way for "fundamentalism" to become a square target. The United States made common cause in this regard with governments that were uneasy with Islamists in such lands as Algeria, Bosnia, Chechnya, the Philippines, Sudan, and Tajikistan. The links of foreign militants were vastly exaggerated in arenas such as Bosnia, which was forced to yield to an ethnically split protectorate after a genocide of its Muslims, and Chechnya, whose spectacular secession from Russia went internationally unrecognized.

This campaign against Islamism was achieved by a vast dissemination of alarmist, reductionist, and frequently misleading "exposes" that usually turned out to be little more than incitement. Significantly in the American context, Israeli links were often involved, particularly of the far-right Likud tendency that marked most Israeli governments from the 1980s. In many cases, these intersected with Zionist networks in North America and Europe, such as the evangelical megachurches that boomed across the United States in the 1980s.

With the Cold War over, this ensured an increased scrutiny on Muslim "fundamentalism": even Afghanistan and Pakistan, where Islamism had been key in the rout of the Soviet Union, saw yesteryear's friends become today's enemies. Dissident Afghan prime minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose considerable international links were offset by polarizing ambitions at home, was a favored target. Former American envoy to the "mujahideen" Peter Tomsen's curious transition to a warner against jihad, with the contradictions and obfuscations that entailed, encapsulated his government's changing mood.[1] Sudan, under the ambitious military-Islamist partnership of Omar

[1] Ibrahim Moiz, "Islam, Western Historical Revisionism, and the Shah Massoud Exception," *TRTWorld*, February 2021, https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/islam-western-historical-revisionism-and-the-shah-massoud-exception-44043;

Bashir and Hassan Turabi, was a greater target: practically the entire American establishment lined up against Khartoum in denunciations that were frequently exaggerated and selective, thinly bigoted, and all the more incongruous in their support of an insurgency, led by John Garang, riddled with abuses.[2]

Samuel Huntington's infamous announcement of an impending "clash of civilizations" with the Muslim world singled out Sudan's civil war, which was fancifully imagined as one of Muslim Arabs against Christian Africans.[3] The singularly hostile Orientalist Bernard Lewis went further in writing of a backward, emasculated, and thus enraged Muslim world.[4] The fact that Islamist movements quickly became mired in factionalism prompted even the small handful of more familiar Western observers, such as Olivier Roy, to write of the "failure of political Islam."[5]

Certainly, Islamists were not without blame. Islamist leadership in protracted insurgencies in Palestine, Bangsamoro in the Philippines, and Kashmir had yet to achieve their aims. Particular strands of Islamism also featured prominently in civil wars in North Africa and Central Asia. Afghanistan's civil war notably involved intra-Islamist factionalism. Algeria's populist Islamists were denied an electoral win and systematically crushed in a war that escalated to horrific proportions. Meanwhile in Yugoslavia's wreckage, a new Bosnian state led by prominent Muslim thinker Alija Izetbegovic was rewarded for its regionally unfashionable rejection of ethnonationalism with a horrendous genocide. These three problems—internal factionalism, state suppression, and external assault—would typify Islamist, and more broadly Muslim, experiences over ensuing years.[6]

Yet in none of these cases, as claimed by a commentator popular in anti-Muslim circles, Khalid Duran, were such problems limited to or typical of the Islamists,[7] who at worst could be accused simply of having failed to transcend these dynamics. Certainly, the Islamists were divided: petty rivalries between personalities and regimes with whom the Islamists had historically friendly links—such as Saudi Arabia and Iran—sharpened disputes. Some Islamists, like Turabi, tried to mend rifts, but were met with pathologization and vilification by non-Muslim states, self-interested Muslim regimes, and a budding misinformation ecosystem of anti-Muslim commentators frequently linked to the establishments of such anti-Muslim states as Israel or Serbia.

Yossef Bodansky, a supposed expert on radicalism tasked to investigate "fundamentalism" by the American legislature, was an extreme—though by no means unique—case. Working for

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Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failure of Great Powers* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).

[2] Richard Cockett, *Sudan: The Failure and Division of an African State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 143–167. The author is himself often guilty of similar impulses, though from a secularist rather than Christian perspective.

[3] Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 256.

[4] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990.

[5] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[6] Ibrahim Moiz, "1992 and the Broken Promise of Islamic Internationalism," *The Ayaan Institute*, August 3, 2022.

[7] Aicha Lemsine, "Muslim Scholars Face Down Fanaticism," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, June 1995, 17; https://www.wrmea.org/1995-june/muslim-scholars-face-down-fanaticism.html. An example of anti-Muslim authors echoing Duran's comments can be found in Millard Burr and Robert Collins's pseudo-scholastic polemic on Sudan, *Revolutionary Sudan: Hasan al-Turabi and the Islamist State, 1989–2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 171.

Washington, Tel Aviv, and Belgrade all at once, he would spend decades drawing non-existent links as a fear-mongering tool between "terrorism" and Muslim politicians and leaders of all stripes, even those friendly with Washington.[8] If such commentators could spread alarmism about such governments as Riyadh and Cairo, their stance on less well-connected Islamists could hardly be anything but hostile. And propaganda had influence: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General Willy Claes's claim that "Islamic fundamentalism is at least as dangerous as communism was"[9] aptly illustrated a shift in the Western power's emerging mood.

Somalia, Yemen, and Ogaden

Few events epitomized the friction between the emergent unipolar order, international institutions, and local dynamics as did the United Nations mission in Somalia. Meant as a groundbreaking mission that would underscore both the United Nations' relevance and American supremacy after the Cold War, it ended as a destructive manhunt whose architects were unable to contend with the dynamics of a civil war.[10] Meanwhile, another briefer and more decisive civil war in recently reunified Yemen assured its union under the clientelist rule of Ali Saleh.

The early 1990s had been a period of serious upheaval in the Red Sea region. In 1990, North and South Yemen, the respectively conservative and leftist twins of the Cold War, had reunited in a deal between their leaders, Ali Saleh and Ali Beidh. A year later, the twin dictatorships of Somalia and Ethiopia were toppled by insurgents. Ethiopia's insurgent coalition—spearheaded by Meles Zenawi's Woyane and Isaias Afwerki's Shaebia groups, who led the main centrifugal opponents to the ousted Derg—quickly arranged a foreplanned transition: notably, the northern region of Eritrea, controversially annexed decades earlier, became independent under Afwerki in May 1993.

By contrast, Somalia's opposition plunged into conflict: the state had already begun to fragment at the end of Siad Barre's dictatorship, and this accelerated when his Darod confederation came under attack in Mogadishu after his ouster. The war also featured polarization and internecine conflict between his opposition, largely from the Hawiye confederation in central Somalia, the long-suppressed Isaq confederation in the north, and Darod's Ogaden clan. Siad's unsuccessful fightback in 1992 exacerbated the effects of famine in Baidoa, haven of the marginalized Rahanweyn confederation. As Somalia fragmented into contested fiefdoms, dreams of *Somaliweyn*, or Greater Somalia, unifying the Somalis in the Horn, lay shattered.[11]

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[8] See Burr and Collins, *Revolutionary Sudan* for examples of such anti-Muslim circles liberally using Bodansky as a source. Greg Noakes, "Republican Task Force Faces Backlash on Bosnia Report," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, July/August 1993, 30. Bodansky's oeuvre—from *Target America & the West: Terrorism Today* (New York: S.P.I. Books, 1993) to *Al Qaeda's Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* (New York: Harper, 2009) is more inciteful than insightful, characterized as it is by unreliable sources where any are mentioned at all and a liberal usage of logical fallacies to promote fear about Muslim.

[9] Chicago Tribune, "Islam is not the Threat NATO Makes it Out to Be," *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1995, https://www.chicagotribune.com/1995/02/12/islam-is-not-the-threat-nato-makes-it-out-to-be/.

[10] John Drysdale, *Whatever Happened to Somalia?* (London: Haan, 2001).

[11] There are surprisingly few books dealing at length with the politics of 1990s Somalia outside the context of the United Nations mission, though articles and academic inquiries into certain segments of the war at a more granular level proliferate. Exceptions include Marc Fontrier, *L'Etat Démantelé 1991–1995: Annales de Somalie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012); Abdisalam Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy*

The main rivalry in Mogadishu was between Hawiye political leader Ali Mahdi and disaffected military commander Farrah Aidid, whose Habargidir militia was formidable enough to force Mahdi to rely on autonomous vassals in Mogadishu, such as Mohamed Qanyare and Musa Yalahow. The south was contested between rival generals: military spymaster Omar Jess and defence minister Aden Gabyow from the Ogaden clan, and Barre's notorious son-in-law Said Morgan from the Marehan. Affiliating himself with Aidid, the most inveterate enemy of the *ancien régime*, Jess fought both Gabyow and Morgan over Kismayo.

The famine had largely passed in 1992, but this did not satisfy Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's wish to make Somalia an example of United Nations potential. Having sidelined the officials who had made the humanitarian mission a success, the former Egyptian foreign minister—who had overseen Cairo's American-brokered détente with Israel—harboured a conviction in Washington's supremacy shared by the American admiral who led the mission, Jonathan Howe. They also shared a disdain for Aidid, over whom they favored Mahdi in Mogadishu, and over whose ally Jess they favored Morgan in the south. Given how Morgan had supported and Mahdi opposed the *ancien régime*, this was an unsustainable miscalculation.

