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THE AFGHAN CRISIS : PROSPECTS FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

Introduction

Four years of Soviet military presence in Afghanistan have passed. The simplest and most obvious reading out of this imbroglio seems to be the futility of an attempt for a military solution to the crisis. The USSR with about 110,000 troops in Afghanistan alongside the Afghan government forces failed to take full control over the country and subdue the Mujahideens. On the other hand, the Mujahideens despite having substantial moral, political and material support from the outside world have so far failed to inflict a damage severe enough to compel the Soviets to leave Afghanistan. As a result, a stalemate in the Afghan problem is continuing with no sign of being dissolved in the foreseeable future.

Meanwhile, a number of countries has already been involved either directly or indirectly in this tangle. Millions of Afghan refugees fled to Pakistan and Iran; guerilla raids have been intensified against the Soviet and Afghan government forces with Mujahideens using Pakistan as their shelter. This has created a bitterness in relations between the Soviet Union and Afghan regime in power on the one side and Pakistan on the other. While Pakistan and her allies—the Islamic World and the West—accuse the USSR of waging a war against the Afghan populace and demand total and unconditional withdrawal of her troops from Afghanistan, the USSR and the Afghan regime in power on their part have been accusing Pakistan of propping up the Afghan rebels by providing them with training and weaponry supplied by the US, China, Egypt and Saudi Arabia and are continuously demanding the cessation of external support to the rebels through Pakistan.

Such state of affairs in an already volatile region is aggravating the existing tense climate in international politics. It is also causing a severe drainage of material and human resources of the concerned sides. A number of efforts have been and are still being made to bring a negotiated settlement of the Afghan crisis. Since June 1982, Afghanistan and Pakistan are having intensive negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations with a view to bringing an end to the crisis. Both the sides indicated that a substantial progress was made during the two rounds of talks held in Geneva and expressed cautious optimism regarding the prospects for a settlement. These developments raised a number of questions. Why the USSR and Pakistan departed from their initial rigid stand? What are their compulsions to look for a negotiated settlement of the crisis? How far have they moved? What are the issues at stake that block an early settlement? What are the future options of the concerned sides? The present article is an attempt to answer these and other questions which are of crucial importance to comprehend any peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis. It consists of two parts. Part I of the article is designed to find out the causes that led to the quest for a peaceful settlement of the crisis from both sides perspective. Part II will study the possibility of a negotiated settlement to the crisis through Geneva talks.

I

Soviet Union*(i) Drain of human and material resources*

Continued military presence in Afghanistan has involved a considerable amount of human and material resources of the Soviet Union. By mid-1983 the number of Soviet troops in Afghanistan reached at 110,000 men equipped with modern weapons.¹ In addition, Soviet

1. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol-XXIX, 1983), p. 32249

Union is providing the Karmal regime with a substantial amount of economic assistance to help consolidate its power. The Soviet Union had committed to provide Afghanistan with commodities valued at about \$ 15 millions a year as grant-in-aid for the period between 1980 and 1984.² Earlier, the USSR donated consumer goods and food stuff worth \$ 40 millions during the fiscal year beginning on March 21, 1980.³ The sum of \$870 million has been made available to finance various development projects.⁴ These data are of course partial and do not include the stationing and operational costs of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Whatever may be the magnitude of Soviet human and material cost in real terms, the Afghan venture is taking a rather long gestation period to be cost-effective for the Soviets.

The USSR involved itself in the sustenance of an economy which is almost in disarray. Factories and mines in Afghanistan are working at a fraction of their capability. Agricultural production has been greatly jeopardised obliging Kabul to import large quantities of foodstuffs including 200,000 tons of wheat in order to face the food shortages.⁵ Reviewing the state of Afghan economy and the Soviet-Afghan economic relations, a Western analyst concluded that "in economic terms Afghanistan had become another backward republic

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of the Soviet Union, whose deficits and development expenses (must) be met from Moscow".⁶ Such state of affairs could not but put the

2. O. M. Smolansky, "Soviet Policy in Iran and Afghanistan", *Current History*, (October, 1981), p. 324.
3. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXVI, 1980), p. 30364
4. O. M. Smolansky, "Soviet Policy in Iran and Afghanistan", *Current History* (October, 1981), p. 324
5. *Strategic Survey 1982-1983*, (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1983), p. 87
6. Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, (Durham N. C: Duke University Press, 1983), p. 237

Soviet Union on sharp alert in the backdrop of the poor performance of Soviet economy in the recent years. Soviet official sources conceded that the projected level of industrial growth during 1982 would be 2.8 per cent (compared with a growth target of 4.7 percent).⁷ The target of industrial growth for the year 1983 is 3.2 percent which is the lowest annual growth target to be set in the Soviet Union since its formation.⁸ In addition, chronic food deficit of the Soviet Union and her dependence for foodgrains on the West has long been a serious problem of economic as well as political nature for the former. In the light of above circumstances, to improve the overall performance of Soviet economy and to overcome the food shortages the USSR has undertaken some ambitious programmes. These include development and wide use in the economy of micro-processors, joint production of industrial robots, production of microchip technology for computers, material and technological equipment for micro-electronics.⁹ To overcome her chronic food shortages the USSR undertook in 1982 a food programme for the period ending in 1990. It has been planned that by that time annual grain production will increase to 250-255 million tonnes (compared with 189.2 million tonnes in 1980) and meat production to 20-25 million tonnes (compared with 15.1 million tonnes in 1980).¹⁰

All these programmes are highly capital-intensive, whose fulfilment will need huge amount of material and human resources both in qualitative and quantitative terms. In these circumstances, not to mention Soviet strategic, military and economic involvements in Europe, Far East and elsewhere, a compromising way out of the Afghan impasse, which is a substantial drain on Soviet resources appears to be in the priority of the Soviet policy-makers.

7. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXIX, 1983), p. 31898

8. *Ibid.*

9. D. Letin, "The Course For Integration", *International Affairs*, (no. 10, Moscow, 1982), p. 14

10. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXVIII, 1982), p. 31588

(ii) *Uncertain prospects*

Despite the massive involvement of troops and the drain of material resources most of the Soviet goals in Afghanistan still remain unachieved. The Soviet troops and their Afghan associates so far have failed to cripple the Mujahideen resistance. Inconclusive fighting is going on all over the country with no prospect for decisive victory within a short time. According to reliable western sources, from 10,000 to 15,000 Soviet troops have already been killed or wounded.¹¹ Even the Soviet Press confirmed that the Soviet troops in Afghanistan remain fragile and vulnerable to guerrilla attacks from the Mujahideens.¹² On the other side, defection and casualties had by mid-1983 reduced the Afghan Army to some 30,000 men.¹³ And the morale of its troops is also sapping sharply. As a result, the Soviets have to shoulder the main burden in the military campaigns against the Mujahideens.

Thus far, the USSR has been unable to fashion a unified political structure in Afghanistan with sufficient popular base to institutionalise Marxist rule. The ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) is torn by dissensions between the Khalq and

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Parcham fractions. Continuous efforts of the Afghan government to broaden its support among the people brought very little success.¹⁴ Outside the urban areas the government and the PDPA still remain mostly isolated.

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11. *Strategic Survey 1982-1983*, (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1983), p. 87
 12. *The Economist*, February 27, 1982, p. 54
 13. *Keating's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXIX, 1983), p. 32249
 14. Sec. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan", *Current History*, (October, 1983), pp. 320-21

By now there is a near consensus among analysts that the Soviet leadership had probably underestimated the length and nature of the conflict it was entering and the type of opposition and complexity of problems it would have to encounter. A western study of the Soviet military press confirmed that the Soviets themselves have already realized that they became bogged down in a protracted war with no end in sight.¹⁵

(iii) *Lack of cohesion among her allies*

The Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan generated a mixed reaction among its East European allies. The Soviet action was openly supported by Bulgaria, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, while Hungary and Poland initially confined their press coverage to factual reports and reproduction of Soviet commentaries. Romania, which has been for a long period holding a view different from that of the Soviet Union on a number of international issues of mutual concern, conspicuously rejected the Soviet action. She was anxious that endorsement of such actions could limit the freedom of individual states within the framework of Warsaw Pact, which was among the long standing issues of discord between Romania and the Soviet Union. No less important in this regard was her special economic relations with the West. Since 1975 Romania has been enjoying the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status in her trade and economic relations with the United States.¹⁶ Western banks and governments provided Romania with significant amount of financial aid. According to Western sources Romania's hard-currency debts to Western banks and governments at the end of 1982 totalled between \$11 and \$ 14 billion.¹⁷ In case of her identification with the Soviet Union over the Afghan issue Romania could risk her special economic relations with the West. These considerations prompted Romania to

15. Douglas M. Hart, "Law-intensity Conflict in Afghanistan: the Soviet view," *Survival*, (Vol. XXIV, No. 2, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1982), pp. 61-67

16. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXI, 1975), pp. 27309-27310

17. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol XXIX, 1983), p. 32094

insinuatingly oppose the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. In his New Year broadcast for 1980 President Ceausescu called for "the withdrawal of all foreign troops from other countries."¹⁸

Hungary and Poland were also quite hesitant to support the Soviet action. They were worried that at a time, when *detente* in Europe had already been facing a severe test, Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan could be too counter-productive to be sustained. Particularly, it could deteriorate the already tense climate in the East-West relations and in consequence increase military confrontation in Europe. Moreover, a considerable extent of Soviet economic and military efforts would be diverted to a region where the East Europeans have quite insignificant economic and political interests. Both Hungary and Poland have also close economic relations with the West and thus have substantial economic stakes in the continuation of *detente*. Particularly, Poland which with its staggering western debt was on the verge of economic disarray and political chaos could not be happy with such an eventuality. Despite such dissatisfactions, both Hungary and Poland mainly due to their adherence to the alliance relationship with the USSR supported the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. A statement issued on January 11 after a meeting of the Hungarian Council of Ministers justified the Soviet action. Poland followed the suit at the end of January.¹⁹ Nevertheless, all the East European countries refrained from taking part in the Afghan venture militarily and their economic involvement in Afghanistan was also limited and cautious. Implicit in such ambivalent approach of these countries is the apprehension that total endorsement of the Soviet action may in the long run encourage similar actions elsewhere in the world including their own territories with so close geographic proximity with the Soviet Union.

Among other reasons for covert dissatisfaction over the issue by East European allies of the Soviet Union are their concern in general for East-West *detente* and economic gains thereof and the poten-

18. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXVI, 1980), p. 30234

19. *Ibid.*

tial diplomatic losses of the Soviet bloc in the Third World in general, a detailed analysis of which follows.

