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**THE SOVIET UNION  
AND SOUTH ASIA**

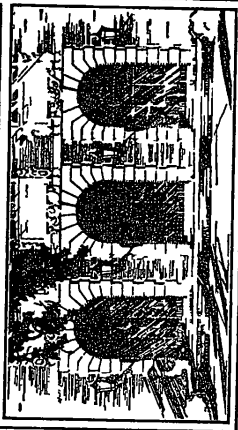
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The Soviet Union  
and South Asia

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## I Introduction

1985 begins the sixth year of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Those who hoped for a quick settlement and the return of Soviet forces are silent. Unless the Soviets decide to dramatically increase their forces, or expand beyond Afghanistan or — improbably — to unilaterally concede defeat and withdraw, it appears that the next five years will still find them enmeshed in a savage war of attrition.

While considerable attention has been given to the impact of the invasion on Afghanistan and on the relations between the U S S R and the United States, relatively little has been given to its impact upon Afghanistan's neighbors to the south and east — a region containing about a quarter of the world's population.<sup>1</sup> Was the Soviet invasion in support of some important regional goal? What effect will it have on the most important regional conflicts that pre-date it, especially that between India and Pakistan? What are the prospects for a major escalation of the war into Pakistan, or even of a joint Indo-Soviet move against Pakistan? Not only have these questions been submerged in the larger debate over the strategic consequences of the Soviet invasion, but it is our contention that what has passed for analysis has often been wrong. This essay first reviews Soviet regional policies and interests, including the situation in Afghanistan, and then turns to these critical questions.

## II Soviet Regional Influence

Twenty-five years ago there was virtually no important support for the Soviet Union in South Asia except for the pro-Soviet wing of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and a few ideological supporters in the Indian Congress Party. The Communist Party of Pakistan was outlawed and in any case had a small following. Russian influence in Afghanistan was competitive but marginal (even then the local communist party was sharply divided)<sup>2</sup> and there was no Soviet presence in Nepal and Ceylon. The Soviets were about to enter into a major arms deal with India — the licensed manufacture of the MiG-21 interceptor -- but Indian MiGs did not fly until 1964 and Indian defense planners had largely turned to the west after their border war with China in 1962. Indeed American and Commonwealth air forces participated in joint exercises with their Indian Air Force counterparts, India adopted some of the McNamara innovations in defense planning, and several hundred U S military personnel were stationed in India until 1965.<sup>3</sup> A large U S civilian and military presence remained in Pakistan until 1965. Pakistan then liked to term itself the most allied of allies, with strong ties to CENTO, SEATO, and a bi-lateral U S military treaty.

By 1985 the Soviets will have planted themselves firmly — and perhaps permanently — in a devastated Afghanistan. They have cordial relations with Pakistan even as they regularly accuse that state of aiding insurgents in Afghanistan. Their economic projects including a steel mill in Karachi are on schedule. The Soviet presence in Nepal, Sri Lanka,

and Bangladesh remains minimal but that certainly is not the case in India which has become closely linked to the Soviet economy and defense establishment through massive purchases of weapons often bartered by Indian-made consumer goods <sup>4</sup> The Indian Air Force is a display case of recent Soviet technology, the Navy is more than half Soviet or Polish in origin and the Indian Army is newly dependent upon the Soviet Union for armor All of this, one might add twenty-five years after a program of defense self-reliance was begun by V K Krishna Menon and Jawaharlal Nehru

Does the above picture represent a steady expansion of Soviet influence in South Asia over the past twenty-five years? Is there any substance to the Soviet boast just over twenty years ago that two billion people would be living under Communist rule by 1980?<sup>5</sup> With the significant exception of Afghanistan (on its way to becoming a Soviet Central Asian republic in all but name) it does not <sup>6</sup> Soviet influence was greater in South Asia in 1966-71, when the U S had virtually withdrawn from the region The Soviets presided over the Tashkent meeting which formally ended the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war (and received American blessings for their efforts) They found themselves supplying weapons to both India and Pakistan in 1968, and, after the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1971 they greatly increased their weapons supplies to India Some have argued that it was at this point that they realized the significance of their Far Eastern military buildup, which was used to deter China from entering the 1971 conflict on the side of Pakistan <sup>7</sup> The Soviets also floated their regional security treaty during this period, and it was given serious consideration in New Delhi, although ultimately rejected However,

they failed (as had the British and the Americans before them) to unite the two major South Asian states into a de facto alliance than might serve broader Soviet interests. And of course communist ideology remains unattractive to the South Asian states, most of all in Afghanistan where it is sustained by a massive Soviet military presence.<sup>8</sup> The present situation is not a case of more or less Soviet influence than in 1960 or 1965 or even 1970. It is a different kind of influence, more brutal, more direct, far more costly, but fixed upon the same goals.

### III Soviet Regional Interests

The interests of most states fall into one or two categories: direct and indirect. Direct interests involve relations with regions or other countries which are themselves important. Indirect interests involve third parties: state A is interested in state B because of B's relationship to C. Change the B-C relationship (or the A-C relationship) and A-B ties vanish at least as far as A is concerned.