Aidid hurried to varnish his political credentials, persuading Jess to withdraw from the south, holding negotiations over the contested Galmudug region, and joining Mahdi's supporters in two United Nations conferences hosted by Zenawi at Addis Ababa. These were promising grounds for reconciliation, but Howe stonewalled for no apparent reason other than to spite him—a particularly bizarre attitude given that Aidid, whose son Hussein was a former American soldier, was by no means naturally ill-disposed toward the United States. As the mission dragged on, poorly coordinated international "peacekeepers" frequently abused power: the notoriety of the Americans, Belgians, and Canadians gave the lie to a now-outdated pretext of humanitarianism.[12]

Matters escalated in summer 1993 when American commander Frank Montgomery tried to force shut Aidid's media and was instead ambushed. Presenting the attackers as international outlaws, Montgomery raided a Habargidir clan meeting, allegedly hosted by the ambush's perpetrator Abdi Qeybdiid, and killed some hundred clansmen to begin months of assault that went beyond targeting Aidid's organization. Habargidir commander Sharif Jimale countered skilfully by organizing decentralized fronts in the city. Matters reached a bloody standoff in a massive streetfight in October 1993: though hundreds of Somalis were killed, what really captured international attention was the downing of three American Black Hawk military helicopters and the ensuing death of nearly twenty American soldiers, whose corpses were dragged in the streets. This persuaded the Americans to exit a war they had never cared to understand. In spring 1995,

(London: Haan Associates, 1994); and Mohamud Mohamed-Abdi, *A History of the Ogaden* (*Western Somali*)*: Struggle for Self-Determination* (London: Lightning Source, 2007). This section relies heavily on these works, with remaining details filled in by consulting reports from various international aid organizations and outlets such as *The New Humanitarian* and *PanaPress*. For this reason, citations will not be given line by line; interested readers can consult the sources given here. I am especially grateful to Somali researcher Abdimalik Warsame for directing me toward and explaining sources of both literary and open-source types, many of which are archived on his website https://somalihistoryarchive.com/.

[12] Sherene Razack, *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

Malaysian commander Aboo Samah Bin Aboo Bakar led out the remaining United Nations force, with Boutros-Ghali's dreams of enforcing international jurisdiction in tatters.

Unexpectedly hailed as a patriotic champion and the closest thing Somalia had to a ruler, it could not be said that Aidid lived up to the moment. The prevalent feature of the war's politics was the alliance or breakaway of various militias, often in response to some external incentive and often mobilizing along clan lines that then went to war. Aidid was no more able to skirt this dynamic than his rivals. Thus, when his former supporters, Omar Hashi and former junta member Abdi Isaq, broke away to join Mahdi, their clans became embroiled in conflict against the Habargidir. Aidid's financier Osman Atto fought Hashi's Hawadle clan for Beledweyne. The Dir clan split between Abdi and Aidid's loyalist Abdulaziz Yusuf in Merca. Aidid enticed, with the position of interior minister, Mahdi's former supporter Qanyare who subsequently fought over Mogadishu with Mahdi's Abgal clansman, Yalahow. Mahdi's financier Mohamed Dheere defected to Aidid, whose own financier Atto defected from him.

Aidid won over Isaaq northerners Abdirahman Tur and former Inspector General Jama Ghalib, who supported Somaliland's reunion with Somalia. But they were beaten in 1994–95 when former Prime Minister Mohamed Egal—elected to replace Tur as Somaliland emir the previous year—rallied experienced commanders Saleban Aden, Abdirahman Tolwa, Musa Bihi Abdi, and Ahmed Mire at Hargeisa and Burao. Egal joined a separatist bandwagon that, given both a history of dictatorial repression and the current mayhem in the remainder of Somalia, had increasing currency among Isaaq chieftains such as Ibrahim Madar, who played a prominent role in Somaliland elections.

After the United Nations withdrawal, Rahanweyn leaders mimicked their Isaaq counterparts by setting up a regional administration at Baidoa under former Interior Minister Abdulkadir Zoppo. This lasted six months before Aidid's son Hussein crushed it, prompting Rahanweyn commander Hassan Shatigudud to set up a militia with Ethiopian support.[13] The civil war continued in ebbs and flows until its leading protagonist Aidid—the closest thing Somalia had to a ruler since 1991—was killed in obscurity in street battles with Atto during summer 1996.

Ethiopia's early cordiality with the Aidids transformed into hostility because it was wary of any Somali faction that grew past a containable extent. Meles's international acclaim as a philosopher-statesman did not make him any more willing than his predecessors to relinquish Ethiopia's ethnically Somali southeast region of Ogaden, whose majority had historically favored union with Somalia. Eritrea's breakaway in 1993 was more a nod to Meles's alliance with its powerful leader Afwerki than a commitment to separatism elsewhere, and Addis Ababa was particularly suspicious of the cross-border links of its Somali subjects.

Several Somali groups had shed their reservations to test Meles's promise of referendum: these included preacher Ibrahim Abdalla Mah, whose confederate Abdulahi Mohamed Sa'adi was elected Ogaden's first premier. Yet this autonomy's superficiality showed when Sa'adi's insistence on holding the promised referendum made him the first of several premiers to be sacked in quick succession by the regime. Hassan Qalinle, Abdirahman Qani, and Ahmed Makahel Hussein followed suit as Addis Ababa instead tried to rally support around loyalist Isaaq minister Abdul Majid Hussein. As early as 1994, the army bloodily cracked down on a rally held by Mah, pushing

[13] Mohamed Mukhtar, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 13. Dominik Balthasar (2013). "Somaliland's Best-Kept Secret: Shrewd Politics and War Projects as Means of State-Making." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7 (2): 218-238.

him into an insurgency of hit-and-run attacks alongside Abdisalam Osman and Abdullahi Omar, whose largely Salafi Itihaad-al-Islaamiya group spanned both sides of the border with Somalia. These cross-border links, along with Ogaden mistrust of Addis Ababa, thwarted Abdul Majid Hussein's attempted talks, since Itihaad would only agree to relinquish arms to their clansmen on either side of the border.

In Somalia, Itihaad's leaders included Islamist officers Hassan Dahir Aweys, who had defected from Aidid's Habargidir militia, and Hassan Abdullah "the Turk" Hersi, who led an Ogaden militia on the southern coast. Marehan preacher Mohamed Yusuf also led an important front among his clansmen at the Gedo border. Though Itihaad had opposed the American campaign, they had shared many of its militia enemies and primarily focused on jihad against Ethiopia. When in summer 1996 they claimed credit for an attempt on Abdul Majid Hussein's life, the Ethiopian army seized the pretext and attacked. So began a decade of periodic Ethiopian raids into Somalia, led by a shadowy but influential officer called Tafasse Mamo. This intrusion by Somalia's "Auld Enemy" provoked a major outcry, amplified by the otherwise apolitical leaders of several Islamic courts that had begun to take charge of local order in the country. In an atmosphere of constant political factionalism and opportunism, these courts would take on a more activist role in future.

Across the Red Sea, Yemen underwent its own civil war, based on the discord between remnants of North and South Yemen that had united under uncertain terms,[14] as well as a desire by Yemen's monarchic peninsular neighbours to keep Sanaa on a leash. Saudi Arabia switched support for Ali Saleh to his secessionist rival, Ali Beidh, whose leftist government in Aden Riyadh had reviled during the Cold War. Beidh now served as a check against both Saleh and the activist—though within Sanaa's context establishmentarian—Islamists of the Islah party.[15] Islah leaders included Hashidi chieftain and parliamentary speaker Abdullah Ahmar, cavalry commander Ali Mohsen Ahmar, eccentric ideologue Abdul Majeed Zindani, and Tariq Fadhli, dispossessed heir to a former sultanate in the southern Abyan province; they lent Saleh key support to the discomfort of their former patrons in Riyadh.

More serious than the split with the Saudis was the discord between loyalists in the north and leftists from Beidh's Tughma faction in the south. Despite a history of factionalism, southern leftists prided themselves on modernization and institutionalism, balking at the obvious patrimonialism of Saleh's regime. Having assumed an at least equal partnership in a united Yemen, the leftists were shocked when they came a distant third to Saleh and Ahmar in the 1993 parliamentary election. Beidh decamped sullenly to the south and bloc leader Salim Saleh rejected an offer by Ahmar to join a ruling council, which the leftists' rivals Fadhli and Zindani instead joined. Coupled with a spate of violence against leftists—which the regime blamed on intra-southern disputes, but which Beidh suspected as the northern settling of old accounts—and disagreement over integration, the stage was set for violent confrontation.

