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## **AFGHANISTAN : SOVIET WITHDRAWAL AND AFTER**

The 'second cold war' that began in the late 1970s seems to have ended. And certain indications of detente are apparently discernible in the wake of the successful third superpower summit in Washington. The United States and the Soviet Union are seemingly eager to improve their bilateral relationship in a fashion that leads one to believe that there has been a convergence of interests between Washington and Moscow on a reassertion of global bipolarity. As a result, attention is being focused also on the resolution of regional conflicts, although in light of the respective superpower interests.

Not surprisingly therefore, the year 1988 has begun on a certain note of optimism pertaining to the Afghanistan issue. As the success of the UN-sponsored proximity talks in Geneva had been hinging for the last few years on an acceptable timeframe for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's 8 February 1988 announcement of a timetable for the withdrawal seemed to bring a peace settlement in sight. The Kremlin policy initiative was generally accepted as a positive signal of serious Soviet intent to withdraw from Afghanistan and it became a topic of discussion almost at all levels around the globe.

The proximity talks began on 2 March 1988 in Geneva. But soon the talks entered an impasse due to two crucial points. One,

Pakistan came up with a precondition that the Geneva Agreement be preceded by the formation of an interim government in Kabul. The Kremlin and the Kabul regime rejected this outright arguing that it was a matter to be left to the Afghans themselves. Two, Washington raised a "symmetry" issue meaning that if the United States was to cut off or continue its aid to the Mujahideens the Soviet Union was to do the same to the Kabul regime. Moscow and Kabul maintained that it was beyond the terms of reference of the Geneva talks.

However, after prolonged and hectic negotiations a four-way package agreement was signed at Geneva by the representatives of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union and the United States. The accords stipulated a Soviet troop withdrawal from 15 May this year and an end to Afghan guerrilla bases in Pakistan. The superpowers signed as guarantors of the accords.

However, the withdrawal of Soviet troops will obviously give rise to a host of questions. The most pertinent ones are : What will happen inside Afghanistan in the wake of the Soviet pullout ? What impact the solution of Afghan crisis will have on the superpower bilateral relationship as well as on their relationships with South Asia, especially with India and Pakistan ? What would be the regional scenario like after the Soviet withdrawal ? Attempt will be made to provide answers to some of these questions in the paper.

The paper consists of three sections. The first section portrays the withdrawal scenario focusing on the compulsions and interests of the involved parties. A brief resume of the last round of Geneva talks constitutes the second section, while the third deals with the possible scenario that might evolve after the Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

## I. THE WITHDRAWAL SCENARIO

There are four parties to the Afghanistan crisis. Afghanistan and Pakistan are directly involved while the Soviet Union and the United States act behind the stage exercising their influence on the negotiating

parties. Judging by their various statements and pronounced intentions all the parties seem to be serious about settling the Afghan imbroglio. However, their compulsions and interests in resolving the tangle are not similar.

#### a. Soviet Union

After eight years of costly stalemate in Afghanistan Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev seemed increasingly impatient to pullout the Soviet forces from Afghanistan. On 8 February this year he made a policy statement on Afghanistan announcing the all-important timeframe for the troops withdrawal. Gorbachev said that the pull-out could begin on 15 May 1988 and be completed within 10 months. This date was based on the assumption that the Geneva agreement would be signed by 15 March and would take effect two months later. To meet a US demand Gorbachev named a date for the withdrawal and made a major concession by offering to "front-load" the pullout, that is, removing a large portion of the fighting force early in the withdrawal period. The Kremlin Chief did not link withdrawal to the existence of a Kabul government in which President Najibullah would retain command. He expected that accordingly, the United States would halt aid to the Mujahideen rebels.<sup>1</sup>

Gorbachev offer made the prospects of a peace settlement in Afghanistan bright and the Geneva talks that started on 2 March this year was billed to be the last round. Though the talks snagged on a couple of crucial points, none of the involved parties seemed ready to shoulder the blame of scuttling the peace process by cancelling the talks and hence talks intermittently continued.

The Soviet compulsions and interests in an Afghan settlement stem from the Kremlin policy of "Novoe Mysleniye" (New Thinking) and Afghanistan's geostrategic location. The significant internal changes

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1. See for details, *Newsweek*, 22 February 1988, p. 33; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 February 1988, pp. 14-15.

taking place in the Soviet Union reflect themselves in the area of foreign policy influencing ever more visibly the Soviet stands on international issues. In fact, there is a visible desire to give the foreign policy a role of supporting "perestroika" and "glasnost". This primarily means that the Soviet Union is interested to reduce the commitments that most directly affect the economic situation and political climate in the country. In terms of cost-benefit analysis, Afghanistan seemed to cost the Kremlin much. An Afghan settlement, therefore, seemed to be a matter of priority. The Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in this light expressly said, "the Soviet leadership has taken the political decision to pull the troops out of Afghanistan. We are interested in doing so; the sooner, the better."<sup>2</sup>

Another Kremlin compulsion was that in order to carry out internal reforms successfully the Soviet Union needed a more favourable international climate. The Afghan crisis constituted a major impediment in promoting ties with many countries. So its resolution was considered to be of great importance to the Kremlin. But the question was how to honourably rectify the "Brezhnev blunder". An Indian scholar even a couple of years ago predicted that there were three alternatives before the Kremlin— (1) seeking an understanding with the United States, in which case the consent of Pakistan to that understanding would be relatively easy to obtain; (2) reaching an understanding with Pakistan, thereby creating opportunities for detaching Pakistan from the American global-regional design to contain Soviet influence and risking a further downslide in relations with the United States; and (3) seeking an understanding to which both the United States and Pakistan could be willing subscribers.<sup>3</sup> Although the third alternative would have been desirable, the Soviet Union appeared to have gone for the

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2. *CSS Papers*, Centre for Strategic Studies, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1987, pp. 73, 81; Louis Dupree, "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan in 1987", *Current History*, October 1987, p. 335.
  3. Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Afghanistan: Politics, Economics and Society*, Frances Pinter Publishers, London, 1986, p. 154.

first one. It was revealed from Pakistan's suspicion that at the last superpower summit in Washington in December 1987, there might have been laid the basis of a "deal" between Moscow and Washington on Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> The resolution of the Afghan crisis was expected to help the Kremlin to improve its relations with Washington, Islamabad, Tehran and Beijing. It was also understandable that none of Pakistan, China and Iran would agree to a replacement of the USSR by the USA in Afghanistan. So the Soviets decided to cash in such a situation by conveniently pulling out of Afghanistan.