Soviet interests in South Asia are almost all indirect in nature and strategic in objective. The obvious exception is the involvement in Afghanistan, although even that is partially explicable by Soviet concerns elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

As for India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, the Soviet connection is based on indirect strategic, not ideological, cultural, or economic considerations. In India, where the Soviets move most freely and are most enthusiastically received, there is little personal warmth or ideological fervor.

To the Soviets, India remains a bourgeois society at the top and a

pre-revolutionary quagmire at the bottom for their part, the Indians, even those with the strongest attachment to the Soviet tie (such as Indira Gandhi) do not hesitate to crack down on the Indian communists when it suits their domestic needs <sup>10</sup>

Soviet interests in South Asia are certainly not economic. Although the Indian trade and barter arrangement is convenient, the Soviets are under no compulsion to export their weapons to India nor are they dependent upon any raw materials or finished products they acquire from South Asia. They get a quantity of cheap natural gas from Afghanistan, but this hardly determined their invasion. The Soviets see no military threat from South Asia nor do any South Asian countries belong to an alliance directed against them. The Soviets were, after all, able to live in harmony with a Shah of Iran who was heavily dependent upon American weapons. They had earlier normalized their relations with Pakistan after Ayub Khan made it clear that Pakistan was not in CENTO or SEATO because of anti-Soviet reasons <sup>11</sup>. In any case, there has been virtually no serious American military presence in South Asia since 1965, yet this very period saw the greatest expansion of Soviet military and economic aid to the area.

Finally, some see the Soviet connection to India as important because of the latter's role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). While it is undoubtedly useful to the Soviets to have a friendly state once again assume importance in NAM, India is neither a showcase of Soviet technology nor a totally trustworthy partner. Cubans and others have been available for several years to express the authentic Soviet position in this and related fora.

Soviet interests in South Asia are primarily strategic in nature and

derive almost entirely from the long-standing Sino-Soviet conflict. They are thus indirect and fluctuate with the state of Sino-Soviet relations and with those between China and individual South Asian states. Nothing brings Soviet generals to New Delhi (bearing gifts of military hardware) faster than the prospect of Sino-Indian negotiations over their border dispute.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, nothing troubles the Soviets more about Pakistan than that country's continuing military and strategic tie with China, even the new American connection with Pakistan is less important. This was true even in the 1960s. American intelligence flights from Pakistan and Turkey embarrassed but did not directly threaten the Soviet Union, and such national means of verification have since been legitimized by the various SALT treaties. The Russians find it more troubling to see another major communist power exercising an independent diplomacy along or near the Soviet periphery, even if it is a diplomacy aimed at easing pressure on China itself by strengthening states with a common strategic interest.<sup>13</sup> For the Soviets, China alone or China plus Pakistan does not pose a vital threat.<sup>14</sup> However, China in combination with a large industrial power could pose such a threat. The prospect of a China-U.S.-Pakistan relationship must be seen in this broader context: not only does it strengthen an unfriendly (albeit not hostile) state that can embarrass the Soviets in Afghanistan, it is a potential link in a broader security system which would be an effective counter to Soviet power. The direct link between China and Pakistan is particularly galling: this allows direct passage between Sinkiang and Gilgit, and traverses the Karakoram only a few miles from Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor. This desolate area is the meeting place of four historic empires (the British Indian, the Persian



the Russian, and the Chinese) The Soviets must regard it as having great symbolic and strategic value, as they occupied it simultaneously with their capture of Kabul and other major Afghan cities

Compared with their sensitivity to China the growing Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean is secondary <sup>15</sup> The Soviet Union remains a land-based state, aware of, and excessively fearful of the diversity on its borders especially along the three quarters of the U S S R that lies in Asia <sup>16</sup> China represents one kind of challenge to Soviet regional domination, the fall of a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan represented another both have implications for our understanding of whether the Soviet Union seeks influence equality, hegemony or dominance in its regional relations

While the most important Soviet interests in South Asia derive from their military, ideological, and strategic concerns vis a vis China, the pursuit of as such an interest necessarily generates side effects Over a long period of time civil and military bureaucracies acquire a stake in the maintenance of the relationship, and changing it can be difficult in the face of their inertia But the Soviets have been adept at switching sides when opportunities arise and conditions alter The present structure of Soviet involvement and commitment in South Asia is vulnerable in three ways

First if Sino-Soviet relations improved neither would have as great an incentive to support what they believe to be their regional surrogates Pakistan and India Such a normalization is improbable <sup>17</sup> Somewhat more probable are two other developments One involves Soviets interests in Iran and the Persian Gulf Should the Gulf's politics become more unstable some Soviet strategists might argue that a warmer relationship

with Pakistan might pay considerable dividends in a region where there already is a major Pakistani military presence, even at the cost of strained relations with India. For the Soviets the calculation would be the relative value of India vis a vis China versus the relative value of Pakistan vis a vis the Gulf and Afghanistan. Such a closer Soviet-Pakistan relationship might just detach Pakistan from Chinese and American influence as well. The present Pakistani leadership is unlikely to subscribe to such a policy but there are those in the political community, and even within the military who have argued for closer ties to the Soviets.<sup>18</sup> From Pakistan's perspective this would also raise the prospect of delinking India from the Soviet Union. India would thus be faced with a genuine strategic dilemma. It is simply less useful than Pakistan in any grouping aimed at the Soviet Union. Yet the Chinese would have little incentive to normalize their relationship with India, except to embarrass the Soviets (the India-China and Soviet-China border disputes being very similar in origin).