(iv) *Deterioration of East-West relations.*

The Afghan crisis worsened the already deteriorating relations between the East and West, particularly, that between the Soviet Union and the United States. In addition to the condemnation of the Soviet action in Afghanistan and the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country, the Western countries took a number of retaliatory measures of economic and political nature against the Soviet Union. On January 4, 1980, President Carter announced a number of punitive measures against the Soviet Union which include; (i) the curtailment of grain sales by 17 million tonnes; (ii) the suspension of export to the Soviet Union of high technology; (iii) the deferral of new cultural and economic exchange; (iv) severe curtailment of Soviet fishing privileges in US waters; and (v) the boycott of the Moscow Olympic²⁰. The United States sent there Coast Guard Cutters on January 8 to the Bering Sea to enforce the fishing limitation. On January 9 it announced the immediate suspension of all export of high technology and machinery to the Soviet Union and of all existing export licences.²¹ Particularly, these measures hurt the USSR economically as many of the Soviet economic targets for the eighties were planned on the basis of technology to be imported primarily from the US.

In political terms, Afghan crisis became one of the factors which revived the spirit of cold war between the super powers and disrupted the normal continuation of the process of *detente*. On January 3, President Carter formally requested the Senate to delay its consideration of the ratification of the SALT II treaty and the treaty was never ratified.²² It also increased super power confrontation in the Indian Ocean region. In the backdrop of Afghan crisis, the US decided to

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.* p. 30235

22. *Ibid.* p. 30234

maintain a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean, to enhance its military presence by seeking the regular use of facilities in Oman, Kenya and Somalia and to reinforce its military facilities on the Islands of Diego Garcia.²³

Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan hurt the cause of detente in terms of its economic, psychological, political as well as military implications.

US concern over the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan prompted President Carter to declare the Persian Gulf region as a sphere of "vital interest of the United States" and reaffirmed the US decisiveness to defend it "by use of any means necessary including military force".²⁴ Subsequently, the US proceeded with a plan to form a Rapid Deployment Force which could be used in the Third World. Thus, the western, particularly, the US measures taken in retaliation to the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan hurt the cause of *detente* in terms of its economic, psychological, political as well as military implications. The continuation of the crisis would further strain the East-West relations. Such prospects could not but concern the USSR as she has obvious compulsions to see the continuation of *detente* the alternative of which must be severely discouraging to the Soviets from the economic point of view, if not anything else.

(v) *Obstacle to Normalization of Sino-Soviet Relations.*

The Afghan issue still remains one among the three major obstacles in the way of the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. China has been continuously demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan as one of the preconditions for the normalization of relations between the two countries.²⁵ Several rounds of talks

23. *Ibid*, p. 30235

24. Sonnenfeldt Helmut, "Implications of the Soviet Invention of Afghanistan for East-West Relations" *NATO REVIEW*, (No. 3, 1980), p. 185.

25. *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 8, 1982.

had been held between the USSR and the PRC since October 1982 to bridge their differences. China so far has shown very little evidence of flexibility regarding her demands specifically on the Afghan issue. In the context of deteriorating East-West relations the USSR has compulsions of economic, political as well as military-strategic nature to improve the Sino-Soviet relations. A Sino-Soviet rapprochement would let the USSR firstly, reduce her ever increasing and costly military confrontation with China which involves at least 46 Soviet divisions;²⁶ secondly, expand mutually beneficial economic cooperation with China at a time when her economic relations with the West are facing a severe test; thirdly, neutralize the possible impact of Sino-US-Japanese triangular relationship and detach China from forging anti-Soviet tripartite alliance; fourthly, take the advantages of Sino-US contradictions and thus, increase the Soviet manoeuvrability in the super power rivalry. With the prospect of such gains from a Sino-Soviet rapprochement the Soviet Union could hardly afford to turn a deaf ear to the Chinese concern over the Afghan issue.

(iv) *Diplomatic losses in the Third World.*

The reaction of the Third World countries to the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan was stronger and more bothersome than the Soviet policy-makers could probably expect considering their previous experiences. During the Sixth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly on January 10, 1980, a resolution was adopted calling for "the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan". The voting was 104 in favour to 18 against, with 18 abstentions. Among the Islamic countries only South Yemen voted against the resolution.²⁷ Since the late 1950s, when the United States lost its automatic two-thirds majority in the United Nations, there has not been a single instance when a UN verdict has been so overwhelmingly against the USSR as in this case. This position of the United Nations

26. Gerald Segal, "The Soviet Threats at China's Gates," *Conflict Studies*, (No. 143, The Institute for the Study of Conflict, London, 1983), p. 4

27. P. K. Saksena, "Afghan Conflict and the United Nations", *International Studies*, (Vol. 19, No. 4, 1980), p. 666

has been reaffirmed during the subsequent sessions of the General Assembly. The position of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) regarding the issue is much stronger than that of the UN. The OIC not only condemned the Soviet action, but also suspended the new regime of Afghanistan from its membership and called upon all countries and peoples to work for securing the Soviet withdrawal through all possible means.²⁸ Although a negligible minority in the OIC was hesitant to cause a deterioration of relations with the USSR, none of them supported the latter on the issue. Islamic countries by and large pursued active policy in different international fora such as the UN and the Non-aligned movement with a view to strengthening the pressure on the Soviet Union for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of her troops from Afghanistan. Never in the past the USSR was as much isolated in the Islamic world as it was following the Afghan crisis.