In February 1994, a scuffle at Amran escalated into a cavalry battle between Ali Mohsen Ahmar's lieutenant Hameed Qushaibi and southern commander Yahya Dahish. After negotiations in Oman faltered, clashes resumed and Beidh announced a revolt. Prime Minister Haidar Attas and Defense Minister Haitham Qasim Tahir, both Tughma leaders, defected to join in. The separatists carefully

[14] On the improvisational nature of the union, see Noel Brehoney, *Yemen Divided: The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

[15] Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 187.

distanced themselves from leftist dogma, allying instead with longstanding Saudi-backed southern rivals from the Cold War—including former Aden premier Abdul-Qawi Makkawi, former Sanaa Foreign Minister Abdullah Asnag, and conservative politician Abdul Rahman Jifri. Few things could bind such a coalition besides resentment of Sanaa. In practice, it relied heavily on Tughma power. Military commander Saleh bin Hussainoun and constable Muhsin Abdullah led the Hadhramaut front in the east. In central Yemen Jarallah Umar, a northern leftist, reprised his Cold War support for Aden against Sanaa. Aden's military command was led by Tahir, navy commander Ali Talib, and South Yemen air force commander Ali Muthanna, whose fleet was vastly superior to that of Sanaa.[16]

This reliance on leftists antagonized Yemeni Islamists, notably veterans of the 1980s Afghanistan war, whom Fadhli and Zindani had mobilized to fight alongside the personal networks of Saleh, Ahmar, and Mohsen. Another part of the unionist camp was the rival southern faction, Zumra, which Tughma had expelled from Aden in 1986. Zumra leaders Abdrabbuh Hadi and Ahmed Musaid played key roles in the advance to Aden, capturing the Anad Airbase from rebel commander Jaafar Saad and joining Fadhli to take their native region of Abyan. Hadhramaut's rebel commander bin Hussainoun was killed as Saleh's cousin Muhammad Ismail captured Mukalla. Aden was captured and plundered bare in July 1994.

The result shocked Yemen's neighbours. Both Saudi Arabia in late 1994 and Eritrea a year later clashed with Yemen over the borders. Saleh sent seasoned diplomats to paper over differences. Foreign Minister Abdul Qadir Bajamal, a southern unionist, signed an accord at Makkah with Saudi diplomat Ibrahim Angari to peacefully negotiate the border, while former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Iryani and Eritrean Foreign Minister Petros Solomon agreed to defer the dispute over the Hanish Islands to an international court. Together with Prime Ministers Muhammad Attar and Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani, these formed a technocratic core that Sanaa hoped would repair regional ties. Such external diplomacy contrasted with internal resolution of the war, where resentment festered against unionist triumphalism. For proud southerners, defeat at the hands of a rival long caricatured as unsophisticated tribalists was a bitter pill to swallow.

Iraq, Syria, and Palestine

If Somalia marked the first military misadventure of the American empire after the Cold War, in no arena did Washington thrust itself more eagerly than the Fertile Crescent. Foremost on the American radar was the security of its pampered vassal Israel, which had been confounded by a long-running Palestinian uprising in which Islamists—notably the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups—were beginning to make worrying inroads. The other major target of American and Israeli ire was the Baath regime in Iraq, the whipping-boy of Washington's "New World Order."

The Americans pushed for punishing international sanctions on Iraq until it dismantled its advanced weaponry, prevented the Iraqi military from marching into its Kurdish-majority Bashur north, and toyed with the idea of dethroning Saddam Hussein via coup or insurgency.[17] In keeping with what influential advisor—and soon-to-be Israel ambassador—Martin Indyk called "dual

[16] Stephen Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 129–130; *Daily Report: Near East & South Asia*, Vol. 94–96, May 10, 1994; Jamal Suwaidi, ed., *The Yemeni War of 1994: Causes and Consequences* (Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research), 1995.

[17] Sarah Graham-Browne, *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

containment," Washington wanted to bleed out neighbouring rivals Iraq and Iran, both seen as refractory "backlash states," until they no longer posed a threat to American vassals.[18] The regional winners were Iran's rival Turkiye, whose military enjoyed extraordinary scope to repeatedly raid into Bashur against its leftist Kurdish insurgents; and Iraq's rival Syria, whose dictator Hafez Assad Bill Clinton painstakingly tried to coopt.

Clinton was identified with nothing so much as he was with the Oslo Accords. The initiative of Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, its open motive was to outsource Israeli security over the Palestinian insurgency to more expendable Palestinian contractors. The talks dangled the carrot of a recognized Palestinian state "side by side" with Israel. For Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who had bounced from one exile to another for decades, this proved too much to resist, even as a large number of dissidents noted that Israel had given no guarantee. Arafat's envoy Mahmoud Abbas secretly signed the initial Oslo Accord with Peres under the watch of American counterpart Warren Christopher, and in September 1993, Clinton famously gathered Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to confirm it with a handshake.

The Oslo Accords were given the superficial appearance of balance only because Israel's far-right, led by Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, volubly protested any negotiation with Arafat. Yet, there was little doubt that Israel alone stood to benefit, warping Palestinian militants into a glorified security force at little cost. The deal did not infringe on Israel's carte blanche to romp about the region, recently on show in summer 1993, when Ehud Barak attacked Hassan Nasrallah's Iran-backed Shia Hezbollah group in Lebanon. Hezbollah had come into recent contact with Palestinian Islamists Hamas and Islamic Jihad, whom Barak had hastily expelled into Lebanon the previous winter.

Arafat, who wishfully saw in the Oslo negotiations the groundwork of a Palestinian state, haggled the "independence" of Gaza and Jericho through the offices of the Americans' favored Arab autocrat, Hosni Mubarak. Yet no sooner had he returned home to Gaza in July 1994 with his new "Interior Minister" Nasser Yusuf than they found their power severely circumscribed, both by the Israeli military and its Palestinian contacts, Mohammed Dahlan and Jibril Rajoub, whose "counterterrorism" forces earned a reputation for skulduggery. Effectively, Palestinian security became a set of competing fiefdoms.[19] The theatrical opportunism in the Israeli Likud's criticisms of the Oslo Accords did not prevent one of their supporters from firing the first shot in February 1994 by slaughtering dozens of Muslims at Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque. Islamists responded with a spate of suicide and bomb attacks. Throughout the next two years, Arafat was hemmed in by Israeli pressure to crack down on Palestinian militancy, and by Palestinian pressure to resist Israeli depredations.

Clinton tried to build Arab normalization with Israel; he persuaded Jordan into its own treaty, but could not get Israel to give the final concessions over the Golan Heights' occupation that would have satisfied Syria. Assad milked and drew out the process, meanwhile taking steps to ensure a smooth succession at home. His eldest son Basil had been killed in an accident and much of the mid-1990s were spent shuffling the Alawite generals who dominated Syrian security. The dictator's

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[18] Simon Murden, *Islam, the Middle East, and the New Global Hegemony* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Chin-Kuei Tsui, *Clinton, New Terrorism and the Origin of the War on Terror* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

[19] Brynjar Lia, *Building Arafat's Police: The Politics of International Police Assistance in the Palestinian Territories After the Oslo Agreement* (New York: Ithaca Press, 2007); Hillel Frisch, *The Palestinian Military: Between Militias and Armies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 70–89.

nephew, praetorian commander Adnan Makhlouf, and commando commander Ali Haidar were replaced in part because they complicated this matter. Makhlouf, whose family leveraged their familial status to extract major shares in the economy, was dismissed after falling out with Assad's presumptive heir Bashar.[20]

One factor in American-Syrian rapprochement was animosity toward Iraq. The United States accused Baghdad of plotting to assassinate Clinton's predecessor George H. W. Bush, and pushed a major international effort to dismantle Iraq's advanced weaponry, where the Baath regime unsurprisingly dragged its feet.[21] Happy to attack Saddam, Washington was divided on whether and how best to topple him. One Baath defector coopted by American intelligence, Iyad Allawi, called for an internal coup; his cousin Ahmad Chalabi, who wanted to purge Iraq of Baathist influence altogether, sought instead to cultivate links to Kurdish militants in the Bashur protectorate.[22]

This Kurdish duopoly, led by Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani, proved incredibly fractious. Their Bashur regime, with Barzani at the helm flanked by a premier from Talabani's Nishtimani party, foundered on this rivalry, and its first premier, Fuad Masum, resigned in protest.[23] Kurdish friction was exacerbated by Turkish incursions against its Karkeran insurgency, led by Cemîl "Cuma" Bayik from Bashur's mountains.[24] Though Turkiye and Iran agreed on the undesirability of Kurdish independence, Ankara took a far harder line. This was a dilemma for Washington, who theoretically preferred Turkiye to Iran, but wanted to maintain its Bashur protectorate. Subsequently, Barzani drifted toward Ankara and Talabani toward Tehran. Additional complications were Kurdish independents: freebooter Hama Mahmoud; chieftains such as the Barzanis' Surchi rival Husain Agha, who was murdered after the Nishtimanis courted him; as well as a small but fast-growing Islamist trend led by Osman Abdulaziz and Ali Bapir.[25]

By 1994 internecine civil war had broken out in Bashur. In Talabani's absence, military commander Jabir Farman attacked Barzani in central Bashur. The Barzanis countered by enlisting Islamists to contest eastern towns like Halabja against Nishtimanis, who appealed to the Islamists' presumed sponsor Iran. Bashur's Western backers scrambled to contain the situation: French First Lady Danielle Mitterrand brought Barzani's second-in-command Sami Abdul Rahman and Speaker Jawhar Namiq to make peace with Talabani. With the region effectively split between Barzani in

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[20] Eyal Zisser, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), gives a comprehensive account of Syrian internal and external policy during this period.