The third alternative to the present structure of Soviet influence in South Asia would be an increase in regional cooperation, free from Soviet control. Were India to conclude that closer ties to Pakistan lessened its need for Soviet arms and that its own power was more than sufficient to enable it to negotiate on an equal basis with China, it might do a deal with both antagonists and emerge as a powerful regional leader free from the stigma of its Soviet military connection.

To summarize Soviet interests in South Asia are largely indirect and derived from its more important conflict with the People's Republic of China. India is one of the few countries with a live border with China.

and could be vitally important to the Soviets in case of a major conflict with the PRC <sup>19</sup> There is no evidence that the Indians have agreed to such a role (and the Soviets must be uncertain as to how useful the Indians would actually be in such a crisis) but only India and Vietnam have the capacity and motivation to assist the Soviets in balancing China Strengthening these states does not threaten any established Soviet position in South or Southeast Asia <sup>20</sup>

#### IV The Soviets in Afghanistan

It is difficult to be optimistic about negotiating the Soviets out of Afghanistan <sup>21</sup> They have repeatedly stated that Afghanistan must not only continue to pursue a foreign policy that is compatible with Soviet interests, but that the revolution (really, a coup) of 1978 must not be aborted They have been willing to pay a stiff price for their Afghan war not because they see Afghanistan as a route to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean (or even the Persian Gulf) but because Afghanistan now falls into that category of allied border state which includes Mongolia and Eastern Europe Force had to be used to save a pro-Soviet group in Afghanistan because it could not be as easily used in Poland the Soviets wanted to show those who might challenge them, especially in the WTO countries, that if pushed they would act They will not 'trade Afghanistan for Nicaragua or Cuba, but they will agree to talk indefinitely, as long as they can continue the building of an infrastructure of loyal—if not happy—Afghans This is going to take a long time, and the Soviet Union would be most pleased if outsiders were to offer guarantees that would ease the process of Sovietization <sup>22</sup> Pakistani

and Iranian support for the Mujahiddin is troublesome but the Soviets have the option of forcing even more refugees across their borders, further destabilizing these countries 23

The Sovietization of Afghanistan may take a very long time—indeed it may never be completed. The Soviets have found the Afghans to be a much tougher foe than they expected 24. From a military perspective the gradual increase in Soviet troops in Afghanistan over the past year (to about 150,000), and the adoption of large-scale search and destroy missions aimed at the destruction of crops, represents a slight change in Soviet tactics 25. But this is matched by the gradual improvement in Afghan tactics, weapons, and greater coordination between different guerilla groups. The war, after five years remains a more violent stalemate with no sign that either side will bend, let alone yield and negotiate.

While, the military and political battles continue, the Soviets will take whatever benefits they can from Afghanistan. Natural gas and mineral resources are promising, and balance some of the costs of war and occupation. So would be the use of Afghan territory by military forces which are oriented towards the Gulf, the Indian Ocean or further afield. These, however, are the perquisites of imperialism, not in this case its cause.

## V The Impact on South Asia

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, their role in the rest of South Asia was at low ebb. While the Janata government had negotiated a major arms deal with the Soviets, it had preferred Western weapons when they were available. The dominant strategic issue was India's growing military power.

vis a vis Pakistan not an anticipated Soviet invasion. Indeed, it took all South Asians by surprise, although leaders in Islamabad were warning visitors in April, 1978 that the coup was irreversible and that the Soviets had achieved a foothold in the subcontinent.

Pakistan had earlier responded to India's growing military power by embarking upon a covert nuclear program.<sup>26</sup> Yet its chief concerns were with domestic order, as the military regime led by Zia ul-Haq had not yet stabilized. But Islamabad acknowledged India's conventional military dominance, and had adjusted its own strategy along more defensive lines, as all three the Indian services had begun to embrace a more offensive-minded approach.

Despite Pakistan's relative position of weakness it had responded to Janata's moves to normalize their relations. When Janata lost power Pakistan assumed the initiative, offering a no-war pact to India.<sup>27</sup> Both Indian and Pakistan adjusted some of their policies after 1979, and have cooperated in the South Asian Regional Council (SARC) first proposed by Bangladesh.

Thus, at a general level the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has not caused any serious change in relations among the states of South Asia—excepting, of course, between Afghanistan and the rest. Afghanistan has not been invited to join SARC and all South Asian states—including India—called for the withdrawal of at least foreign forces from Afghanistan.

However, the Soviet presence in Afghanistan has jolted the 'balanced' imbalance between India and Pakistan. Some had hoped that the Soviet presence would bring the two states closer together. This has not

happened. Yet, they have not been driven into war. India has not threatened Pakistan, but it has complained loudly and frequently about Pakistan's efforts to rearm itself. Pakistanis recognize that the Indians could have done worse (and some have recently predicted an Indian escalation of Indian pressure against them) but they remain suspicious of India just as they remain apprehensive about the prospects of increased Soviet pressure from the west.<sup>28</sup>

The remainder of this essay explores these two strategic consequences of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: Pakistan's exquisite vulnerability, and India's sudden strategic irrelevance.