The Soviet interest in Afghanistan, in fact, is to establish a stable government and to ensure that forces hostile to Moscow did not come into power in a country that borders their own. And that is why Shevardnadze said that the Soviet Union wanted to see "an independent, neutral and non-aligned" Afghanistan with the broadest-based coalition government without the Islamic fundamentalists dominating the political structure of the country.<sup>5</sup> Analysts also hold a view that the Soviets were interested in an Afghan settlement because it could "open the way for practical superpower approaches" in the Iran-Iraq war, Central America and southern Africa.<sup>6</sup> The Soviet Union could then respond more effectively any eventuality from any political hot bed around the globe especially from the Persian Gulf area.

Even a casual look at the map of Afghanistan would suggest that the Soviet stakes in Afghanistan are very high indeed. So, when the Soviets are heard saying they did not regard Afghanistan as a socialist state and did not necessarily want a pro-Soviet government in Kabul but one that was not hostile to Moscow,<sup>7</sup> it is difficult to subscribe to

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4. Mushahid Hussain, "Regional Scenario After Afghanistan", *MAG*, Karachi, 17-23 March 1988, p. 7.

5. *The Muslim*, 22 January 1988; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 January 1988, p. 16.

6. Muhammad Riaz, "Are the Russians Moving Out?", *Inquiry*, November 1987, p. 59; Fay Willey and Joyce Barnathan, "New Trends in the Afghan War", *Newsweek*, 14 March 1988, p. 28.

7. *The Muslim*, 20 January 1988.

it. As a matter of fact, Afghanistan had been in the Soviet sphere of influence for about last seven decades and no government in Kabul, monarchical or republican, tried to pursue policies detrimental to Soviet interests. And no outside power did care to meddle into it.

Political observers maintain that the real intention of Moscow seems not to abandon the party at present in power in Kabul, nor to accept the demand of the resistance parties that the PDPA must be totally eliminated from power.<sup>8</sup> It appears that by offering not to link their withdrawal to the formation of a coalition government in Kabul, the Soviets, took a calculated risk. Moscow's calculation appeared to be that a political settlement of the Afghan problem, opening prospects of power-sharing in Kabul, was likely to sharpen the already serious rivalries between and among the various factions of the Mujahideen. And President Najibullah might survive either through political accommodation with his opponents or internecine military struggle or both.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact, it is inconceivable that the Soviet Union decided to wash its hands off Afghanistan just like that. A *realpolitik* approach after a decade of Soviet involvement in Afghan affairs would suggest that the Kremlin took its political decision to pullout troops from Afghanistan only after it was convinced that the Kabul government was strong enough to cope with the opposition that threatened it. However, Moscow kept its option open by agreeing to formation of a Kabul government consisting of moderate elements headed by the exiled King Zahir Shah, who during his own days also pursued his policies not detrimental to the Kremlin interests.

There seems to be another aspect of the Soviet withdrawal. The reasons for which the Soviets trooped into Afghanistan seem to be at least partially justified, and despite its diplomatic loss as well as loss in terms of men and materiel, the Soviet Union is observed to have gained in many other aspects. An Indian scholar observes that the Soviet action in Afghanistan signalled a new epoch in world politics

8. Pran Chopra, "Dangerous Precedent", *Holiday*, 1 April 1988, p. 5.

9. Afzal Mahmood, "Will 1988 Bring Peace to Afghanistan?", *Dawn*, 3 January 1988, p. 7.

making itself a co-equal of the United States. Moscow had demonstrated its political will and capability to safeguard its vital interests even if it required the involvement of its armed forces. At the same time it had also enhanced the image of the USSR as a credible alliance leader and a power which one could rely upon.<sup>10</sup> Although the Soviets have not won militarily, they have had some other crucial gains in Afghanistan. According to a Soviet commentator, the Soviet efforts in Afghanistan were not in vain. "In spite of everything that has not been attained, fundamentalism of the Iranian type is already impossible. ... Nor will there be a threat to our Central Asian republics or American intelligence gathering system on our border", he wrote.<sup>11</sup> The political cost of the Soviet withdrawal might then be compensated. The Soviet withdrawal offer also contained some significant small print. For example, the Kremlin is reported to have expressed its will to keep control of the so-called Wakhan Strip in northeasternmost Afghanistan, a zone that borders on China, Pakistan and the Soviet Union. And that would give Pakistan a frontier with the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> The Soviets would, thus, like to keep control over the developments in Afghanistan, geo-strategically the Kremlin's soft underbelly. Moscow would, of course, prefer communist Afghanistan. However, Moscow's bottomline might be to allow a regime in Kabul that might share power with the moderate Mujahideens.

#### b. Kabul Regime

In tune with the Kremlin initiative Dr. Najibullah, the Afghan President, said that the Soviet troops might be withdrawn from Afghanistan within a period of 9 months if the agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan on stopping foreign interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs could be reached at Geneva. He maintained

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10. Bhabani Sen Gupta, *The Afghan Syndrome : How to Live With Soviet Power*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1982, pp. 1, 220

11. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 March 1988, pp. 12-13.