[21] Graham-Browne, *Sanctioning Saddam*; Ryan Hendrickson, *The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), 143. It is worth noting that the alleged assassination plot has never been confirmed.

[22] Aram Roston, *The Man who Pushed America to War: The Extraordinary Life, Adventures, and Obsessions of Ahmad Chalabi* (New York: Nation Books), 161; Richard Bonin, *Arrows of the Night: Ahmad Chalabi and the Selling of the Iraq War* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 106–108. These books and their sources rather exaggerate Chalabi's importance in American hostility toward Iraq, though it was a role that he wholeheartedly embraced.

[23] Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); Erwin van Veen, *Armed Organizations and Political Elites in Civil Wars: Pathways to Power in Syria and Iraq* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024).

[24] Hannes Cerny, *Iraqi Kurdistan, the PKK and International Relations: Theory and Ethnic Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

[25] Salih Mustafa, *Nationalism and Islamism in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: The Emergence of the Kurdistan Islamic Union* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).

the west and Talabani in the east, the agreement collapsed when Nishtimani premier Kosrat Rasul wrenched Bashur capital Erbil in winter 1995. The internecine Kurdish conflict underscored a common pattern where the major Kurdish nationalists had seen each other as bigger threats than the Baghdad regime.

Grim as the 1990s were for Iraq, they also underscored Baath resilience. The regime's sprawling security apparatus—controlled by Saddam's half-brothers, his cousin "Chemical" Ali Majid, and his son Qusay—intercepted a number of coup plots that, contrary to conventional wisdom, largely came from the Sunni Arabs from which they hailed. A major site of Shia opposition was uprooted when the regime drained the Huwaiza Marshlands in spring 1993, and from then it was largely malcontent Sunni Arabs who preoccupied Baghdad.

In fall 1993 Saddam's fellow Tikritis, chieftain Taleb Suhail and Surgeon General Raji Abbas, were executed for a plot in league with pre-Baath praetorian commander Bashir Taleb. When Habbaniya commandant Muhammad Mazloum was also executed, his Dulaimi clansmen, led by Turki Ismail, mounted a brief revolt that was quashed by Saddam's half-brother, Interior Minister Watban Majid, and Baath Commissar Younis Ahmad. Opportunist soldiers, including military spymaster Wafiq Ablaj and army commander Nizar Khazraji, defected as confrontation with the United States loomed. Saddam centralized power, dismissing Prime Minister Ahmad Khudayir Samarrai, a military placeholder, while "Chemical" Ali rerouted military resources in favor of an expanded praetorian force whose leaders, such as Tikriti army commander Ibrahim Abdul Sattar, could be trusted not to challenge the regime.[26]

Given the regime's clientelist model, it was familial rifts that most troubled Saddam. On the same summer 1995 day that his savage son Uday injured Watban in a feud, the dictator's sons-in-law, the brothers Saddam and Hussein Kamel, defected to Jordan. The brothers hoped to capitalize on international fixations with the Iraqi arsenal, which Hussein Kamel had long supervised. Receiving surprisingly little traction, they unwisely accepted Saddam's invitation home, where "Chemical" Ali cornered and killed them in a shootout to avenge the family honor.[27] Uday himself was badly injured in an assassination attempt, leaving Qusay as Saddam's expected heir.

To control a gagging populace, Saddam formally strengthened regime ties to religiosity and clan, though this trend was coopted by his lieutenants Izzat Douri and Aziz Nouman.[28] A third selling point was defiance to the United States, thus playing the role of "backlash state" typecast by the American elite. Washington's willingness to sacrifice Iraqis for a feud against Saddam earned such widespread infamy that in December 1996, Clinton approved a United Nations program to trade foreign food for Iraqi oil. Revealingly, however, this "humanitarian" program was led by former weapons inspector Rolf Ekeus, and would be a partial cover for further American subterfuge.

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[26] Ibrahim al-Marashi and Sammy Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); Hamid Bayati, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: An Insider's Account of the Iraqi Opposition to Saddam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

[27] Patrick Tyler, *A World of Trouble: The White House and the Middle East – from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 2010), 439–441.

[28] Alison Pargeter, *Tribes and the State in Libya and Iraq: From the Nationalist Era to the New Order* (London: Hurst, 2023). David Jordan, *State and Sufism in Iraq: Building a "Moderate Islam" under Saddam Husayn* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 193–195.

This grudging concession only came after two years of bungled attempts at regime change. In spring 1995, Washington backed Chalabi in a plot with the Nishtimanis, whose leaders Talabani, Kosrat Rasul, and Omar Fattah made a three-pronged advance on Iraqi corps commander Mahmoud Hazzaa at the hotly contested oil town Kirkuk. This was intended to coincide with a coup planned by Wafiq Samarrai, but Washington aborted at the last moment and the plan collapsed. The American about-face might have been influenced by Talabani's rival Barzani, who meanwhile supported a massive Turkish incursion, led by Hasan Kundakçı, against Karkeran's Bashur camps.

As Chalabi's strategy faded, American intelligence instead backed Allawi's plot for an internal coup, based around corps commanders Mohammed Abdullah Shahwani and Abdul Qadir Jasim Obeidi, but this was intercepted and crushed in 1996. At the summer's end, Baghdad gained an enormous boost when Barzani called in help to retake Erbil from Kosrat. A praetorian assault led by Sayf al-Din Taha Rawi seized Bashur's capital, taking care to decimate Chalabi's network before turning the city over to the Barzanis and withdrawing to avoid American bombardment.[29] Hundreds of Chalabi's followers were airlifted out of what had become an American fiasco while Barzani, shrugging off Nishtimani indignation, replaced Kosrat as premier with his party loyalist Roj Shaweis.

Meanwhile, disillusionment had spread over American diplomacy in the Holy Land. Its skewed nature had been exposed further in Clinton's last mediation, at Taba, between Rabin and Arafat: the Palestinians received a fraction of the West Bank but responsibility to police the vast majority of its inhabitants. The fundamental problem—that the United States insisted on targeting Palestinian Islamists, while Israel's regime bowed to pressure from Likud provocateurs—was underscored when a far-right assassin, Yigal Amir, killed Rabin. His replacement, Peres was beaten in the election by Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, whose strategy was to haggle endlessly over minutiae while expanding Jewish settlement to generate a fait accompli.[30]

Meanwhile, the first, largely boycotted, Palestinian election, which confirmed Arafat in power, was less than a success: even his runner-up Samiha Khalil attacked the Oslo deal, whose negotiator, Ahmed Qurei, Arafat nonetheless promoted to lead a rubber-stamp parliament. The Likud went out of its way to embarrass Arafat, and the Palestinians' longstanding tormentor Ariel Sharon began his return to the cabinet with illegal excavations under the Aqsa compound in Jerusalem, lending strength to the impression that Israel's grudge was against Islam.[31]

Such Israeli provocations were emboldened by years of one-sided American ire for Palestinian opposition, even before the supremacist Likud came to power. The Labor regime had lobbied Washington to imprison Hamas politburo head Mousa Abu Marzouk on contrived grounds. They assassinated Islamic Jihad leaders Fathi Shiqaqi and Mahmoud Khawaja, and Hamas commanders Imad Aql and Yahya Ayyash: the latter's vast funeral emphasized how Islamist defiance had won support over Arafat's collaboration.[32] In spring 1996, Clinton and Mubarak held a regional conference to condemn the Islamists, just before Peres sent a pointedly brutal foray under

[29] Baer, *See No Evil*.

[30] Gershon Shafir, *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World's Most Intractable Conflict* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 125–126.

[31] Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon's war against the Palestinians* (London: Verso, 2003).

[32] Said Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 295.

General Amiram Levin into Lebanon against Hezbollah.[33] These features—the crackdown against Islamists, the cooptation of weakened collaborators, the alacrity with which Israel abused its American support, and the ease with which even "centrists" like Peres and Clinton would slip into arbitrary violence—were to become familiar patterns in the unipolar crusade.

Libya and Sudan

Nowhere in the mid-1990s did unipolar policy assume so blatantly religious a dimension as in Sudan, where the United States backed an insurgency against Omar Bashir's regime for reasons that frequently framed its idea of Islam as a threat. Sudan's enemies also included Arab regimes and northern dissidents, often of a secularist bent, whose arguments likewise often brought Islam itself into their gunsights. Both Libya—long targeted by the United States as a "backlash state"—and Sudan would thus spend the mid-1990s under various forms of attack.