Soviet and Afghan government efforts to influence the Non-aligned countries also yielded very limited success. The Seventh Summit Conference of Non-aligned countries held in New Delhi

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from 7 to 12 March, 1983, reiterated the Movement's previous call made at the Conference of Foreign Ministers held at the same venue in February 1981, "for a political settlement on the basis of the withdrawal of foreign troops".²⁹ Thus, the Third World countries from a position of near-unanimous rejection of Soviet action have been continuing with unabated political and moral pressures on the USSR. Indeed, the perspicuous rejection of the Soviet military presence in

28. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXVI, 1980), p. 30242

29. *Strategic Digest*, (Vol. XIII, No. 5, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, 1983), p. 288

Afghanistan by the Third World countries made the USSR diplomatically isolated in the international arena on the issue.

Thus, it is evident that the Afghan crisis made the USSR mired in a protracted war with uncertain prospects for victory, caused dissatisfaction among her allies, greatly hampered the process of *detente*, jeopardized the East-West economic relations, disrupted the prospects of her rapprochement with China and finally, disprofitted her relations with the Third World in general and the Islamic World in particular. All these factors *en bloc* led her to set off in search of a peaceful and compromising solution to the crisis.

Pakistan

(i) *Refugee burden.*

The crisis in Afghanistan has resulted in an enormous refugee problem for Pakistan with about 3 million³⁰ Afghan refugees took shelter in different parts of the country bordering with Afghanistan. Some other countries, especially Muslim nations had provided financial assistance, but no country except Turkey which offered to take about 4,500 Afghan refugees of Turkish origin had agreed to host the refugees.³¹ Despite generous assistance from the outside world, Pakistan is spending from 1 to 1.5 million dollars daily from its own resources on these refugees,³² which Pakistan can hardly afford for an indefinitely long period.

Besides, the refugee problem is pregnant with many complexities. Particularly discomfoting is the threat to the law and order situation in Pakistan and the overall stability of the country. Firstly, it threatens to jeopardise the socio-economic life in provinces borde-

30. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXVIII, 1982), p. 31544

31. S. G. M. Budruddin, "Pakistan Foreign Policy—A Quarterly Survey", *Pakistan Horizon*, (Vol. XXXV, No. 3, Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Karachi, 1982), p. 9

32. Marvin G. Weinbaum and Stephen p. Cohen, "Pakistan in 1982 : Holding on", *Asian Survey*, (Vol. XXIII, No. 2, 1983), p.135.

ring Afghanistan. Since Pakistan itself is already burdened with substantial unemployment problem, there are very few openings for Afghan refugees seeking jobs. As a result, the bulk of Afghan refugees remains jobless and the deleterious outcomes of prolonged idleness are generating apprehensions for spill-over effects on the law and order situation. Secondly, refugees are changing the ethnic composition of the areas in which they are heavily concentrated. In the case of Baluchistan, the inflow of Pakhtoons is fast reducing Baluchi predominance, a trend not viewed favourably by Baluch leaders.³³ Thirdly, a substantial number of Afghan refugees are settling in Punjab and Sindh, a development that Pakistan authorities have sought to prevent since this might make eventual repatriation of refugees to Afghanistan difficult. Finally; more serious is the problem of supply of arms from tribal areas to Afghan resistance groups.³⁴ It conceives a potential threat to the internal stability of Pakistan, in view of the possibility of similiar arms supplies to other areas within the country. In the backdrop of an unstable internal political situation prevailing in the country with a section of anti-government forces taking fefuge to terrorist actions, such possibilities might obviously be hard for authorities in Islamabad to absorb.

(ii) *Uncertain prospects for a Mujahideen victory.*

On the other hand, the Mujahideen groups, despite having an enormous moral and material support from the outside world and a combined strength of about 100,000 men,³⁵ is yet to demonstrate the capability of any assertive victory. The Mujahideens are poorly trained and are organized mainly on a tribal basis. The basic weakness of the Mujahideens lies in their internal cleavages. Some outside attempts to unite them ended up with insignificant success. As a result, the possibility of a Mujhideen success over the Soviet-Afghan

33. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "The Afghanistan Crisis and Pakistan's Security Dilemma," *Asian Survey*, (Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1983), p. 235

34. Jutus M. Van Der Kroef, "Pakistan's Search for Security", *Asian Affairs*, (Vol. 8, No. 1, New York, 1980), pp. 28-29.

35. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXIX, No. 2, 1983), p. 32249

forces still remains far-fetched. On the other hand, the activities of Pakistan-based Afghan resistance forces conceive in itself a potential source of external threat to Pakistan. A Pakistani analyst recently

While the prospects for a Mujaheddin success over the Soviet-Afghan forces remain shallow, Pakistan is shouldering the burden of 3 million Afghan refugees, which she can hardly afford for an indefinitely long period.

expressed fear that if the Afghan crisis persists and the Soviet casualty rate continues to increase "there may come a point where the Soviets would seriously contemplate active hot pursuits and sanctuary-destroying operations".³⁶ Once this happens, Pakistan would be dragged into the Afghan crisis militarily, an eventuality, to prevent which Pakistan has obvious compulsions.