12. *Time*, 14 March 1988, p. 9.

that the issue of foreign interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs was the only one which was blocking the Soviet withdrawal.<sup>13</sup>

The Afghan Government initiated a policy of reconciliation, gave a call for ending bloodshed and forming a coalition not leaving out opposition forces.<sup>14</sup> As part of the new course the PDPA has renounced its monopoly on power and offered the opposition 23 of the ministerial posts in the government, including the posts of Prime Minister and Vice President of the republic. Although the PDPA rejects the idea of restoration of the monarchy in Afghanistan, it believes that former King Zahir Shah, who has been in exile since 1973, could play a constructive role in national reconciliation.<sup>15</sup> The Afghan Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil said that the present Afghan Government would, if necessary, be prepared to step down for the sake of peace. He said that a proposed new coalition government could represent all Afghan groups. He is even reported to have offered direct contacts with opposition Mujahideens on a future coalition team.<sup>16</sup> As promised the Kabul regime has kept reserved a number of seats in newly elected Parliament for exiled Afghan leaders. On the other hand, the Soviet leadership was reportedly persuading President Najibullah to call back Zahir Shah, and the former had publicly invited him to come back and lead a coalition government in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup>

However, the Najibullah government appears to be in a predicament. Its survival depends not only on its own strength, but also on the convenience of the Kremlin. The Kremlin made it clear that it would sacrifice Najibullah's government if that opened the way for a peaceful settlement. It caused concern to President Najibullah who insisted that he would remain in power even after the Soviet pullout.<sup>18</sup> Here,

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13. *The Muslim*, 18 January 1988.

14. *ibid*

15. V. Andreev, "Settlement of Afghan Problem : Two approaches", *The Muslim*, 26 January 1988, p. 5.

16. *Bangladesh Observer*, 4 March, 26 March 1988.

17. *Bangladesh Observer*, 8 March, 17 April 1988; *Dawn*, 12 January 1988.

18. *Newsweek*, 1 February 1988, p. 18.



two points are worth noting ; one is that President Najibullah has to convince the Kremlin leadership that he could survive the Soviet withdrawal, while the other is that if the situation demands, the Kabul regime will have to share power with moderate opposition forces. While both Moscow and Kabul would prefer the first option, the other one is also being kept open as the Kabul regime came up with numerous initiatives and concessions for a national reconciliation.

### c. Mujahideens

Although the Mujahideens are not an officially recognized party to the conflict, they are the wild card in the game. They are a card conveniently being used by Islamabad and Washington vis-a-vis Kabul and Moscow. While neither the USA nor Pakistan pleaded the Mujahideen to be a party, the Mujahadeens themselves claim that they and the Soviet Union are the real parties to the Afghan issue. The Mujahideens through their Peshawar-based alliance claim the right to be included in any Afghan settlement. They do not recognize the Kabul regime and hence reject any Kabul initiative or concession offered to them for national reconciliation or formation of a broad-based coalition government.

The Peshawar-based alliance on 23 February proposed setting up of a "transitional government" with a cabinet consisting of fourteen representatives from the Mujahideens, seven from Afghan refugees in Pakistan and seven from Muslims now living in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> But it is widely believed that the unity among the rebel groups is very fragile. There are rebel groups who do not favour a single communist to be allowed to work in the government. There are others who are for a coalition government. There are still those who are supporters of Zahir Shah and are critical of the seven parties. Further, there is a gap in interest and intention between the field commanders and the politicians. The Mujahideens who are fighting at the front support a coalition and Soviet withdrawal but not those who thrived and benefited from continuation of war. Those who live well in Pakistan are

19. *Asiaweek*, 11 March 1988, p. 22.

accused of favouring a government for themselves but those who lead a miserable life support the formation of a coalition government so that they could return home.<sup>20</sup>

The Mujahideens have shown no willingness, even verbally to arrive at any settlement with the Kabul regime. Their pronouncements indicate a resolve not only to destroy the post-1978 changes in Afghanistan, but to take it back to its pre-1955 status. It is believed that four hardline Islamic parties seek an Islamic state mid-way between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The three moderate traditional parties support a democratic regime with Zahir Shah heading it.<sup>21</sup> A real danger might be that the Alliance leaders' intransigence could lead them to miss an opportunity. An unyielding and uncompromising stance runs the risk of not getting a share in the post-withdrawal Afghan government on the one hand, and prolonging the war and as a result the agonies of the Afghans, on the other. Geopolitical reality in and around Afghanistan would suggest that there was no alternative to compromise with the Kabul regime for the safe return of the refugees and restarting a nation-building process in Afghanistan.

#### d. Pakistan

A definite and convincing Soviet withdrawal offer would push the ball squarely back into Pakistan and US court. Three of the four documents on Afghan settlement were agreed upon at Geneva, while the fourth one was hinging on an acceptable timeframe for the pullout of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Everybody welcomed the Kremlin offer including Pakistan. However, opinions were divided on the compulsions and interests of Pakistan in favour or against an Afghan settlement.

Many in Pakistan complain that the Afghans are creating socio-economic and even political problems in Pakistan. Afghan refugees

20. Louis Dupree, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-335 ; *Bangladesh Observer*, 2 March 1988.

21. M. Raziullah Azmi, "Afghan Portents: Khost and Geneva", *The Muslim*, 17 January 1988, p. 4; *Bangladesh Observer*, 6 March 1988.

are blamed to have taken away jobs in the border cities. Others say that they have uprooted scarce forests for firewood, and the large number of sheep and goats they brought with them have destroyed their grazing lands. Pakistanis insist that Afghan smuggling operations feed the habits of an estimated 600,000 Pakistani heroin addicts. And there is no question that arms intended for the Islamic guerrillas turn up frequently in the Pakistani black market.<sup>22</sup> And the upsurge of urban violence in Pakistan with the indiscriminate use of these weapons has left a feeling of disenchantment amongst the Pakistanis not only with the Afghans living in Pakistan but also with Islamabad's Afghan policy. Observers argued for an early Afghan settlement if dangers of the procrastinated war were to be avoided. Most of the political parties were also urging the Pakistan government to go for early Afghan settlement by signing the Geneva accord.<sup>23</sup> Those favouring an early Afghan settlement argued that President Ziaul Haq, who had basically obtained the main goals of his Afghan policy had no good reason to delay a settlement. Gen Zia has consolidated his political position. He has modernized his army. He has achieved economic recovery. Now Zia had nothing to lose and everything to gain from an agreement.<sup>24</sup> There were also arguments which favoured a resolution even with the PDPA as it was a known political category, most actions of which were broadly predictable, while those of a 'Mujahideen government' in Kabul would be pretty difficult to predict.<sup>25</sup>