## VI Pakistan's Soviet Threat

Pakistan is now a state with a three-front security problem. The threat from India originates in the partition of British India in 1947. It has been extended vertically and horizontally as the Indians have developed their military infrastructure in Rajasthan and have acquired aircraft (the British Jaguar) that can penetrate to every corner of Pakistan. The second threat is internal. Pakistan has major dissident groups and regions, most notably Sindh and Baluchistan, and the military regime of Zia ul-Haq remains less than popular. Paradoxically, the most recent threat—from the Soviets or their Afghan clients—is also the oldest. It is the latest manifestation of a very old great game of imperial expansion, a game that began in the Nineteenth century, but which had virtually disappeared from public consciousness for the past twenty-five years.<sup>29</sup> Pakistan has found itself in the unenviable position of the boy who cried wolf often without much conviction—but the wolf has

arrived

The gravest threat to Pakistan is not from a single source but from a combination of external or external and internal sources. Foreign support for dissidents and Soviets or Indian forces acting in concert would present an overwhelming military problem. While Pakistan has a large and well-trained military, Indian forces are much bigger, and the Soviets have theoretically, an unlimited potential.

This image of Pakistan threatened on both fronts, and at home, has led many observers to conclude that its military situation is hopeless. Before the Soviet invasion, Indians had expected Pakistan to recognize its permanent inferiority and fit itself into an India-dominated system of regional security.<sup>30</sup> Many Pakistanis felt that they had fallen behind India in conventional arms, and this led Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to embark upon a covert nuclear program. When the Soviets moved into Afghanistan, Pakistan's strategic vulnerability was again stressed by a number of observers. They opposed military support for Pakistan on the grounds that it might provoke the Soviets to foment rebellion in Baluchistan. Many Pakistani civilians (and some in the military) threw up their hands at the prospect of resistance, and urged a policy of conciliation with the Soviet Union and even India. Finally, Pakistan continues to be criticized for failing to move more of its forces to the Durand Line, keeping them across the border from India. This is taken as evidence that Pakistan does not take the Soviet threat seriously, and is using its American aid to build up its capacity against India. A careful analysis of the actual terrain involved, the level of Soviet forces presently in Afghanistan, and the historical precedents, would indicate that Pakistan's military situation is

not as desperate as the above suggests and that the impact of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan on Pakistan has been miscalculated

First the Soviet force levels in Afghanistan are barely adequate to control the major cities and only intermittently control major road routes Soviet/Afghan airpower ranges unopposed over Afghanistan but would meet a technological equal in the PAF Some idea of the increase in Soviet forces necessary to pose a major threat to Pakistan can be gained from earlier calculations of the defensibility of the N W F P and Baluchistan The British estimated that a joint Afghan-Soviet invasion force would be required to pose a threat to India, and that it could be met with an Indian force of about the same size (five divisions) as Pakistan now has deployed along the Durand Line <sup>31</sup> Further, a major increase in enemy forces in Afghanistan then—as now—could be quickly detected and matched by a smaller increase in defensive forces Pakistan's current deployment seems reasonable if it is regarded as a forward defense force and the rest of the army as a ready reserve

Second, the combat record of the Pakistan Army is such that the Soviets could expect a stiff battle The Pakistan Army may be the best army that never won a war Its performance in the invasion of India in 1965 was excessively zealous it fought well in East Pakistan (even though demoralized and often ineptly led), and there is no evidence—despite a great deal of insinuation—that its involvement in politics since 1977 has seriously hurt its fighting spirit

Third, a direct Soviet attack on Pakistan would raise the prospect of American, Chinese, and other support A Soviet buildup of ground forces would give these and other countries sufficient opportunity to coordinate



their assistance. A rapid buildup of Soviet air units in Afghanistan would be possible but this could be quickly countered. As for increased Soviet/Afghan air strikes on Pakistan, this would be militarily ineffective and possibly politically counterproductive. Such pressure, whether on the ground or in the air, might force Pakistan to reduce its support for the Mujahiddin but there are limits to Pakistan's ability to enforce such a policy in the NWFP.

The Soviet military threat to Pakistan has been exaggerated. Pakistan has sustained its precarious security with a modest increase in its forces. What has dramatically changed is the prospects for a two-front war, with Soviet and Indian pressure applied at the same time, overwhelming Pakistan's defenses. Pakistan's reserves for the Rajasthan/Sind front are the same troops that are deployed against the Afghans and Soviets in Baluchistan. If these reserves were frozen in place, Pakistan would be at a severe military disadvantage. If one includes the prospect of internal disorder, then Pakistan's situation could become desperate. The critical question becomes, therefore, not whether the Soviets threaten Pakistan, but whether joint pressure is applied by the Soviets and the Indians.