(iii) *Internal instability.*

National cohesiveness achieved in Pakistan in the wake of the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan proved to be short-lived. Centrifugal forces soon became active, particularly among the Baluchs, who have been seeking greater autonomy for many years, at times with the active support of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.³⁷ Baluchistan is the obvious corridor through which Soviet influence may move to the Indian Ocean. A study of Pakistan's public opinion also showed that most of the Pakistanis (78% of those questioned) believe that sooner or later the USSR would move towards the Indian Ocean through Baluchistan.³⁸ More uncomfortable for Pakistan is the fact, that Baluch secessionists include Marxist-Leninist groups

36. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "The Afghanistan Crisis and Pakistan's Security Dilemma", *Asian Survey*, (Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1983), p. 238

37. *Strategic Survey 1982-83*, (International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1983), p. 91

38. Mazhar Ali Khan Malik, "The Conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan Option" *Strategic Studies*, (Vol. III, No. 4, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1980), p. 66

which have been increasingly challenging and/or influencing traditional leadership in the province. In addition, General Zia's regime continues to be challenged by a number of strong political parties including former premier Bhutto's Peoples Party. And the Afghan regime in power and for that matter, Soviet Union were showing every sign that they are ready to take the advantages of any opportunity offered by the internal political instability of Pakistan. It was openly demonstrated by the identification of Kabul regime with the terrorist organization Al-Zulfiqar, while it hijacked a PIA passenger plane.³⁹ Moreover, there were reports that hundreds of Kabul-trained men who crossed the border into Pakistan were among those creating political unrest in Pakistan.⁴⁰ All these developments put Pakistan on sharp alert as her domestic political instability was in greater degree being linked with events across the border. In these circumstances, it became imprudent for the Pakistani leaders to continue the policy of confrontation with the USSR on the Afghan issue.

(iv) *Lack of reliable international support.*

From the early days of the Afghan crisis it was evident that in order to face the challenge thrown by the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, Pakistan had to rely mainly on the West, particularly on the US for military and economic aid. The Islamic world, particularly the oil rich Arab countries have been the other source of economic assistance in this connection.

Pakistan and the US have a long-standing tradition of mutual security arrangement and alliance relationship, albeit with limited success as well as considerable mistrust between each other. Because of a conspicuous divergence in the security perspectives of the two countries, a 'troubled' friendly relationship has been in existence between them since the early years of Pakistani independence. During the hay-days of the cold war, the US being rebuffed by India turned to Pakistan for alliance in her pursuit of the policy of containment of

39. *The Economist*, January 16, 1982, p. 49

40. *Ibid.* January 23, 1983, p. 52-53

communism. Given India's non-participation in cold war, the strategic location of Pakistan at the doorstep of the Soviet Union and China was really attractive to the US military strategists. On the other hand, the perceived threat from India has been the main factor in Pakistan's friendship with the United States. Prominent among the objectives that Pakistan intended to achieve through her alliance with the US were: (i) guarantee against possible Indian assault; (ii) military aid to establish parity with India and (ii) pressure on India to resolve the Kashmir dispute. With these ends in view, in 1954 Pakistan signed the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the US and joined the US-sponsored SEATO and CENTO. Pakistani policy makers of that period were confident, as M. Ayub Khan wrote "the equation between the United States of America and Pakistan has been one of close friendship and alliance".⁴¹ But the subsequent development of events in Pak-US relations did not justify such confidence. Soon After the Indo-Chinese border clash of 1962, the US started supplying arms to India in large scale ignoring repeated objections from Pakistan.⁴²

Later on, during the Indo-Pak war of 1965 the US failure to honour her security commitments to Pakistan disillusioned many Pakistani leaders about the reliability of the US security commitments. Later on Z.A. Bhutto recognised with frustration that, "when displeasure with India brought United States closer to Pakistan we came to the hasty conclusion that it was our permanent, natural friend."⁴³ Such sentiment was shared by a substantial part of ruling elite in Pakistan. But the alliance survived. It was mainly due to Pakistan's lack of alternative sources of economic and military assistance to counter balance the growing Indo-Soviet economic and military cooperation.

41. Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends, Not Masters*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1967), p. 129

42. *Ibid*, pp. 133-136

43. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *The Myth of Independence*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1969), p. 159

The most severe blow to the Pak-US military alliance came during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. The US failure to honour her security commitments during the war of 1971 finally convinced Pakistan that no US Administration could or would provide an unconditional security commitment. It prompted the Pakistani leadership to dissociate itself from the US-backed military alliances. Pakistan soon left SEATO and then CENTO and decided to pursue non-aligned foreign policy. The relations between the two countries were further deteriorated in April 1979 as the Carter Administration suspended financial and military aid to Pakistan because Islamabad had declined to give assurance that it would not proceed with the construction of an offensive nuclear capability.⁴⁴ Thus, on the eve of Afghan crisis, Pak-US relations reached the lowest ebb, and Pakistan developed a sense of being betrayed by the US.

In this backdrop, Pakistan put forward the following demands to the US in exchange for her active anti-Soviet role in Afghanistan: a new treaty to be reached with the advice and consent of the US Senate committing America to the defence of Pakistan; a multi-billion dollar offer of military and economic aid; and non-interference with her nuclear power development programme,⁴⁵ a package far beyond US willingness to offer. Several attempts from both sides to bridge the differences ended inconclusively. Later on, the Reagan Administration, despite its anti-Soviet rhetorics, agreed to fulfil Pakistan's demands only partially. In September 1981, an Agreement was reached between the two sides on a package of US military and economic assistance to Pakistan worth \$3,200 millions over a six-year period. At the same time it was declared by the US that aid should be suspended immediately if Pakistan exploded a nuclear device⁴⁶ Regarding Pakistan's demand for a Pak-US defence treaty, Washington is apparently not prepared to go beyond general assurance. It gradually became obvious that the US concern over the

44. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXV, 1979), p. 29701

45. Bhabani Sen Gupta, *The Afghan Syndrome : How to live with Soviet power*. (Vekas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1982), p. 143.

46. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXVIII, 1982), p. 31701

Soviet military presence in Afghanistan has not yet reached the point where such a treaty would be politically acceptable in the United States, especially in view of possible repercussions such a treaty would have on Indo-US relations.

Pakistan gradually came to realize that the US objectives regarding the Afghan crisis were not quite similar to those of Pakistan. While Pakistan has been employing all her efforts to ensure the total and unconditional withdrawal of the Soviet troops as early as possible, the US seems to have no obvious compulsion to see an end of the Afghan crisis. Instead, there is every reason for the US to welcome its continuation. First, it would result in the loss of the scarce human and material resources of the Soviet Union. Second, it would do irreparable damage to Moscow's image in the Third World in general and in the Islamic World in particular. It may well be the US intention to convert the Afghan crisis in an East-South conflict or at least in a conflict between Communism and Islam, which would be a political plus for Washington. Third, it would limit the Soviet capability to

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respond to the US offensive in other regions of the world. Soviet failure to respond to the Lebanese crisis and US action in Grenada are cases in point. In these circumstances, it is important to the US that the USSR should remain entangled in Afghanistan and at odds with the Third World. Thus, the US and Pakistani perspectives on the Afghan issue failed to converge and the US assistance has been viewed by Pakistan as merely piecemeal.

The Islamic world strongly opposed the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan and extended substantial moral, political and

material support to Pakistan in her efforts to face the crisis. At the initiative of Pakistan, an extraordinary meeting of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers was held in Islamabad in January 1980, primarily to discuss the Afghan issue. In the course of the meeting all 36 members present approved a resolution, which "condemned the Soviet military aggression against the Afghan people;..... demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan,.....decided to suspend Afghanistan's membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference and..... declared complete solidarity with the Islamic countries neighbouring Afghanistan against any threat to their security and wellbeing.⁴⁷ Cohesive Islamic stand on the Afghan issue certainly created a moral and political pressure on the USSR. Secondly, it helped to mobilize international opinion against the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Thirdly, it opened for Pakistan a major way to financial assistance from oil-rich Islamic countries. Fourthly, it made a possible attack on Pakistan quite a risky job for the Soviet Union.

At the same time, there was a number of limitations of the Islamic countries to provide the support Pakistan requires. The Islamic countries have the potential to provide financial and other forms of economic assistance. But for high technology and military hardware they themselves are dependent on either the West or the USSR. Besides, Islamic world itself has been facing challenges from internal cleavages and conflicts. Particularly, Iran's protracted war with Iraq limited the former's ability to project any effective policy towards the Afghan issue. Arab radicals were anxious that overemphasis on the Afghan issue could divert the world attention from the Palestine issue. More important, they were quite reluctant to deteriorate their relations with the USSR while they are in a genuine state of war with the US-backed Israel. That is why, from the very inception of the Afghan crisis, Syria, Libya, South Yemen and the PLO were hesitant to play any visible role and during the 11th Extra-

47. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, (Vol. XXVI, 1980), p. 30242

ordinary Session of the ICFM all of them lodged objection to the resolutions adopted at the session.⁴⁸

Islamic countries were well aware of these limitations and this has been reflected on the comparatively flexible stand of the OIC during the Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Taif in January 1981. The conference expressed its willingness to "cooperate with the UN Secretary General and his representative in finding a just solution to the situation in Afghanistan".⁴⁹ Later, the Lebanon crisis and the subsequent development of events further split the Arab World and diverted the attention of the Islamic countries to West

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Asia and this limited their ability to stick to their initial position on the Afghan issue. The continued US patronage of Israel further undermined the former's credibility in the Islamic World and discarded the possibility of any viable cooperation between the US and the Islamic countries on the Afghan issue. In consequence, despite the total opposition of the West and of the Islamic World to the continued presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, a common front of the West and the Islamic World did not take shape over the issue.

Indo-Pak relations.

Another factor that has contributed to Pakistan's urge for a peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis is the recent developments in Indo-Pak relations and the Indian policy towards the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan.

Since the Simla accord of 1972 between Pakistan and India, two divergent trends are being observed simultaneously in relations

48. *Ibid* p. 30385

49. *Strategic Studies*, (Vol. IV, NO. 2, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1981), p. 23.

between the two countries. On the one hand, the dispute over Kashmir remains as a dormant volcano with its perilous threat to erupt at any time; arms race is continuing with no end in sight and mutual mistrust still preoccupies the leaders of both nations. On the other hand, both the sides seem to be eager to avoid another military conflict and to break the present political impasse in the subcontinent by improving their mutual relations. A proposal by President Zia for a non-aggression pact between Pakistan and India, India's counter-proposal for a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation and the subsequent diplomatic efforts including the Zia-Indira parley in New Delhi in November 1982—all these are indicative of this trend.⁵⁰