However, there were considerations and observations on the contrary. Some Pakistanis suspect that the end of the Afghan war, while ending some problems, may present their country with a new set

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22. See for details, Mohammad Humayun Kabir, "Afghan Crisis : Signs of Hope?", *BISS Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1987. pp. 159-178; *Newsweek*, 1 February 1988, p. 17.
  23. See for details, Muhammad Riaz. *op. cit.*; *The Muslim*, 9 February 1988.
  24. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 January 1988, p. 16.
  25. Nihal Ahmad, "That Dangerous Man, Gorbachev", *The Muslim*, 23 January 1988, p. 4.

of ever more worrying ones. According to them, at present Pakistan is a country of special international importance. This importance dates from 1979 when the Soviets trooped into Afghanistan resulting in pumping of massive US military and economic aid into Pakistan. But with the Soviets out of Afghanistan, it is hardly likely that Pakistan will continue to be in the forefront of American mind.<sup>26</sup> However, it is simplistic to say that Pakistan's salience in US strategic considerations is due only to the Afghan crisis. Pakistan's imperatives are to get the refugees out, to have a peaceful neighbourhood and to improve relationship with the proximate superpower, and not to allow the Mujahideens to dictate terms with all the consequences that inhere in such a situation.

#### e. The United States

The US government welcomed the Kremlin offer as a positive and serious Soviet initiative to withdraw troops from Afghanistan and characterized it as a step in the right direction. The US officials were learned to have said that Gorbachev had conceded two points that Washington had earlier insisted on by setting a specific date for beginning the withdrawal and offering to frontload the pullout.<sup>27</sup> As a matter of fact, Washington had always regarded Afghanistan as being an area of Soviet interest. But following the Soviet physical involvement in Afghanistan, the US has been only happy to see the Soviets bleed in Afghanistan and has scored diplomatic victory over the Soviet Union on certain issues. But the Afghan card seems to have outlived its utility after so many years of the crisis. The American interest and involvement in Afghanistan has to be seen in the global context of its relationship with the Soviet Union. Cold war II has seemingly yielded place to a new phase of detente<sup>28</sup> making the prospects of an Afghan settlement brighter than ever before. Despite the US preference for an independent and sovereign government in Kabul to be established

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26. *The Economist*, 9 January 1988, p. 23.

27. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 February 1988, p. 15.

28. M. Raziullah Azmi, *op. cit.*

following the Soviet pullout, analysts maintain that there might have been a global *quid pro quo* between Moscow and Washington. In any such global give-and-take between the superpowers the US national interests will allow itself to sacrifice Afghanistan in exchange for something of more vital interest to it. A Soviet promise not to establish influence in Central America, for example, could enable the United States to finally consign Afghanistan to the Soviet sphere of influence. It is also believed that Washington found it propitious to let Moscow off the Afghan hook as a part of some sort of package deal on strategic arms reduction. The Afghan issue is one where the US has for very low price gained very high profits.<sup>29</sup> As a matter of fact, at the fag end of Reagan's tenure in the White House his priorities now seem to be disarmament, the Gulf War, but not Afghanistan.

Interestingly, in the thick of divergences on the Afghan issue between Moscow, Washington, Beijing and New Delhi there is a strange commonality among them in regard to their interest in preventing an Islamic fundamentalist takeover in Kabul. And that makes the formation of a purely Mujahideen government in Kabul an improbable eventuality. The induction of the Afghan communists in any future government cannot, therefore, be a matter of long debate, while their role in the government may be.

The US position on Afghanistan issue, however, remains one of ambiguity. While the US urged the Soviet Union to deliver on its promise of a fast timetable for withdrawal, the Reagan Administration continues its support to the Afghan resistance. It seems that this ambiguity stems out of a dilemma the US Administration is facing in pursuing its Afghan policy. Washington seemed to understand Pakistan's concerns about an interim government in Kabul before the Soviet withdrawal, while publicly pretended to be seen as not holding up the pullout. The US dilemma was between being a stumbling block by endorsing Pakistan's demand or being condemned for having sacrificed the interest of Pakistan and the Mujahideens. However, the super-

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29. *ibid*; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 January 1988, pp. 15-16,

power status, prestige and ego did not allow the United States to share credit for an Afghan settlement with Pakistan, much to the latter's disappointment. What Washington appeared to be aiming at is that it wanted to make the world see that the Soviet Union was made to roll back from Afghanistan on the US terms. It would show the long US diplomatic war with Moscow over Afghanistan justified.

## II. GENEVA TALKS

The latest round of UN-sponsored Geneva talks on Afghan settlement started on 2 March 1988. The parties involved in the crisis expected the round to be the last and the year to see the end of Soviet withdrawal. The talks started off very well as the Afghan side reached its bottomline by offering a 9-month period for Soviet pullback and agreeing to withdraw 50 percent of Soviet troops within first three months. It met the earlier US-Pak demands and the signing of the Geneva accord therefore, became almost a reality at last. But, surprisingly enough, Pakistan came up with a new demand of forming a transitional coalition in Kabul with both the communists and the Mujahideens, prior to any Afghan accord. The rationale behind Pakistan's new position was that Afghanistan would descend into a bloodbath following the Soviet pullout and as a result, millions of Afghan refugees would not return home.<sup>30</sup> It was a straight departure from Pakistan's earlier position according to which the question of the future government in Kabul was one that should better be left to the Afghans themselves to determine.