#### VII India and Afghanistan

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan came as a considerable surprise to India which had not been told in advance of Soviet intentions. Compounding India's embarrassment, the first public statement on the problem by the new government of Indira Gandhi had to be retracted. India's polite and private suggestions to the Soviets that they withdraw have been simply ignored. In any case, the Indira Gandhi government was more concerned with

the indirect consequences of the Soviet invasion than the direct it launched a vehement campaign against U S military support for Pakistan lobbying intensively (and with some effectiveness) in Washington

This modest addition to Pakistan s weaponry was in terms of the Indo-Pakistan military balance quite significant The Indian military had embraced a first-strike (or pre-emptive strike) military doctrine over the 1970s, and had drawn selectively on the Soviet Union to fill in gaps in its inventory The Soviet invasion had, indirectly not only aided Pakistan s rearmament but put India in an embarrassing position vis a vis the Soviets

India could have managed the crisis by taking up Pakistan s offer of negotiations over arms levels, troops disposition and other security-related issues, by moving more quickly in their negotiations with China, and by accepting American offers of arms sales This would have reduced their dependency upon Soviet weapons and the need for such weapons But the military has stuck to their goal of complete dominance over Pakistan, and the 1980 arms deal with the Soviets has been followed by two others of equal or greater magnitude <sup>32</sup> India is buying the most advanced Soviet weapons, and may produce some of them in its own arms factories The Soviets have offered to let India handle the entire spare-parts production of such obsolete weapons as the MiG-21, and will allow India to manufacture the T-72 tank India defense experts remain divided over such offers they would enhance India's defense production sector, but at the cost of Soviet control over sales and transfers (the Soviets refused to allow India to sell MiG-21 spare parts to Egypt after that country cut its Soviet military ties) The technology is attractive, but the terms and political restrictions violate directly India s long-term goal of defense

production autarky

The paradox of increasing Indian dependence upon the Soviet Union at just the moment when the Soviets have entered South Asia as a military power is explained by some as one manifestation of India's client status, and by others as indication of a long-range plan in which both countries will join forces and swallow up Pakistan. These suspicions surfaced most recently during a Joint Intelligence Committee briefing and are, of course, stressed by some Pakistani strategists who have decried Indo-Soviet collusion for years.<sup>33</sup> If either of these arguments are correct—if India is a client of the Soviets or if their interests parallel the Soviets'—then the situation in South Asia is grave indeed. Ultimately, we could expect the joint pressure of these two giant states to overwhelm Pakistan and it is unlikely that Pakistan's distant friends can do much about it. The Soviets will obtain a foothold in Pakistan itself either directly, or through client states along the Afghan border. Finally, the alleged Soviet dream of a warm-water port will be fulfilled, as these client states knuckle under to Soviet demands.<sup>34</sup> For a number of reasons, these arguments do not seem plausible, and it is very unlikely that India will join with the Soviet Union in pressuring Pakistan, or risk a solo attack on Pakistan.

First, Pakistan is an irritant to India but does not pose a vital threat. India has uncovered no substantial evidence that Pakistan intends to attack it, or that it supports any of the several terrorist or insurgent movements underway in India, or even that its nuclear program would be a threat. Pakistan's rearmament makes it more difficult for India to maintain rough superiority on land and in the air, but in a long war India

would have the advantage in numbers. However, it can no longer hope for a quick victory.

Second, the Indian armed forces are themselves temporarily vulnerable. Many of the indigenously built weapons systems are no longer modern and the Indian defense industry is incapable of producing adequate replacements. Thus, India has had to turn abroad for wholesale replacement of its ageing armor force and many aircraft types. In many years its superiority over Pakistan has been about 1.6:1 in the former and 2.5:1 in the latter.<sup>35</sup> The disaster of the Golden Temple occupation (Operation Blue Star) revealed inadequate intelligence, poor civil-military coordination, and the untrustworthiness of many Sikh units. The IAF has at least twice as many Sikhs, proportionately, as the Army's 10% and must be regarded as an uncertain instrument.

Third, the alleged Soviet connection is problematic. There are several possible cases: the Soviets could ask India for assistance against Pakistan, India could ask the Soviets for assistance should they decide to rectify the Kashmir border or otherwise pressure Pakistan, and both, for different motives, could agree on a joint strategy of pressure. However, the likely Indian calculation in each of these cases probably suggests caution.

A Soviet request for Indian assistance (or, as some would put it, a request that India act on behalf of the Soviets) would be analyzed carefully in New Delhi in terms of Indian gains and losses. Any kind of Indian pressure on Pakistan runs the risk of Pakistani air retaliation, ground warfare, and foreign involvement. India would want to make certain that an initial attack on Pakistan would quickly end the war with Indian

objectives achieved. These might include complete incorporation of Kashmir and its hinterlands (such as Gilgit) and bringing a more pliable Pakistani government into power. Could Indian arms achieve such goals right now? A reading of the levels and quality of the two armed forces leads me to conclude that it is doubtful, without a substantial improvement in weapons intelligence, AWACS and probably more than passive Soviet assistance. Yet any sign of the latter risks outside assistance to Pakistan. In such a scenario, India would have only a marginal chance of success in an initial attack, which, if it failed, would leave India alone against a whole array of forces.