One reason, why Pakistan became so eager to improve her relations with India was the fact that Pakistan was sandwiched between Soviet-supported Afghanistan and India and for understandable reasons the improvement of her relations with the latter was less costly than with the former. In this regard, India's policy towards Afghan issue was not discouraging for Pakistan. After a brief period of hesitation and indecisiveness, India took a two-pronged approach to the issue. On the one hand, privately to the Soviet leaders and even publicly she made clear her disapproval of the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan.⁵¹ In addition, she adopted a low-key and largely behind-the-scene effort to bring about a Soviet withdrawal.⁵² On the other hand, she has been eager to limit the global and regional response to the problem to an extent beyond which it might threaten India's interest. More specifically, India's concern has been to prevent Pakistan from being armed which would mark a new spiral of arms race in the region.⁵³

50. Walter K. Andersen, "India in 1982 ; Domestic Challenges and Foreign Policy Successes" *Asian Survey*, (Vol. XXIII., No. 2, February, 1983), p. 118

51. Sec, the Interview given by Mrs Indira Gandhi to the *U. S. News and World Report.*, (February 15, 1982), pp. 26-28.

52. For details see, Robert C. Horn, "Afgnanistan and the Soviet-Indian Influence Relationship", *Asian Survey*, (Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1983), pp. 244-260.

53. Ibid.

In these circumstances, if Pakistan maintains a high degree of confrontation with the USSR by involving herself deeper in the Afghan tangle and totally identifying herself with the US, it would deteriorate her relations with India. Instead, if Pakistan pursues a policy of peaceful settlement to the Afghan problem and refrains from the actions that could further aggravate the situation in the region, India might find it reasonable to cooperate with the efforts directed at the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan through negotiations. Whether India could influence the Soviet stand on Afghanistan or not is a moot point but the net gain for Pakistan would be the fact that it would enhance the slowly improving relations between the two countries.

All these factors discussed above *en bloc* coupled with the flexibility shown by the Afghan regime and the Soviet Union led Pakistan to tilt towards a peaceful and compromising settlement of the Afghan crisis.

II

From the discussion in the preceding section, it is obvious that a military solution of the crisis is rather far-fetched. Despite their yearning for a negotiated settlement, both the sides, however, took quite a long time to budge from their respective initial positions. Because of the wide difference between these stands, a number of attempts to initiate negotiations on the issue failed to work out a *modus operandi*.⁵⁴ In this respect, Soviet president Brezhnev's funeral provided the USSR and Pakistan with the opportunity of having talks at the highest level. Despite the existing unfriendly relations between

54. Kabul rejected the British proposal of neutralisation of Afghanistan (Jan-Feb. 1980), the French proposal for an International conference (January 1983), the European Council's proposal for a two-stage international conference (July 1981) and Iran's plan for a Islamic solution (November, 1981) and Pakistan and Iran rejected the proposals made by Afghanistan on May 14, 1980 and August 24, 1981. See, P. B. Sinha, "Geneva talks" on the Afghan problem," *Strategic Analysis*, (Vol. VI, No. 6, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, 1982), p. 338

the two countries following the Afghan crisis, President Zia-ul-Haq attended the funeral of the late Soviet leader. The visit was an indication to the Soviet leadership that Islamabad is at least prepared to seek some accommodation with Moscow on the Afghan issue. The Soviet leaders positively responded to the Pakistani gesture. Only hours after the funeral Soviet leader Yuri Andropov met President Zia. Soviet official news agency Tass confirmed that during the conversation between the two leaders "questions concerning the situation around Afghanistan were touched upon a principled plane".⁵⁵ Though the Zia-Andropov meet produced nothing dramatic, it at least demonstrated the willingness of the two countries to find a way out of the tangle.

Meanwhile, despite Afghan and the Soviet rejection of the UN General Assembly resolutions, the United Nations continued its efforts to break the deadlock. The shuttle diplomacy of the UN special envoy on Afghan affairs Diego Cordovez in Islamabad, Kabul and Tehran in April, 1982 yielded some positive results. Shortly after his return to the UN he announced that both Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed to hold "indirect" talks in Geneva in June under the auspices of Cordovez with a view to bringing an end to Afghan crisis. Iran would not participate directly but agreed to be kept informed. The agreed items of the agenda of the talks were :

- (i) withdrawal of foreign troops;
- (ii) non-interference in the internal affairs of the states;
- (iii) international guarantee of non-interference; and
- (iv) voluntary return of the refugees to their homes.⁵⁶

The agreed agenda seemed to be in consistence with the Pakistani demands and conformed to the positions of the OIC, Non-aligned movement and the UN.

55. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 19, 1982, p. 8

56. S. G. M. Budruddin "Pakistan's Foreign Policy—Quarterly Survey", *Pakistan Horizon*, (Vol. XXXV, No. 3, Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Karachi, 1982), pp. 7-8.

Review of the progress

First round of such talks were held in Geneva from June 16 to 25, 1982. The Soviets did not participate in the talks though they sent a delegation of high level Soviet experts on Afghan affairs to Geneva to observe the proceedings behind the scene. There were still sharp and wide differences of approach and emphasis between the two sides at the talks. Pakistan laid emphasis on voluntary and dignified return of the refugees, but this could take place only after foreign troops were withdrawn. The Afghan delegation stressed on two points — guarantees by concerned states and also by the international community against interference in its internal affairs. But the very fact that the two sides agreed to talk was itself a step forward. Pakistan's acquiescence to drop some of its known pre-conditions and Afghanistan's agreement to at least discuss the matter of withdrawing Soviet troops were probably some of what Cordovez called as important "concessions" and Yaqub Khan described as "flexibility" shown by the two sides in their talks.⁵⁷

Since the contents of discussions at Geneva have been kept confidential, no authentic version is available regarding the extent of progress made in Geneva. But a Pakistani newspaper relying on indications given by "informed sources", reported that there were some movements on the following lines at the talks.