Some analysts tend to believe that General Ziaul Haq's attempt at footdragging over the Geneva talks was more an attempt at highlighting his displeasure at India being introduced in the Afghan affairs than a real desire to scuttle the peace process.<sup>31</sup> But the UN sources

30. *Newsweek*, 22 February 1988, p. 33; *The Economist*, 19 March 1988, p. 25.

31. Abdul Hye, "Withdrawal Symptoms in Afghanistan", *Holiday*, 26 February 1988, p. 6.

said that Pakistan might have been trying to obtain finer points worked out on how the agreement would function and be monitored.<sup>32</sup> Another point Pakistan perhaps wanted to get settled with Afghanistan is the question of 'Durand Line' - the British demarcated boundary line between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Afghanistan did not rule out talks on this contentious issue, but maintained that it should be taken up separately and not to be linked to the Geneva peace process.<sup>33</sup>

Talks on Afghanistan during Washington summit between the superpowers made Pakistan think that the Afghan issue was leaping out of Pakistan's hand or at least it had diminished Pakistan's role in the peace talks. In a bid to demonstrate its leverage on the Afghan issue Pakistan was believed to have stood in the way of a peace accord. But Pakistan could not remain persistent on this point for long. It had to buckle down under US pressure and Pakistan subsequently withdrew its demand of interim government and agreed to sign the peace accord with Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> It is plausible that Pakistan did budge from its position only after it was assured of continued US aid to Pakistan. However, having stopped Pakistan to block the Geneva talks the US itself had snagged the talks over a "symmetry issue". The symmetry issue involves mainly the military aid of the US and the USSR to the resistance and Kabul regime respectively. The US put forward a proposal that once US halted its aid to the Afghan resistance forces, the Soviet Union simultaneously would stop supporting the Kabul regime with military supplies.<sup>35</sup> The proposal was, however, firmly turned down by the Soviets. The Kremlin had also dismissed the simultaneous continuation of arms supplies by Moscow and Washington to the warring parties. The Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze was reported to have said that it would be inconceivable

32. *Bangladesh Observer*, 9 March 1988.

33. Interview of Soviet Foreign Minister E. A. Shevardnadze to "Rabotnichesko Delo", Sofia, Bulgaria, Tass report circulated by Soviet Embassy in Dhaka, 31 March 1988, pp. 2-3.

34. Fay Willey and Joyce Barnathan, *op. cit* ; *The Muslim*, 4 January 1988; *Bangladesh Observer*, 1 April 1988.

35. *Bangladesh Observer*, 26 March 1988.

for US military aid to the rebels to continue if Washington was to serve with Moscow as a guarantor of the accord. He also ruled out any halt of Soviet military aid to Afghanistan citing treaty obligations with Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> The United States and the Soviet Union, thus, remained sharply divided as the negotiations to settle the war entered a second month.

The Soviet Union argued that nowhere in any draft Geneva document was there any mention of any "symmetry" or "moratorium" on arms supplies. The US proposal was not acceptable to the Soviet Union on the ground that it meant interference in its bilateral relations with Afghanistan, a sovereign state, a UN member which had diplomatic relations even the with United States itself. The US contention was also not tenable because it put a sovereign state at par with the rebels.<sup>37</sup>

Next, the Soviet Union tried it with Pakistan by suggesting that the United States be excluded from the agreement, and Pakistan sign, committing itself not to allow US arms to be channelled through its territory. But, Pakistan rejected that, insisting on signing the agreement with Afghanistan and the superpowers as it was a four-way agreement.<sup>38</sup> As the deadlock continued at Geneva, Moscow opened up its second option and Shevardnadze flew to Kabul to confer with President Najibullah on policy options in case Geneva peace talks failed. It was reported that Afghanistan had agreed to Soviet troop withdrawal even if Geneva talks did not produce an accord. This would allow Moscow to disregard Washington's request for "front-loading" or the withdrawal of a large proportion of the Soviet troops in the first months of the pullout.<sup>39</sup> It is observed that the Soviet move was to put the heat on the US-Pak side and thereby to hasten peace accord in Geneva. And that seemed to have worked.

36. *Bangladesh Observer*, 4, 7 April 1988.

37. Shevardnadze's interview, *op. cit.* p. 5

38. *Bangladesh Observer*, 4 April 1988.

39. See for details, Shevardnadze's interview, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7; *Bangladesh Observer*, 5, 6, 7 April 1988.



At last, the Soviet Union, the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed the UN-sponsored accords on 14 April 1988 designed to bring peace to Afghanistan. In a series of accords contained in a 36 - page document, the four countries said that there would be phased withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan beginning on 15 May. One half of the troops will be withdrawn by 15 August 1988 and thus withdrawal of all troops will be completed within nine months. From 15 May there would be no interference or intervention in the affairs of the parties and the voluntary repatriation would begin of the estimated five million Afghan refugees mainly living in Pakistan and Iran.<sup>40</sup> The accords also stipulated that the representatives of Afghanistan and Pakistan would meet whenever required to consider any violations of the agreement and the UN Secretary General's representative would investigate any such incidents at the request of the two countries, or on his own initiative. An annexe to the agreement also provided for the appointment by the UN of a senior military officer in the area as head of two separate units, one in Kabul and the other in Islamabad. Both the Soviet Union and the United States reserved the right to provide military supplies to the Kabul regime and the Mujahideens respectively.<sup>41</sup> However, the Mujahideens rejected the accords and vowed to continue the fight.

### III. POST - WITHDRAWAL SCENARIO

It is only obvious that the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan will inevitably catch the imagination of political analysts and observers. It is worth examining whether the post-withdrawal regional scenario and the relationship between actors having bearing upon the region, will be the same as it prevailed before December 1979. Analysts hold the view that the political landscape in Afghanistan and the neighbouring region is expected to undergo some changes after the Soviet withdrawal regardless of the complexion of the regime in Kabul.<sup>42</sup>

40. *The New Nation*, 16 April 1988.