Yet to join with the Soviets ensures that India will be treated as a Soviet client. Even if Pakistan could be defeated the political, economic, and military costs would be high. India's relations with China and the U S would be gravely injured, and the former might identify India fully as a Soviet proxy.

Further, a joint Indo-Soviet operation, even if successful provides no guarantee against future clashes with the Soviet Union along their likely new border. Would this border be drawn at the Hindu Kush, the Durand Line, or the Indus? Would several post-Pakistani states emerge? Which of these would become Soviet, Chinese or Indian clients? What would India do if one of its clients were to become entangled with a Soviet client constructed out of the old Pakistan? In any such conflict, or in a heightened conflict with China, good relations with the U S would be essential—but these would not survive a joint Indo-Soviet operation against Pakistan. India might be tempted to join with the Soviet Union in attacking Pakistan in a situation which paralleled 1970, when Pakistan

itself was in a state of civil war and millions of refugees had fled to India. India's intervention was rapid and decisive and a pro-Indian government was put in power in the new state of Bangladesh. While Indians today are concerned about the modest growth of Pakistani power, informed Indian strategists recognize that while a weak Pakistan suits Indian interests, a broken Pakistan does not, because of the presence of Soviet forces a mere two hundred and fifty miles from Indian territory.

The third case—a Soviet attack on Pakistan—is more problematic. If the Soviets attacked Pakistani airfields and bases, or engaged in hot pursuit across the Durand Line, would India join in? Their present calculation might be as follows:

- the Soviets are an important source of weapons and political support, and must not be directly opposed as long as their actions are limited
- India must not appear to be supporting the Soviets in word or deed for fear of antagonizing the U.S., China, and Pakistan's Islamic supporters
- the critical question will be how far are the Soviets prepared to press Pakistan, and how vulnerable is Pakistan to such pressure? If it appeared that Pakistan was yielding or disintegrating, then India would calculate prospective advantages associated with its own intervention
- there is a fair chance that India might disregard its current weapons dependency and offer tacit assistance to Pakistan. The decision to support Pakistan might depend on who was in power in India, but it is a very old idea that makes good strategic sense. It may be that the Soviets will yet inadvertently push these two states to a common strategic outlook.

Our own view, discussed above, is that Pakistan's ability to resist Soviet pressure is greater than most observers have imagined. Just as a

number of predictions concerning Pakistan's imminent disintegration have not been borne out. It may be that expectations concerning Pakistan's military weaknesses will be revised. New Delhi may yet reconsider its strategy of dominance which has been disrupted by modest additions to Pakistan's weapons armed forces. Indian regional dominance may yet be achieved through a sharing of the military burden of regional defense. The alternative for India is to engage in an arms race propelled by the actions of its own major arms supplier.

#### VIII Conclusion

This essay has discussed extreme cases. These are important to consider, if only to show that they are not imminent. The real threat to Pakistan from the Soviet Union lies at a lower level than an all-out attack. A joint Indo-Soviet attack is even less likely. Pakistan's capacity to meet such threats—or at least force an attacker to greatly increase the level of force required for success—is greater than most observers have recognized. Even Pakistanis tend to exaggerate their security dilemma. The gloom that pervaded the conference rooms of Pakistani strategists five years ago was unnecessary. Pakistan remains a powerful, united state with an effective military establishment. It has no hope of winning against a concerted or long-term threat, but short of that it is more capable of protecting itself than most of us thought five years ago. This has several implications for the future of South Asia, and the Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

- 1) The Soviets entered Afghanistan because of a combination of hubris and ignorance, and, above all, to ensure that a proper ally on its border

would not fall. This may add up to a defensive motive but does not mean that the Soviets may not yet exploit Afghanistan for adventures further afield. It is unlikely that they will move in the direction of South Asia. Pakistan is a greater obstacle than any they have yet encountered and Soviet interests in South Asia are quite different than those that brought them into Afghanistan. For the Soviets, India is the regional dominant state and provides a useful balance against the Chinese. Pakistan is an irritant, but has been careful to stay out of any overtly anti-Soviet arrangement, and retains its non-aligned status.

- 2) Soviet expansionism--at least in South Asia--has been a function of the weakness of individual states. Even if Soviet ambitions were unlimited, its expansion could only march with opportunity, and the opportunities for a move in the direction of Pakistan are less than many have thought. As was the case of Afghanistan in 1978, internal vulnerability is the greatest likely source of change for Pakistan. If it can continue its very slow march towards stability and broaden the scope of political participation so as to include the many justifiably dissident groups in Pakistani society, external forces are unlikely to be effective. If it cannot, any outside pressure will have considerable impact.
- 3) The likelihood of Pakistan's continued tacit support for the Mujahiddin is very good. It is difficult for the Soviets to stop Mujahiddin activity, it would require a great degree of pressure to get Pakistan to do so. Even if Pakistan wanted to, it would be difficult. Pakistan is serious about negotiations that would lead to



the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, but is in a strong enough position to insist that there really be such a withdrawal and that the Mujahiddin can honorably return to their own country. In the long run Pakistan's security would be enhanced by such a settlement, even if it meant a loss of some outside support. But the whole question is conjecture. A Soviet withdrawal in the next several years is very unlikely.