Pious protestations notwithstanding, there was little doubt that the Sudanese insurgency was backed by the West for reasons that had more to do with Islam than specific Ingaz abuses.[34] The picture of Sudan as a majoritarian tyranny against minorities was a blatant fiction whose anti-Islamism frequently crossed into a frontal assault on Islam itself. Former Foreign Minister Mansour Khalid, who joined the insurgency, scattered sophomoric criticisms of Islam into his work;[35] commanders like Yousif Kuwa in the Nuba Mountains pointedly downplayed Muslim identity in favor of ethnic identity. Both the internal, and occasionally public, discourse of the mostly non-Muslim Sudan People's Liberation Army resorted to anti-Islam and anti-Arab rhetoric in part as an easy way to assure foreign support.[36]

Khartoum, both as a military dictatorship and as internationalist Islamists, ruffled so many different feathers in the global and regional order—ideological secularists, rival Arab autocrats, political liberals, and evangelical Christians. As a result, opposition claims were repeated without question outside the country by governments, non-governmental organizations, and media. British aristocrat Caroline Cox, politically-connected American activist John Prendergast, and the Graham evangelical network amplified these claims.[37] The portrayal of an admittedly ruthless crackdown in

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[33] Most infamously, an Israeli attack on a United Nations compound at Qana killed over a hundred refugees. Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 106.

[34] Richard Cockett, *Sudan: The Failure and Division of an African State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 143–167.

[35] For instance, the insinuation, popular in anti-Islamic circles and resting on generally false equivalences, that Islamic conquests delegitimized any Muslim criticism of colonialism. Mansour Khalid, *The Government they Deserve: The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution* (Kegan Paul International, 1990), 49. Such equivalences are unsurprising given Khalid's role in lobbying for Garang to the very same former colonial powers whose record stood to benefit. Mansour Khalid's *War and Peace in the Sudan: A Tale of Two Countries* (Kegan Paul International, 2003) touches on similar themes in its assault on the Ingaz regime.

[36] "It is striking," notes an expert who witnessed the climate among aid groups in the south, "how many people working for international [aid organizations] in [insurgent]-controlled areas assumed anti-Arab and anti-Sudanese prejudices even when they had often never met a Sudanese Arab…[notwithstanding] the systemic abuse by the SPLA of its own citizens…a climate of opinion developed among many aid workers that they were collectively involved in a struggle against the Arab regime in Khartoum." Young, *Civil War*, 46.

[37] Cockett, *Sudan*, 143–167; Young, *Civil War*, 36–63.

the Nuba Mountains as "genocide," for example, was deliberate sensationalism in order to bandwagon on the attention toward contemporary genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda.[38]

What was obvious was that northern rule was widely loathed in the south, and that Khartoum employed punishing tactics such as mass bombardment. However, the insurgency and its foreign backers went beyond such tactics to explicitly target Islamic identity. Former American leader Jimmy Carter—an earnest but unsuccessful mediator—noted that Washington's hostility toward Khartoum stemmed from antipathy toward Islam.[39] Meanwhile, insurgent leader John Garang's long record of mass imprisonments, bloody internal purges, and communal attacks were studiously downplayed if at all noticed; he was instead widely lionized as a generational visionary.

Ingaz latched onto southern dissidence against Garang's skulduggery by hinting that his unionist secularism stood in the way of a clean break between north and south: his removal, it was intimated, would enable both Islamist northerners and secessionist southerners to settle their differences Subsequent mutinies were led by many of the Liberation Army's founders: Kerubino Bol and Arok Arok from Garang's Dinka people; William Nyuon and Riek Machar from the often-rivalled Nuer; and veteran politicians Lam Akol and Joseph Oduho. This contest escalated into vicious, often communal, conflict in the famine-hit Ayod region, which the mutineers first misruled before Garang's forces recaptured it, killing Oduho and burning alive Arok's family. None of this dissuaded Washington, whose regional point man George Moose was a schoolmate of Garang,[40] from singling the Ingaz regime out in "human rights" criticisms.[41]

To this was added suspicion over foreign Islamists. The Sudanese regime—whose *éminence grise* Hassan Turabi preached a modern and radical form of state-led renewal—had an open-door policy for mostly Muslim militants and activists. He hosted several conferences that brought together a bewildering cast of the emerging world order's dissidents, Islamists from Algeria to the Philippines, and other "revolutionaries." Rather than a grand conspiracy, these conferences served as a forum for often disparate elements to vent their frustrations.[42]

But most of Khartoum's neighbours balked at its internationalism as a potential destabilizer. Eritrea and Uganda were galled at Khartoum's support of their Muslim rivals Mohammad Arafa, Juma Oris, Ali Bamuze, and Jamil Mukulu. There was more than just religious solidarity: Ingaz tried to mediate between Asmara and its Islamist opponent Arafa, but also responded to Ugandan support for its opposition by backing the decidedly non-Muslim Ugandan cult led by Joseph Kony. Relations with Cairo were frosty since its own insurgent leaders, Ayman Zawahiri and Mostafa Hamza, sheltered in Sudan. Saudi Arabia, with whom its financiers had once been close, balked at Ingaz's criticism of the Gulf War and shelter for its fugitive dissident Osama Bin Laden.The massacre of a pro-Saudi Salafi subsect at a Khartoum mosque was never satisfactorily solved. Yet it was the

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[38] One involved critic of the Ingaz regime later admitted to the mischaracterization of the Nuba campaign as a "genocide" and the political motives behind it: Alex de-Waal, "Writing Human Rights and Getting it Wrong," *Boston Review*, June 6, 2016, https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/alex-de-waal-writing-human-rights/.

[39] Edgar O'Ballance, *Sudan, Civil War and Terrorism, 1956–1999* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Limited, 2000), 180.

[40] Burr and Collins, *Revolutionary Sudan*, 124. Both Garang and Moose earned their undergraduate degrees from Grinnell College in Iowa.

[41] Donald Petterson, *Inside Sudan: Political Islam, Conflict, and Catastrophe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999). The author was the American ambassador to Sudan, and thus the liaison for these criticisms, in the 1990s.

[42] Willow Berridge, *Hasan al-Turabi: Islamist Politics and Democracy in Sudan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

United States who decisively marshalled Sudan's neighbours and insurgents into a coalition.[43] In spring 1993, mediation by Nigerian leader Augustus Aikhomu was sabotaged at the last minute when Garang rushed in from Washington to overrule his own deputy Salva Kiir,[44] heralding five years of an undisguised American onslaught against Khartoum.

The regime proved more efficient in internal than foreign affairs, drawing on a substantial groundswell of student activists, soldiers, preachers, bureaucrats, and diplomats. Unlike earlier sectarian parties, claims to universalism initially brought loyalists from across Muslim Sudan, who played versatile roles from administration to diplomacy to warfare. A case in point was Mohamed Amin Khalifa, an Islamist army retiree of Berti ethnicity who became parliamentary speaker and led talks with the insurgency. Bashir was flanked by Zubair Saleh, who led the Kordofan campaign and diplomacy abroad, and Ibrahim Shamseddine, a restless enforcer who led the southern campaign along with Ingaz generals such as army commanders Hassaan Abdel Rahman and Ibrahim Sulaiman, military spymasters Kamal Mukhtar and Zakaria Adam, and corps commander Hussaini Abdel Karim. Party veteran Ibrahim Sanousi founded a paramilitary corps: though more disciplined than previous militias, its ideology attracted more foreign scrutiny.

Student militants Nafi Nafi and Qutbi Mahdi led security alongside Bashir's military lieutenants Abdel Rahim Hussain, Tayeb Sikha, and Bakri Saleh. Proteges of Turabi chiefly handled diplomacy: these included Ali Taha, a former speaker; Ali Mohamed, who controlled Ingaz funds; Ghazi Atabani, Bashir's nephew; Mustafa Ismail, who organized internationalist conferences; Fadlullah Abu Qusaisa, who dispensed aid with Islamic propagation; and his parliamentary liaison, Islamist southerner Radi Jabir. Skilful proponents of southern counterinsurgency, Jabir, Abu Qusaisa, and Mukhtar were killed in a plane crash while negotiating with southern politician Lam Akol.

Flirtation with Akol indicated the regime's acceptance of outsiders where expedient. Outliers in the radical regime included George Kongor, Bashir's southern deputy whose brother-in-law Arop Achier was a southern governor and convert to Islam; Ali Fertak, a southern chieftain and veteran counter-insurgent who joined Ingaz; Abdel Rahim Hamdi, a privatizing Ingaz financier with links to the Gulf;[45] career diplomat and foreign minister Hussain Abu Saleh; Abul Qassem Ibrahim, veteran of a previous military regime who now governed the east; and Fateh Orwa, whose links with American intelligence the regime sought to exploit in back-channel diplomacy.

These machinations, if liable to catalyze internal competition, ensured an effective coalition against outsiders. Though a far cry from the excesses of the early 1990s, the regime remained watchful against potential threats: in 1994 Bashir's predecessor, and Turabi's brother-in-law, Sadiq Mahdi was put under house arrest for an alleged coup, and in fall 1995 the regime cracked down on protest at Khartoum. In 1996, a dubious election—widely boycotted, with politically negligible athlete Abdel Majeed Kigab as runner-up—confirmed Bashir's power and formalized Turabi as speaker. He was flanked by Alison Magaya, a former corps commander from the south whose nephew, Isaiah Rhiani, continued to run a fiefdom in Western Equatoria: the Ingaz regime was quite open to coopting such Christians that collaborated with its project.