41. *ibid.*

42. Nasim Ahmed, "After the Soviet Withdrawal", *The Muslim*, 16 February 1988.

### a. Afghanistan

It would be interesting to observe Afghanistan during the Soviet withdrawal as well as after it. And after all, what actually the Soviet pullout would mean in Afghan politics. The Soviet pullback is essentially a military one and not in political or economic sense. Moscow is going to withdraw its men in uniform only, but not its advisers and specialists in Afghanistan. The Soviets are reported to have signed many economic agreements at the national as well as local levels. The process of Sovietization of the Afghan society has also taken a dynamics of its own and it is expected to proceed as before.<sup>43</sup> All this will help the Soviets maintain more political sway in the Afghan affairs even after the withdrawal.

On the other hand, the Afghan resistance has decided to set up an interim government inside Afghanistan with the central authorities located in the Panjsher Valley, or Jaji region of Paktia province bordering Pakistan. Resistance sources said that the offices of the interim government will spread all over the liberated areas. The resolve of the resistance was further stiffened by the US-Pak pledge to continue arming the Mujahideens.<sup>44</sup> However, it may be argued that the US-Pak position is a pressure-tactic aimed at ensuring a better representation for the Mujahideens in the coalition government to be constituted soon in Afghanistan. Because, the Americans can not be expected to continue arms supplies in order to install an Islamic fundamentalist regime in Kabul. It is plausible that if the share for the Mujahideens in the future Afghan government be satisfactory to the US interests, Washington would have no rational ground to keep its arms flowing into the rebel hands. That is one danger the Mujahideens might face in case they keep on showing intransigence.

Another scenario might be that with the Soviet troops withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Afghans would fight the Afghans. The

43. *The Economist*, 27 February 1988, p. 20; Dieter Braun, *Afghanistan : Sowjetische Machtpolitik-Islamische Selbstbestimmung*, Nomos. Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, FRG, 1988, pp. 294-295.

44. *Bangladesh Observer*, 16,17 April 1988

Mujahideens might fight the communists, the fundamentalists might fight the moderates within the resistance alliance. Given the already fragile unity among the rebel groups and the withdrawal of their common enemy, the resistance alliance might find it difficult to remain together for long. The communist regime might make use of such a situation in its favour. However, events would be quite uncertain and ambiguous that might unfold in Afghanistan during and after the Soviet pullout. Those who are interested in peace in Afghanistan, however, would suggest that a lasting settlement lay in a compromise, to be reached by all involved parties, in formulating a national government representing all segments of Afghan society.

#### b. Soviet - American Relations

An image developed in the late 1970s that had a powerful effect on American politics. This was the picture of the Soviet Union as an aggressive power, an "evil empire". And the Soviet Union was seen as having taken advantage of detente in the early 1970s.<sup>45</sup> This impression got entrenched as the Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan in December 1979 and cold war II set in. Following these events, the Soviet-American relations came to the lowest ebb. But soon after he became the Kremlin chief, Gorbachev had sent feelers to Washington for improving relations between the two countries. Although relations remained very chilly during his first months in power, gradually the ice began to melt and subsequently there were three summit meetings between General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan. They are going to hold their fourth summit in late May this year.

The third summit held in December 1987 in Washington was very successful as the superpowers signed an agreement eliminating the intermediate - range nuclear forces (INF). Political pundits tend to believe that the summitters agreed more than they said and more progress was made on Afghanistan than the communique

45. Lawrence T. Coldwell, "United States - Soviet Relations and Arms Control", *Current History*, October 1987, p. 306.

announced.<sup>46</sup> As a matter of fact, regional conflicts and confrontation are directly affected by an understanding or lack of it between Washington and Moscow. The Afghan settlement is a case in point. The impact of an Afghan settlement on superpower relationship is quite obvious. For Moscow and Washington, it removes a major area of friction which was affecting their bilateral ties. In fact, the priorities of the superpowers in their respective global commitments appear to be different from those in the last one decade. A peaceful Afghan settlement would help both to concentrate on other more pressing bilateral issues as well as other regional and global issues that threatened world peace and security.

### c. US-Pak Relations

The history of US-Pak relationship has been a chequered one. In the fifties Pakistan formed a significant pillar in the US policy of 'containment' against the communist states, as the former moved into US-sponsored military alliances. The US-Pak relationship continued well upto the 1970s with minor periodic ups and downs. After the emergence of independent and sovereign Bangladesh, the regional power configuration in South Asia underwent a radical change with India dominating the regional politics. Following this, the salience of Pakistan to the United States did not figure quite prominently. But the political developments in South and South-west Asia in the late 1970s, namely, the revolution in Iran, the Soviet entry into Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war, quickly heightened Pakistan's strategic value for the United States. In the wake of all these events, Pakistan began to be treated as a "frontline state" and once again it became an essential anchor of US South and South-west Asia policy.<sup>47</sup>

Now, political observers appear to be interested in matters of possible impact of an Afghan settlement on US-Pak relationship. A

46. *Dawn*, 3 January 1988.

47. Abdur Raziq Khan, "Pak-US Relations in Historical Perspective", *The Muslim*, 31, January 1988, p. 4.

renowned Pakistani journalist has observed that some three divergent points had arisen between Islamabad and Washington on the Afghan issue. First, Pakistan suspected that there was a superpower 'deal' on Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan's concerns on the issue. Second, the US had not supported Pakistan demand of forming a coalition government in Kabul prior to the signing of any agreement at Geneva. And finally, it was a concern for Pakistan that the US had endorsed a role for India on the Afghanistan issue.<sup>48</sup> He further points out that there has been a convergence of interests among the United States, the Soviet Union and India on certain issues which are considered to be detrimental to Pakistan by many of its political observers. The issues are: a common opposition by the three to a radical Islamic government in Kabul and for that matter anywhere in the region; acceptance by superpowers of India's status as a dominant power in South Asia; and a common opposition to Pakistan's nuclear programme. As a matter of fact, the same observers consider that the Americans will be less hesitant in putting pressure on Pakistan on the nuclear issue, once the Soviets are out of Afghanistan.<sup>49</sup>