- 4) It is unlikely that India will join with the Soviet Union in pressuring Pakistan, or that it will launch an attack upon Pakistan by itself. The latter would involve considerable military risk and would require a full-scale war. The former would be a colossal political blunder, and would only leave India in a worse strategic position facing the Soviet Army across an uncertain frontier border.
- 5) The old conflict between India and Pakistan still blocks a coordinated regional response to the Soviet occupation. India missed its moment in 1980-81, but that was not necessarily the last chance. If a joint regional response could be forged, then serious diplomatic and even military pressure could be put on the Soviets, along with a concerted plan that would ease them out with their dignity intact.

FOOTNOTES

1 For an excellent compilation of views on the Soviet role in South East and Southeast Asia see The Soviet Role in Asia, hearings before the Subcommittees on Europe and the Middle East and on Asian and Pacific Affairs, U S House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs 98th congress July-August 1983

2 For a survey of the communist parties of Afghanistan see Anthony Arnold Afghanistan s Two Party Communism Parcham and Khalq (Stanford Hoover Institution Press 1983)

3 These air exercises were in response to Nehru s frantic appeals for help, and were held between November 9 and 19 1963 A squadron of U S A F F-100 Supersabres and a squadron of RAF Javelins and two Australian Canberra bombers participated along with the IAF Later the U S designed and built much of the Indian air defense network For details of these exercises see the Indian note in Foreign Affairs Record (New Delhi) Nov , 1963 pp 264-5

4 Ironically, some of these goods are manufactured in plants established by Western multinationals There is some debate in India over the desirability of tying down so much production capacity it tends to lessen the competitiveness of Indian goods on the world market because of stale designs and mediocre quality further, the Soviets have dumped some of these goods on the international market, undercutting Indian-marketed items

5 S Strumlin 'The World 20 Years from Now, Kommunist No 13 (Sept 1961), pp 25-36 in Current Digest of the Soviet Press Vol 13 No 38 (Oct 18, 1961), pp 3-7

6 For an excellent overall assessment of the net gains and losses of Soviet influence in Asia and South Asia in particular, see Thomas P Thornton prepared statement and testimony in The Soviet Role in Asia, pp 3-27

7 See Harry Gelman Soviet Policy Toward China The Contending Perspectives in Moscow in Soviet Role in Asia p 353 Gelman is probably wrong the Indians waited until the snows blocked movement in the northeastern Himalayan passes in any case, they have had tactical superiority over the Chinese along their border for some time The Soviet connection was important because of the promise of weapons supplies and the nuclear umbrella they extended, over India This umbrella—assurances of support in case of a Chinese nuclear threat—had earlier been offered by the United States in 1964-5 but was withdrawn by the U S on the eve of President Nixon's visit to China

8 Recent reports indicate an increase by 70,000 of the level of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, which has been estimated at between 105,000 and 110 000 New York Times, October 10, 1984 This may be a temporary increase due to replacement of old units by new

9 During this period the Soviets were concerned about the deteriorating situation in Poland the massive use of force in Afghanistan may have also been intended to demonstrate to troubled allies that the Soviets had not lost the will to control dissident communist allies since 1968 For a comparison of the 1968 and 1979 invasions see Jiri Valenta From Prague to Kabul The Soviet Style of Invasion, International Security Fall 1980 pp 114-141

10 In 1959 Indira Gandhi toppled a communist-led government in the South Indian state of Kerala while she was serving as President of the Indian Congress Party and if given a chance would topple the current communist government in West Bengal Her approach to such matters is non-ideological

11 Actually, Pakistan had made it known when they entered the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) that they were not entering into a military alliance against the U S S R and that their real concern lay with the Indian threat For a survey see William J Barnds India Pakistan, and the Great Powers (N Y Free Press, 1975)

12 For a concise survey of the Indo-Soviet military relationship see S Nihal Singh Why India Goes to Moscow for Arms Asian Survey Vol 24 No 7 (July 1984), pp 707-720

13 See Jonathan Pollack The lessons of Coalition Politics Sino-American Security Relations (Santa Monica Rand Corporation 1984)

14 John J Stephan, Asia in the Soviet Conception in Donald S Zagoria, ed , Soviet Policy in East Asia (New Haven Yale University Press, 1982), p 40

15 For an excellent survey see Walter K Andersen Soviets in the Indian Ocean Much Ado About Something—But What, Asian Survey Vol 24 No 9 (Sept 1984), pp 910-930

16 About a third of Asia is in the Soviet Union The Soviets are more aware of the myth of the unity of Asia than many in the West since their own Asian territories are quite diverse For a discussion of Soviet national pluralism see Walker Connor The National Question in Marxist

Leninist Theory and Strategy (Princeton Princeton University Press

1984) and Stephan p 31

17 Two recent collections that by Zagoria and the hearings The Soviet Role in Asia, present a wide range of views on this issue as well as on Soviet goals in Asia, which include equality hegemony, world socialism, a security glacis and defensive See especially the articles and testimony by Thornton Kelly Brown Zagoria and Langer