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[43] Burr and Collins, *Revolutionary Sudan*, attends at length, if with characteristic invective, to these regional quarrels.

[44] Ann Lesch and Steven Wondu, *Battle for Peace in Sudan: An Analysis of the Abuja Conferences, 1992–1993* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000).

[45] Harry Verhoeven, *Water, Civilisation, and Power in Sudan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 93.

In the battlefield, corps commanders Hussaini and Jafar Mahgoub advanced in Kordofan and Eastern Equatoria during spring 1994, before a surprise swathe through international borders enabled the army to outflank rebel commander Samuel Kabbashi at Western Equatoria in early 1995. But these advances rarely lasted long, and a major counterattack by insurgent commander Atem Aguang toward Juba in fall 1995 was only narrowly beaten off as the regime scrambled to replenish its soldiers and "mujahideen." Khartoum's reliance on transactional deals with such powerplayers as Machar, Bol, and Awad Jago from the south, and Mohamed Kafi from the Nuba Mountains was tactfully useful but inherently unstable: Nyuon, for instance, rejoined the insurgency before he was killed.

Unintended effects from the war pervaded beyond the south: in Darfur, militias empowered by their counterinsurgency role feuded with ethnic minorities over resources, while in the east, insurgent commander Abdelaziz Hilu led an Eritrean-backed revolt. An early wedge in Darfur, where the Ingaz regime originally had some support for its universalism, came when veteran Darfuri Islamist Shafi Ahmed was sidelined in favor of the northerner Ghazi Atabani as the ruling party's Secretary-General. Dissident Islamists in Darfur would increasingly see themselves as frozen out by northerners, a factor that was to have dire consequences in both Khartoum and the periphery.

Bashir improvised, vainly trying to win over neighbours and appealing to regional mediation to isolate Garang. This mediation, led by the hostile Eritrean minister Yemeane Gebreab, yielded little satisfaction for Ingaz, calling for secularism with a standing option for southern separatism. Other neighbours opposed secession but also Islamism, thus echoing Garang's stance, and relations unsurprisingly soured. Barely had the ink dried on a Libyan-brokered agreement between Zubair Saleh and Ugandan Prime Minister Eriya Katsegaya when renewed conflict prompted them to sever ties. Most damaging was a hit on Hosni Mubarak by his Sudan-based opposition during a summit at Addis Ababa in summer 1995: this galled both Sudan's northern and southeast neighbours, who threw their weight behind the opposition.

Bashir and Turabi frantically tried to mend fences, stamping control over security and evicting both Bin Laden and Zawahiri. Neither this nor repeated outreach to the United States prevented its foreign rivals from setting up an insurgent coalition around Garang, supported by American-backed army defectors and sectarian party leaders Sadiq Mahdi and Osman Mirghani. In December 1996, Mahdi's unlikely escape from house arrest, even as Turabi was visiting for a family wedding, marked the start of a renewed American-incited offensive against Khartoum in the late 1990s.

By contrast, seasoned American irritant Muammar Qaddhafi of Libya won regional plaudits when he deferred to an international court over the Aozou Strip. Qaddhafi sent a former prime minister, Abdul Ati Obeidi, to stake his claim, but when Judge Robert Jennings accepted Chadian delegate Abderrahmane Dadi's argument, Libya quietly ended two decades of Aozou occupation in 1994.

This withdrawal from prior adventurism was partly motivated by regime consolidation that particularly favored Qaddhafi's family and clan alliances. Senior lieutenants in security included his brother-in-law and spymaster Abdullah Senussi; his clansmen the Gaddaf al-Dam brothers, Mohamed Majzoub, and Fezzan Governor-General Massoud Abdel Hafiz; occasional Prime Minister Buzaid Dorda; and Moussa Koussa, who juggled international diplomacy with remorseless repression against dissent.[46] The military was controlled under loyalists Defense Minister Abu-Bakr

[46] Luis Martinez, *The Libyan Paradox* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 92–95.

Jabr, Ali Fitouri, and Abdel Fatah Younis. Another former officer, the outspoken former Prime Minister Abdessalam Jalloud, was sidelined as a potential dissident. This closely entwined elite was rounded off with technocrats like occasional Prime Ministers Abdul Ati Obeidi and Abdel Majid Qaoud. Qaddhafi fiddled endlessly with experiments that officially aimed to increase public representation while practically doing quite the opposite.

Revolt was Qaddhafi's principal preoccupation. Of early concern were disgruntled officials: a defected foreign minister, Mansour Kikhia, was assassinated, while American-coopted former general Khalifa Haftar entered into a brief partnership with an exile group led by Mohamed Magarief. This network claimed a coup attempt from officers of the sprawling Warfalla clan, led by Muftah Qarroum, in fall 1993.[47] In response, Qaddhafi's Warfalla lieutenant Fitouri ostracized the clan's stronghold of Bani Walid. Qaddhafa commander Sayyid Mohammed Gaddaf al-Dam set up a "Social Leadership" that sought to control Libya's historically assertive clans.[48]

Like his neighbours in North Africa, Qaddhafi was soon faced with an Islamist insurgency, led by Afghanistan veterans Abdelhakim Sadiq Belhaj and Fathi Hattab, with strong roots in the east. Though casually linked to insurgencies in both Algeria and Egypt, they vocally opposed the indiscriminate violence epitomized by Algeria's Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) and instead repeatedly tried to assassinate Qaddhafi. Only when their cover was blown were they drawn into the battlefield around Darna by Ahmed Gaddaf al-Dam. Regime repression peaked in summer 1996 when Senussi and Koussa massacred over a thousand prisoners at a Tripoli dungeon. Like other North African Islamists, Libyan insurgents rallied support from the diaspora in Europe—where their actions were not unknown to at least British intelligence—as well as finding refuge in Sudan and testing the initial cordiality between Tripoli and Khartoum.[49] Qaddhafi would increasingly shed revolutionary pretensions in favor of policies that more closely resembled the pro-American autocrats of North Africa.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir

No region more than Afghanistan and Pakistan had been identified with the Muslim internationalism of the 1980s, and yet by the mid-1990s it was in turmoil. India's savage crackdown on the Kashmiri insurgency unprecedentedly militarized the region, while cyclical power struggles between various political parties, the military, and the bureaucracy precluded an effective Pakistani response. Meanwhile the vaunted "mujahideen" win at Kabul had quickly descended into rounds of bitter internecine conflict, principally between the two major factions Jamiat-e Islami, who held power, and Hizb-e Islami, who led the opposition.

This mayhem had little to do with Washington except insofar as a tamed Russia and an increasingly pro-West India colored perceptions of a threat in Pakistan's nuclear program and regional

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[47] Wolfram Lacher, "A Most Irregular Army: The Rise of Khalifa Haftar's Libyan Arab Armed Forces," Stifftung Wissenschaft und Politik Working Paper, November 2020, 7.

[48] Peter Cole, "Loyalism in a Time of Revolution," in Peter Cole and Brian McQuinn, eds., *The Libyan Revolution and its Aftermath* (London: Hurst, 2015), 292; Wolfram Lacher, *Libya's Fragmentation: Structure and Process in Violent Conflict* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 70–72. While Cole's informants emphasize the harshness of the treatment of Bani-Walid, a contrary claim in Alison Pargeter's *Tribes and Politics* claims that the regime adopted a softer outsourced method as compared to other revolts, given Warfalla importance.

[49] Camille Tawil gives the best overall account of the North African insurgents, including in Libya in Kumayl al-Ṭawīl, *Al-Qāʿida wa-Akhawātuhā: Qiṣṣat al-Jihādiyyīn al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Saqi, 2007).

Muslim militancy. Hizb emir Hekmatyar was a special target: his group was the most internationalist of several such "mujahideen" groups, and flaunted a particular defiance toward the West.

Though Hizb retained a considerable private network in Pakistan, perceptions that it was their proxy were largely outdated and in the mid-1990s Islamabad explored links with other Afghan groups.[50] This was partly because of the mayhem caused by a revolt led by Hekmatyar and Hezbe Wahdat leader Abdul Ali Mazari against Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat regime in Kabul. Wahdat demanded a quarter of government seats for Shias, and exchanged ethnosectarian atrocities with a rival militia led by Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf and Sher Alam Ibrahimi. Hizb's pretext was Jamiat's coalition with Abdul Rashid Dostum, who had recently defected from the communists and carved out a near-feudal confederation of largely Turkic militia leaders under the umbrella of his Junbish-e Milli network in Afghanistan's north.

The retroactive perception that this conflict was an ethnic war on an unusually Tajik-led government was incorrect: most Pashtun "mujahideen" initially supported Rabbani, and saw Hekmatyar as an inflammatory upstart. Pashtun preacher Nasrullah Mansur had arranged an unconvincing parliamentary election for Rabbani shortly before his own murder, while Arsala Rahmani Daulat and Jalaluddin Haqqani were among the leading Pashtun commanders who refrained from supporting Hizb.[51] Nor was ideology the issue: little separated Hizb and Jamiat on this count—both in fact supported Tajikistan's Islamists even as they fought each other in Afghanistan. A recognition of Afghanistan's spiral brought a rare accord between Islamabad, Riyadh, and Tehran in spring 1993, when Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif mediated a deal that brought in Hekmatyar as Rabbani's prime minister and pointedly excluded Dostum. Yet the bitter rivalry between Hekmatyar and defence minister Ahmad Shah Massoud precluded regime control outside Kabul, where instead autonomous militias of various colors held sway.