But there are views opposed to the ones stated above. Observers maintain that there would be no limit to the US accommodating Pakistan's wishes as the price of earning Pakistan's cooperation. The price could even extend to "legitimizing" Pakistan's nuclear ambition by turning the heat on India and otherwise insisting on India-Pakistan parity.<sup>50</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski in his book 'Game Plan' also listed Pakistan as one of the linchpin states on the south western front in a geo-strategic framework for the conduct of the US Soviet contest.<sup>51</sup> In fact, the future of US aid was linked to Pakistan undertaking to support Washington in the Gulf as well. It was clear from a recent

48. See for details, Mushahid Hussain, *op. cit.*

49. *ibid.*

50. M. H. Askari, "Indo - Soviet Relations : Implications for Pakistan", *Dawn*, 6 January 1988, p. 7.

51. Najam Rafique, "What Price Pak-US Relationship;", *The Muslim*, 10 February 1988.

statement by Frank Carlucci, US Secretary of Defence, in Islamabad, that the US needed Pakistan not only because of Afghanistan, it needed her in a broader context of issues and relationship. He went further by saying that the US would not develop its relationship with any other country at the cost of that with Pakistan.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, as long as the US considers its interests in Pakistan's neighbourhood to be at stake, Washington is not likely to abandon Islamabad.

#### d. Pak-Soviet Relations

Historically Pakistan has sought and bought its security from a superpower across the ocean, not from the one that almost borders it. Nevertheless, close Indo-Soviet and Pak-US relationship could not prevent Pakistan and the Soviet Union at times to look eye to eye for good neighbourly relations. The Afghan crisis had certainly marred the relationship between the two countries. Now, with the Soviets out of Afghanistan and a peaceful Afghan settlement fast nearing, possibilities of improving Pak-Soviet relationship are real. It is already known that Gorbachev is determined to seek improved relationship with the countries of Asia. Moreover, peace in Afghanistan is also contingent on good relationship with Pakistan. In light of this, a general improvement in political relationship may be expected between Pakistan and the Soviet Union.

Analysts are of the view that with an Afghan settlement the prospects of greater economic cooperation seem bright.<sup>53</sup> Since economic cooperation between the two has a political bias the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan will provide an improved political climate between the two countries. However, one must bear in mind that the Pak-Soviet ties will be vigilantly watched at Washington and New Delhi. However, it would be prudent to think that Pakistan's friendship with the US should not be at the cost of Soviet hostility. Soviet power

52. Rashda Anwer and Sabiha Hasan, "Pakistan Foreign Policy-A Quarterly Survey", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. XL, 1987, Third Quarter, p. VIII; BBC monitored in Dhaka, 8 April 1988.

53. *The Muslim*, 2 January 1988; Musbahid Hussain, *op. cit.* p. 49.

and proximity are to be meticulously taken into consideration by Islamabad in formulating its foreign policy.

#### e. Indo-US Relations

The Indo-American relations have been featured by periodic oscillations. However, their relationship is believed to be taking a sharp upturn consequent to frequent official and political level meetings including summits. What has made the change possible may be the US recognition of India's growing importance as a regional power and a pragmatic approach by India in seeking US technology to realize its full potential.<sup>54</sup> Although the question of US aid to Pakistan and American concern over India's nuclear programme continue to affect bilateral ties, Washington and New Delhi seem eager to continue the defence and technology cooperation begun three years ago.<sup>55</sup>

However, the US officials acknowledge that their and New Delhi's perspectives differ because Washington looks at India and Pakistan in the context of the East-West conflict, while historical animosities of the two South Asian neighbours dominate their view of Washington. While in recent years Washington has acknowledged India as a regional power by publicly hailing India's role in Sri Lanka, it has treated Pakistan as more of a West Asian than subcontinental power. And US security aid to Pakistan has been guided more by its strategic needs in Afghanistan and the Gulf than by Indian concerns.<sup>56</sup>

However, an end to the Afghan war would not suddenly devalue Pakistan's importance. A senior US administration official is reported to have said: "while Pakistan would not obtain as much generous help as it gets now, relations will continue, We have an historic association with Pakistan. Also, the turmoil in neighbouring countries

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54. Nayan Chanda, "A New Indian Summer", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 February 1988, p. 24.

55. *ibid*

56. *ibid*

ensures our continued interest in Pakistan"<sup>57</sup> So it is clear that Washington can hardly be expected to sacrifice Pakistan for the sake of improving its relations with New Delhi.

The failure by India to condemn the Soviet action in Afghanistan will also remain for quite sometime in American minds. And following the Soviet withdrawal, a major realignment of India with the United States is not likely because the upturn in their relationship is not in the political or ideological field but in the commercial and techno-economic sectors.<sup>58</sup> The limits of Indo-US ties are succinctly put by an Indian scholar : "not all the perfumes of diplomacy can conceal the cardinal fact that on most of the regional, world issues the world's most prosperous and the world's most popular democracies stand widely apart."<sup>59</sup>

#### f. Indo-Soviet Relations

Although India did not publicly condemn the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, privately it is known to have been persuading the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan as soon as possible. India did not welcome the Soviet troops so close to its border. Moreover, in the pretext of being a 'frontline state' Pakistan was heavily armed by the US weapons which were, according to India, basically targeted against India, affecting India's regional aspirations. This caused a "benign friction" between Moscow and New Delhi. Now, with the Soviet pullout, this is going to be all over with a promise of further cementing the Indo-Soviet ties. And probably that is why the Soviet Union is now encouraging India to play a role (as if a compensation from Moscow for "benign friction" over Afghanistan) in the Afghan affairs.

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57. *ibid*

58. See for details, Sikandar Hayat, "Indo-US Relations : New Developments", *Regional Studies*, Vol. V. No. 1, Winter 1986/87, pp. 64-84.