18 The author has met a number of Pakistan army officers who in frustration at the perceived failure of the U S to support Pakistan have speculated that perhaps we should turn to the Soviets Such views have receded since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan but they are held more widely among dissident Pakistani civilians

19 Edward Luttwak s scenario of a Soviet attack on the P R C is indirectly verified by the amount of Soviet equipment pouring into India See Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union (New York St Martin s Press, 1983)

20 Pakistan, now a close friend of China, has a negative importance for the Soviets They were as eager to undercut Chinese influence there in the 1970s as they were once eager to undercut American influence in Pakistan However, the prospect of an extended occupation of Afghanistan and Pakistan's good ties to the Islamic world are factors that have nothing to do with the U S or China, and might yet prompt a change in Soviet policy

21 The best overview of the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan is in Henry S Bradsher, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union (Durham Duke University Press, 1983)

22 The most sensible proposal for a combined political-military approach to the problem is contained in Jagat S Mehta A Neutral Solution Foreign Policy No 47 (Summer 1982) pp 139-153

23 About a quarter of the Afghan population are either dead or live as refugees in Pakistan (almost three million) or Iran (almost one million) Dr Hasan Askari-Rizvi, Afghan Refugees in Pakistan Influx Humanitarian Assistance, and Implications Pakistan Horizon Vol 36 No 1 (1984) pp 40-61

24 In this connection it is worth citing Kim Philby's views of tribal warriors, acquired when he was ostensibly running Western agents into the U S S R from Turkey, but really working for the K G B

I never shared the bemusement of the British gentleman at the sight of a tribesman I am sure that tribal courage is legendary only in the sense that it is legend, and that the mountaineer is as brave as a lion only in the sense that the lion (very sensibly) avoids combat unless assured of weak opposition and a fat meal at the end of it

Philby My Silent War (N Y Grove Press, 1968), p 196 Was Philby asked for his advice on the resistance of the Afghan tribals? If so, was it consistent with this derogatory view?

25 It is hard to obtain accurate information about the state of the war in Afghanistan For a survey, see Tahir Amin, 'Afghan Resistance Past, Present and Future, Asian Survey, Vol 24, No 4 (April 1984) pp 373-391 An imaginative projection of the course of the war over the next

decade, which speculates that the Mujahiddin may be in a better position than some critics have guessed is in Pierre Allan and Albert A. Stahel Tribal Guerilla Warfare Against a Colonial Power Analyzing the War in Afghanistan Journal of Conflict Resolution, (December 1983)

26 The prospect of a Pakistani nuclear weapon is discussed in Stephen P. Cohen The Pakistan Army (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) pp. 152 ff.

27 This proposal was made by the government of Pakistan on the same day it announced the acceptance of a military assistance program from the U.S. (September 15, 1981). This proposal originally dated back to an Indian initiative of December 22, 1949, which had since been rejected by Pakistan.

28 For views by the leading Pakistani advocate of normalization between India and Pakistan, see Lt.-Gen. A. I. Akram (ret.) Make Peace Not War (Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, 1982). A critique of Akram's views can be found in India's Military Ascendancy, by Cassandra The Muslim (Islamabad) April 15-16, 1983.

29 See Milan Hauner, The Last Great Game, Middle East Journal Vol. 38 No. 1, Winter, 1984, 72-84, and Robert L. Canfield, "Soviet Gambit in Central Asia," Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. VI No. 1 (Fall 1981), pp. 10-30 for two perceptive surveys of the historical significance of the Soviet move to Afghanistan.

30 The most comprehensive statement of Indian strategic goals is in an address forty-three pages long by the then Indian Defense Minister, C. Subramaniam India's Defense Strategy in the Next Decade delivered in late 1979. Another comprehensive and authoritative summary of Indian

strategic objectives is in K S Bajpai, ed , India s Security (New Delhi Lancer s, 1983)

31 The British developed several plans from 1926 onward, most of them assuming joint Afghan-Soviet military action They steadily scaled down their own plans, from a pre-emptive invasion of Afghanistan to a simple defensive deployment along the Durand Line This would have required only five or six divisions, plus air superiority

See Historical Section (India and Pakistan), Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, Defense of India Policy and Plans (N P Combined Inter-Services Historical Section distributed by Orient Longmans, 1963), pp 23 39

32 The Soviet Union supplies about 70% of India s arms imports which now run about \$1 billion or more per year although details about exact numbers cost, and terms of agreement are usually kept secret See Singh and Raju G C Thomas Indian Defense Policy (forthcoming, Princeton University Press)

33 India-Pakistan Tension Causes Concern to U S New York Times September 15, 1984 Two senators indicate that Mrs Gandhi has been advised to attack Pakistani nuclear facilities

34 Some informed observers still cite the myth of Peter the Great s Will For a description of this forgery (by the French secret policy) see Paul Blackstock Agents of Deceit (Chicago Quadrangle Books 1966), Chapter Two The Testament of Peter the Great

35 Data from International Institute of Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1983-1984 Richard Nations mysteriously comes up with figures indicating a 4 1 or better ratio of Indian superiority, which is