In the south, militia competition left hundreds dead at Kandahar; in Helmand, a leftist holdover, Khano Mohammad, was ousted by "mujahideen" commander Rasul Akhundzada. In fall 1993, more sustained conflict kindled in the north. Dostum's vassal Rasul Pahlawan competed with Herat's autonomous corps commander Ismail Khan, who ruled the west with considerable efficiency.[52] Jamiat commander Atta Nur challenged Dostum for Mazar-i-Sharif, while in the northeast the Tajikistan war's effects spilled over to provoke intermittent fighting between Islamist loyalist Ameer Chughai and Junbish commander Abdul Rauf Baigi.[53]

Matters reached a head in the winter of 1993–94, when Hekmatyar and Mazari cut an unlikely deal with Dostum and Rabbani's predecessor Sibghatullah Mujaddidi in a coup attempt. Having flayed his foes' reliance on Junbish, Hekmatyar now joined them in an attack on Kabul that hastened his own downfall. In the six-month battle that ensued, Hizb fragmented and instead relied on a notoriously brutal mercenary, Faryadi Zardad. In the north, Hizb commanders Juma Hamdard and

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[50] Ibrahim Moiz, *The True Story of the Taliban: Emirate and Insurgency, 1994–2021* (Selangor: The Other Press, 2024), 426–31.

[51] Moiz, *The True Story of the Taliban*, 37–46.

[52] Neamatollah Nojoumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Antonio Giustozzi, *Afghanistan: The Problems of Creating a New Afghan Army - and the Critical Dangers of Failure!* (International Industrial Information Ltd, 2002).

[53] Michael Bhatia and Mark Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict: Armed Groups, Disarmament and Security in a Post-War Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

Nasim Mahdi joined Junbish in attacks on Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif. Adding to the misery was conflict not only between unlikely Hizb and Junbish bedfellows, but their opponents: Kunduz saw recurrent conflict between Tajik commander Mir Alam and Pashtun sheriff Mirza Mohammad.

Islamist principle was increasingly giving way to opportunism. In hostility to Hizb and an assumption that Pakistan had enabled its attack, Jamiat shed previous reservations to ally with India and Russia, ignoring its own roots to increasingly adopt their language of an Islamist threat. Iran harboured enough misgivings about Pakistan to join this coalition, whose effects reached beyond Afghanistan. In 1994, an attempt by Pakistan's United Nations envoy Iqbal Akhund to draw international condemnation against India's Kashmir occupation was unexpectedly sabotaged by his Iranian counterpart Sirous Nasseri, whose government had been courted by New Delhi.[54]

Yet Pakistan was too riddled with factionalism to attempt the sort of manipulation that had characterized the military rule of the 1980s. The residue of that rule was an ambiguous division of authority between the presidency, then held by the capable but autocratic Ghulam Ishaq, and the prime minister, as well as the entry of state institutions such as the military and judiciary into their rivalry. These often farcical struggles precluded any sustained attempt at foreign policy, which were instead autonomously taken over by competing networks within the military or government.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (1990–93) had originally come to power with the support of Ishaq and the military, but fell out in the mid-1990s. In spring 1993, Ishaq ousted him in favor of placeholder Balakh Sher Mazari, only for Chief Justice Nasim Shah to reverse the move within days. With the battle lines drawn, Sharif tried to reassert control over his stronghold of Punjab, where his loyalist premier Ghulam Haider Wyne had been ousted and replaced in a party revolt by Manzoor Wattoo. Ishaq and Sharif tried to appeal to the army, whose exasperated commander Abdul Waheed Kakar replaced both in July 1993. A technocratic regime was set up by Wasim Sajjad and World Bank veteran Moeenuddin Qureshi to supervise a barely attended election, won by Sharif's rival Benazir Bhutto. Having mended fences with the military, and with her lieutenant Farooq Leghari in the presidency, she had a promising base to start her second term, which instead came to be embroiled in internecine conflict.

In Karachi, hard-charging Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar, one of the few generals loyal to the ruling People's Party, set out to stamp out the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. Led from a London exile by Altaf Hussain and on the ground by Imran Farooq, the group was Bhutto's primary provincial rival in her Sindh stronghold. The establishment had already fallen out with Muttahida, supporting a breakaway led by Afaq Ahmed and Azeem Tariq; the latter's murder during talks ensured that Muttahida would remain split. The People's Party also countered opposition in other provinces: in 1994, Aftab Sherpao engineered the dismissal of Peshawar's oppositionist premier Pir Sabir Shah, and in 1995 the dangerously free-wheeling Punjab premier Wattoo—whose defection had been so key in undermining Bhutto's predecessor—was ejected.

Coupled with recurrent corruption allegations in which Bhutto's husband Asif Zardari was a favored target, neither government nor opposition inspired confidence. Along with the military, Islamist groups often tried to fill the vacuum: they included organized legalist groups such as the Jamaat-e-Islami party led by Qazi Hussain Ahmad, but also disparate groups galvanized by neglect

[54] Moiz, *The True Story of the Taliban*, 433–435; Iftikhar Gilani, "Saudis follow Iran's 1994 somersault on Kashmir at OIC," *Anadolu Agency*, February 11, 2020, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/opinion-saudis-follow-iran-s-1994-somersault-on-kashmir-at-oic/1730770.

or misrule in the periphery. In 1994, a Malakand preacher, Sufi Mohammad, led a brief revolt calling for Islamic law. This was approved by Governor-General Khurshid Ali Khan but, in what would become a familiar pattern, its implementation proved trickier. In fall 1995, discontented Islamist general Zaheerul Islam Abbasi was jailed for a coup plot after Qari Saifullah Akhtar, a shadowy Islamist militant with links to the military, turned informant. A less obviously political fringe among religious groups regularly traded sectarian assaults in southeast and northwest Pakistan.[55]

In this climate, little could be done about Kashmir, where Pakistan's initial strategy of bleeding the Indian occupation by "mujahideen" groups until a decisive encounter had been indefinitely postponed. This was all the more tragic given systematic brutality: rape and periodic massacres abounded, with the occupation handled by Indian statist hardliners like spymaster Girish Saxena and military commander Kotikalapudi Rao who oversaw a number of crackdowns in 1993–94. An insurgent council founded at Muzaffarabad by Mahmood Ahmed Sagar included respected Islamist ideologue Ali Musa Gilani, Yasin Malik of the venerable Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Kashmir's Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and others, but exercised little control over operations. Often autonomous commanders in the field pursued desperate tactics. Basharat Raza and Harun Mast Gul were among several commanders who holed themselves up in sanctuaries. Links to both Pakistani Islamists and senior Afghan commanders such as Hekmatyar, Daulat, and Haqqani did not translate into control as India tightened its grip.

It was Gilani's personal rather than formal links that influenced the most cohesive militants, Hizbul Mujahideen led by Abdul Majeed Dar, who also leant on support from Afghan Hizb commander Khalid Faruqi. India's disproportionately violent campaign managed to kill several leading commanders—Muhammad Maqbool Elahi and Muhammad Shams-ul-Haq of Hizbul Mujahideen, Raza and Shabbir Siddiqui of the Liberation Front—without pacifying the valley. The occupation increasingly outsourced its crackdown to collaborators such as Kuka Parray, who gaily abused their position against other Kashmiris and contributed to the mayhem in the valley.[56]

Coupled with increasing religious persecution in India fuelled by the far-right Hindu nativism of the Bharatiya Janata Party, many militants broke away to attack on the Indian mainland. Some were linked to Islamists, such as Qari Akhtar's Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami, a very fragmented group with autonomous wings across several regional countries. But others had little to do with these networks of "jihad": a spree of bomb attacks, killing over two hundred and fifty people, were planned by notorious mafioso Dawood Ibrahim to "avenge" months of attacks on Muslims in Mumbai.

India's accusation that Pakistan "exported jihad" was an easy buzzword in the emerging international climate,[57] and when Pakistani spymaster Javed Nasir sent weapons to Bosnia, he was

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[55] Hasan Askari-Rizvi, *Military, State, and Society in Pakistan* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000); Hein Kiessling, *Faith, Unity, Discipline: The ISI of Pakistan* (London: Hurst, 2016); Amir Rana, *The A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2004).