- There was an understanding that one of the underlying elements should be the principle of self-determination;
- Interrelationship was defined between the withdrawal of troops and other measures to be provided in the agreement, including return of refugees and non-interference;
- An understanding was reached for some consultative arrangement with the Afghan refugees to ascertain the conditions acceptable to them for their voluntary return.⁵⁸

57. *Ibid.*

58. P. B. Sinha, "Geneva talks on the Afghan problem" *Strategic Analysis*, (Vol. VI, No. 6, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, 1982), p. 342.

Though none of the sides compromised on their basic positions, these achievements were by no means negligible, if the previous deadlock is taken into consideration. They encouraged the concerned parties to continue the process of negotiations in the hope that in course of time, they could find out an acceptable solution. The second round of talks on Afghanistan began on April 16, 1983. This time, talks had moved beyond procedural questions to specific discussions on substantive matters. There were sheer indications that substantial progress was made during the talks.⁵⁹ A draft for a comprehensive solution to the Afghan problem was being prepared by Diego Cordovez. Cordovez informed the newsmen that he was trying to base the framework on three important factors; withdrawal of foreign troops, return of refugees and the guarantee of non-interference,⁶⁰ which was an indication that serious as well as tough negotiations were going on concerning the key issues of Afghan problem. The talks were adjourned on April 22, to enable the delegations to consult their respective governments on substantive issues contained in the text of the draft. The very fact that the stage had come where the delegations felt like going back and consulting their governments itself created an impression that something positive could come out within a short time.

The talks were resumed on June 16 in Geneva during which Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yakub Khan had a series of negotiations with his Afghan counterpart Shah Mohammad Dost through the mediation of Diego Cordovez, albeit with no remarkable success. Pakistan sticking to her previous position also demanded on a specific time frame for the phased withdrawal of Soviet troops regarding it as "essential for the whole issue". Afghanistan, on the other hand, demanded international guarantee of non-interference as the pre-requisite to everything else.⁶¹ If Afghanistan would accept the Pakistani demands, then the very existence of present regime in

59. *Dawn*, Karachi, April 23, 1983.

60. FBIS-SAS-83-079, Friday, 22 April, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 079, P. C, 1

61. *Dawn*, Karachi, June 23, 1983,

Kabul would have been at stake, probably it would collapse. On the other side, if Pakistan would agree to Afghan demands it would mean the legitimization of the Kabul regime without resolving the key issues of the Afghan problem, a price to pay which Pakistan was not prepared. It appeared that the compulsions of neither of the sides to see an end to Afghan crisis reached the point where any major concession for a breakthrough in the discussions could spring up. As a result, the second round of Geneva talks ended on June 25 inconclusively. Since then diplomatic efforts are going on to bridge the differences between the parties with no success. As a result, the original optimism generated by the Geneva talks has now began to wane.

Issues at Stake and prospects of a negotiated settlement

Now the question is, what are the vital issues at stake which continue to block a negotiated settlement? Pakistan being aware of the fact that refugees would not go home unless the Soviet troops are withdrawn continues to demand the withdrawal for their return. But the prime consideration of the Afghan-Soviet side is the security

Despite all the irreconcilables, there still exists at least an attenuated possibility of compromise between the two sides.

of the present regime in Kabul, and they know it very well that a pro-Soviet government would fail to keep control over Afghanistan once the Soviet troops are withdrawn. So, they demand the guarantee of noninterference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, by which they mean the cessation of foreign assistance to the rebels and the use of Pakistani territory for attacks on Afghan-Soviet forces. These divergent approaches towards the problem have caused the present near-deadlock in the Geneva talks. And the options of both sides seem to be limited.

Despite all these irreconcilables, there still exists at least an attenuated possibility of compromise between the two sides. Pre-

viously, President Zia-ul-Haq indicated that Pakistan would accept a government friendly to the Soviet Union which would not be a "USSR satellite".⁶² Pakistan has not so far changed her stand on the issue. On the other side, Yakub Khan reportedly told that Soviet leaders had signalled their readiness to withdraw from Afghanistan if the government in Kabul "could be replaced by one that was friendly to the Russians but not necessarily under Soviet control."⁶³ Then negotiations could proceed to bridge the differences between the Soviet and Pakistani understanding of a government friendly to the USSR. Nevertheless, certain questions would remain unanswered even if an understanding is reached between the two sides. How would the international guarantors fulfil their guarantee if the government friendly to the USSR fell and the forces hostile to the USSR come to power without any outside assistance? Taking into account the present volatile situation in Afghanistan, such possibility could not be ruled out altogether. Then, would the guarantors intervene in Afghanistan? Or, would the Soviets have the right to come back again? Or, would the Afghan people be given the right to self-determination? These questions are of crucial importance to be answered before any viable settlement of the Afghan crisis is reached. Possibility of such a settlement and its nature would depend on a number of factors, such as: the future development of events in Afghanistan, particularly, the correlation of forces in the country, political atmosphere in the countries neighbouring Afghanistan, the overall climate in the regional and international politics regarding the Afghan issue and finally, the manoeuvrability of the concerned sides in the forthcoming rounds of talks.

62. *Guardian*, November 28, 1982.

63. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan", *Current History*, (October, 1983), p. 338.