

'Russian offer rejection proved disastrous'

By [Global Research](#)

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Washington—Afghanistan would have been a peaceful nation with good governance if Pakistan had agreed to a Russian offer in 1989 for the former Communist regime to share power with mujahideen, according to the English translation of ex-ambassador Abdul Salam Zaeef's book.

The book that hit the US market was originally written in Pashto and later translated and edited by Alex Strick van Linschoten and Feliz Kuehn. Eminent American scholar on Afghanistan Barnett Rubin has written a foreword to the book. For thirty years Afghanistan has cast a long, dark shadow over world events, but it has also been marked by pivotal moments that could have brought peace and changed world history," says the book "My Life with the Taliban." One such moment occurred in february 1989, just as the last Soviet troops were leaving Afghanistan. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze had flown into Islamabad, the first visit to that country by a senior Soviet official.

"He came on a last-ditch mission to try to persuade Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to agree to a temporary sharing of power between the Communist regime in Kabul and the Afghan mujahideen. He hoped to prevent a civil war and lay the groundwork for a peaceful, final transfer of power to the mujahideen," Zaeef writes.

"By then the Soviets were in a state of panic. They ironically shared the CIA's analysis that Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah would last only a few weeks after the Soviet troops had departed. The CIA got it wrong - Najibullah was to last three more years, until the eruption of civil war forced him to take refuge in the UN compound in April 1992. The ISI refused to oblige Shevardnadze."

The ISI wanted to get Gulbadin Hekmatyar, one of the seven disparate mujahideen leaders and its principal protg, into power in Kabul. The CIA had also urged the ISI to stand firm against the Soviets. It wanted to avenge the US humiliation in Vietnam and celebrate a total Communist debacle in Kabul - no matter how many Afghan lives it would cost. A political compromise was not in the plans of the ISI and the CIA.

"I was summoned to meet Shevardnadze late at night and remember a frustrated but visibly angry man, outraged by the shortsightedness of Pakistan and the US and the clear desire of both governments to humiliate Moscow.

He went on to evoke an apocalyptic vision of the future of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the region. His predictions of the violence to come turned out to

be dead right," the author recalls."—NNI

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