[56] On the politics of Kashmiri militancy, see Saul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[57] Among an avalanche of Indian literature to this effect—often amplified by dissident or secularist Pakistanis—see Sushant Sareen, *The Jihad Factory: Pakistan's Islamic Revolution in the Making* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2005); Arif Jamal, *Shadow War: The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir* (New York: Melville House, 2009); and Ved Prakash, *Terrorism in Northern India: Jammu and Kashmir and the Punjab* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2008). Similarly to the Sudanese insurgency, this mixture of mass, sensationalist reportage on "jihad" by writers sympathetic to hostile foreign states and dissident secularists ensured a massive echo chamber, which would soon be uncritically adopted by

forced out under American pressure against Islamists. In fact, this was largely unsuccessful, not least because there were several competing Islamist camps in the Pakistani officer corps, and a purge by Nasir's successor Javed Ashraf Qazi served only to weaken his agency's regional links.

This did little to help curtail steady patterns of fragmentation among militants with whom Pakistani intelligence had links. When Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front leader Yasin Malik backed Pakistani diplomacy on Kashmir, he was expelled along with much of the group by its combative founder Amanullah Khan, whose remaining loyalists fought to the end at Srinagar. The revolt slowly lost steam and an improvised election returned India's vassal Farooq Abdullah to Srinagar as the occupation's public face.

Afghanistan's war was meanwhile radically changed with the mobilization of the Taliban movement. Based on conservative Deobandi student networks, it emerged in Kandahar, where governance had collapsed amid militia fragmentation and friction between Governor Gul Agha Sherzai, corps commander Naqibullah Gul, and sheriff Ustaz Abdul Halim. Local Islamic courts, which often filled the vacuum, militarized under the leadership of "mujahideen" veterans such as Mullah Umar Mujahid, local "mujahideen" leaders Mohammad Rabbani and Yar Mohammad Akhund, military commanders Aminullah Burjan and Mohammad Marhum, and treasurer Ihsanullah Ihsan who would play a key role in the movement's early impetus. When in fall 1994 Pakistani Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar arrived to inspect a transit route through Afghanistan, he was waylaid by commanders at Spin Boldak, including leading Hizb commander Sarkatib Atta, only to be rescued by Taliban militants who proceeded to overrun Kandahar.

Babar, a veteran intelligence officer called Amir Sultan Tarar, known by his *nom de guerre* Colonel Imam, and much of the private merchant class on the Afghan-Pakistani border enthusiastically backed the Taliban, who also attracted defections from "mujahideen" commanders as Mullah Naqibullah, Abdul Salam Rocketi, and Raees Abdul Wahid. Their takeover of the south met only brief opposition from Abdul Wahid's rival, Helmand governor Abdul Ghaffar Akhundzada. In the southeast highlands, treasurer Ihsan won over a formidable network of more prominent "mujahideen" commanders who shared Taliban background and worldview. Prime Minister Arsala Rahmani Daulat, who had formally replaced the rebellious Hekmatyar but resided outside Kabul; Justice Minister Jalaluddin Haqqani and his brother corps commander Ibrahim Umari; and the family of former speaker Nasrullah Mansur joined the movement.[58]

The Jamiat regime initially applauded a Taliban offensive against their mutual rival Hizb in the winter of 1995.[59] Ghazni governor Taj Mohammad, also known as Qari Baba, was beaten after ignoring Kabul's orders to cooperate against Hizb, before Hizb commander Amanullah Khugman suffered mass defections against the Taliban march on Wardak. With Hekmatyar out of the way, his leading confederate Abdul Ali Mazari and opponent Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Massoud separately negotiated with Taliban leaders Burjan and Rabbani. Burjan's talks with Mazari were interrupted by an attack from a Wahdat rival, Mohammad Akbari: in the ensuing confusion, Taliban

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Western observers. On inaccurate, often hostile, coverage of Muslim politics in Afghanistan, see Ibrahim Moiz, "Fundamental errors," *layyin1137*, April 24, 2020, https://layyin1137.wordpress.com/2020/04/24/fundamental-errors/.

[58] Moiz, *The True Story of the Taliban*, 47–68.

[59] Hekmatyar's memoir indignantly accuses Jamiat and Taliban of a joint conspiracy against him. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, *Secret Plans, Open Faces: From the Withdrawal of the Russians to the Fall of the Coalition Government*, trans. Sher Taizi (Peshawar: University of Peshawar, 2004).

soldiers killed Mazari before Akbari and Massoud drove them from Kabul. Now that he no longer needed them as a counterweight to the Hizb, Massoud declared the Taliban to be Pakistani lackeys and reaped major regional support from India, Iran, and Russia.

Inside Afghanistan, Jamiat's most potent counterweight to Taliban progress was Herat commander Ismail Khan. Incited by fleeing militias and unwilling to disarm against these upstarts, he fought them to a standstill, killing their military commander Marhum. But this early success disguised serious rifts: when Ismail attempted to finish off his quarry, his coalition instead disintegrated and he was chased back to, and evicted from, Herat in September 1995. A galled Jamiat attacked Kabul's Pakistani Embassy, prompting Islamabad to throw its support behind the rebels. A frontal Taliban attack on Kabul only ended when corps commander Abdul Qayum Mashar was slain.

1995–96 was spent in conflict between Rabbani's Iran-backed Jamiat regime and Mullah Umar's Pakistan-backed Taliban insurgents, who offered contrasting implementations of Islamic governance. So dysfunctional was the regime that even Prime Minister Massoud favored reconciliation: Taliban governance was seen as fair if severe, and was given a thrust in spring 1996 when *'ulamā'* at Kandahar declared Mullah Umar "Commander of the Believers." Some Islamists were unconvinced: Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami emir Qazi Hussain, an in-law of Hekmatyar, managed the rare feat of personally reconciling Hizb and Jamiat into an Ikhwani coalition against the insurgents in Kabul. Hekmatyar returned as prime minister, while his spymaster Waheedullah Sabawoon shared military command with Massoud.

This coalition ended when in September 1996 Burjan mounted a sudden attack on the eastern city of Jalalabad. Its neutral council led by "mujahideen" commanders Abdul Qadeer Arsala, Fazal Haq Mujahid, and Engineer Mahmud had invited Osama Bin Laden from Sudan and offered to mediate in the Jamiat-Taliban conflict, but disintegrated at the sudden Taliban attack. From Jalalabad, Burjan galloped toward Kabul: though he was killed outside the city, Rabbani's outflanked regime was forced to escape to Massoud's Panjshir stronghold. In their wake, Mullah Mohammad Rabbani became Taliban prime minister in a regime led from Kandahar by the reclusive Mullah Umar. This made a sanguinary start when Burjan's second-in-command Abdur Razzaq Akhundzada ignored United Nations protection of former Soviet vassal Mohammad Najibullah, who was castrated and publicly hanged.

This execution of a fellow Soviet vassal alarmed Dostum, who collaborated with Massoud to ambush Abdur Razzaq Akhundzada's pursuit. The emergent coalition between the north's largest groups—Jamiat-e Islami and Junbish-e Milli—which had first seized Kabul in 1992, now proved a bulwark of opposition to Taliban rule. While Massoud and Baigi manned the northeast front, in the northwest, Ismail Khan joined his rivals the Pahlawan family, whose leading scion Rasul Pakistan had attempted to buy off before his murder. Taliban commander Abdul Ghani Baradar staunched raids from Iran by Ismail's lieutenant Allauddin Khan, but the Jamiat-Junbish partnership blocked off the north.[60] The northern front would prove a hard nut for the new Afghan regime to crack, but international diplomacy proved harder, not least because of the social severity of Taliban rule, an especially stark contrast to international norms of the day. In the late 1990s, Afghanistan would replace Sudan as the much-maligned epitome of the Islamist threat.

Pakistan's own regime changed in fall 1996. The tussle between Bhutto and her rivals had taken a new turn when her more radical brother Murtaza, an insurgent during the 1980s, returned

[60] On the Taliban's advance to power between 1994 and 1996, see Moiz, *The True Story of the Taliban*, 47–89.

from exile and contested her leadership of the People's Party. His assassination prompted the end of her term (1993–96) when Farooq Leghari unexpectedly used his presidential prerogative to dismiss her and tasked Parliamentary Speaker Meraj Khalid with overseeing a new election. Like the previous election, its scant participation reflected profound public cynicism with the cyclical squabbles that had marked Pakistani politics in the mid-1990s.

Conclusion

"Islamic fundamentalism" slowly emerged in the mid-1990s as a major concern of the United States, then identified more with Muslim defiance of the international order than Islamic pietism. This prompted the United States to mount concerted attempts at undermining such contrasting regimes as Baath Iraq and Ingaz Sudan, primarily through regional isolation and support for their insurgents. The most direct American interventions, in Somalia and the Levant, were far too skewed in the favor of one party to resolve the conflicts, let alone achieve their aim of confirming American preeminence as a diplomatic and military hegemon.

American attention to Libya and Pakistan was focused mainly on limiting harm to a favored neighbour, an aim made easier by a progressive corrosion of internal legitimacy. Washington largely avoided dipping its toes in the civil wars in Afghanistan and Yemen, viewing them primarily through the lenses of its favored regional vassals. As Bill Clinton completed his first term in office, it was clear that the United States perceived a threat from the Muslim world, though was yet to define its precise contours, and preferred to work through local collaborators, with only brief bursts of direct intervention. But the seeds of anti-Islamism sown in the mid-1990s would see the United States extend its intervention further and further afield.

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