59. Bhabani Sen Gupta, "A Tale of two Visits", *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 30 June 1985.



Going a little back one can recollect that there were speculations that Rajiv Gandhi, a modernist with a quest for sophisticated technology, might subsequently go for a restructuring of India's relations with the superpowers. But it did not happen. Because, the Indo-Soviet relations are time-tested and are set on a stable, durable and unruffled course. Any meaningful retraction from this course would involve Rajiv Gandhi in a serious political risk not only for himself but for his country as well. Because the present power alignment seems to be serving India's national interests better.

Gorbachev's Kremlin makes overtures for improved relations with Asia in an effort to reduce Moscow's "political isolation and economic marginality" in Asia and to "regain the diplomatic initiative, and to win breathing space for revitalization". For the success of this policy, support and favour of India is of vital significance and India, as always, is considered a fulcrum for Soviet policies in Asia.<sup>60</sup> In return, India was recognized as a regional superpower by the Soviet Union by warmly endorsing the Indo-Sri Lanka peace accord. Hence, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan would remove the irritant between the Soviet Union and India, and further cement the existing relationship for their mutual interests.

#### g. Sino-Soviet Relations

Breakthrough in Sino-Soviet relations occurred when Gorbachev made a peace overture to Beijing in a speech on 28 July 1986 in Vladivostok. Since then the pace of Sino-Soviet normalization has been stepped up. The three obstacles, which are—Soviet troops stationed along China's border, Soviet presence in Afghanistan and Kremlin's support for the Vietnamese role in Kampuchea, stand in the way of improved Sino-Soviet relations. The Chinese admit that Gorbachev has started to work on all three.<sup>61</sup> Following the withdrawal of

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60. Bushra Gohar, "Indo - Soviet Relations : The Rajiv Era", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol XL, 1987, Third Quarter, p. 98.

61, *The Economist*, 16 January 1988, pp. 24-25.

Soviet troops from Afghanistan the prospects for a genuine reconciliation between China and the USSR are expected to improve. An Afghan settlement will, in turn, offer better chances for the solution of the Kampuchean issue, which is considered the chief sticking point.

There are evidences that Gorbachev has been pressing the Vietnamese to keep their promise to withdraw their troops from Kampuchea by 1990.<sup>62</sup> The developments on Kampuchean settlement in recent months are probably indicative of that. Gorbachev said in an interview that he favoured a just political solution to regional conflicts. What he appeared to have expected in return is that China should abandon its longstanding policy of maintaining "equidistance" between Moscow and Washington.<sup>63</sup> While it is difficult to say whether the Chinese will go for a rapprochement with the Soviets at the cost of Beijing's American connection, it is almost an improbability that the two communist giants can afford the material and policy costs of a return to the 1960s and 1970s.

#### **h. India and the Region**

Since its independence India has been pursuing a policy objective of dominating South Asia. Post-independence Indian leadership took it for granted that India had inherited the British "Strategic Unity" in the region. Not only that, India endeavoured to become an independent centre of decision-making in global politics. India continued to pursue this policy at times even at the expense of legitimate interests of her South Asian neighbours. However, India continued to be the predominant power in the region. It is only the 1962 Sino-Indian war that dealt a severe blow to India's power and prestige. Then came the challenge from Pakistan in 1965. Thus the Indian regional supremacy was almost effectively challenged. However, following the historic role of India during the Bangladesh crisis and the defeat of Pakistan at the hands of India in the 1971 Indo-Pak war effectively reestablished Indian regional supremacy.

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62. *ibid.*

63. *Asiaweek*, 22 January 1988, p. 11.

However, the developments in the neighbourhood of India in the late 1970s and above all, the developments in Afghanistan altered the situation. The fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet march into Afghanistan marked the beginning of a second 'cold war' between the superpowers with its consequent impact on the South Asian political scenario. India for obvious reasons could not welcome the Soviet presence so close to its border. Moreover, as a result of these developments the salience of Pakistan in the strategic calculus of Washington was graduated abruptly to a higher level with an obvious impact on Indo-Pak relations.

With the Soviet troops withdrawn from Afghanistan, India is expected again to assert its hegemony in South Asia which was in fact already recognized by both superpowers in the wake of Indian intervention in Sri Lanka. India's regional status is also evident from the blessings of both Washington and Moscow that India received in order to play an active role in the Afghan affairs.<sup>64</sup> Indian interests in Afghanistan are not far to seek. A non-aligned and non-fundamentalist government in Kabul is only obvious to be expected by New Delhi. India, therefore, can not be happy to leave the field to Pakistan alone. As soon as the seriousness of the Soviet intentions to withdraw became clear India had made numerous contacts with the Kabul regime as well as with Afghan exiles including the former King Zahir Shah, now living in Rome.<sup>65</sup>

Theoretically Indo-Pak relations are expected to improve in the wake of an Afghan settlement. But the vast difference in the perceptions of the two countries about their role in establishing peace and order in the region makes any expectations and predictions difficult. During the years of the Afghan crisis Pakistan has been rearmed to the teeth by the sophisticated US weapons. In response to it India also matched it by swelling its own arsenal. In conventional weapons,

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64. See for details, *Asiaweek*, 11 March 1988, p. 22; Abdul Hye, *op. cit.*; *Bangladesh Observer*, 4 March 1988.

65. *Bangladesh Observer*, 29 February 1988; *The Muslim*, 18 February 1988.



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there exists a balance between the two countries, although Pakistan may now move its troops from Afghan border and deploy them along the Indian border much to the discomfort of India. There are other irritants between India and Pakistan, namely the Punjab issue and Pakistan's alleged involvement in it, and the Siachin glacier issue. All this almost overrules a possibility of a reduction of arms race between the two. The two are also intransigent in carrying on their respective nuclear programmes. And it might subsequently bring in a qualitative change in the strategic environment in the region with countless uncertainties and imponderables, much against the welfare of a billion people of South Asia.

## CONCLUSION

The Geneva settlement package on Afghanistan contains four documents. The first is a bilateral agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan on non-interference and renunciation of intervention in each others internal affairs. The second is a bilateral agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the voluntary return of refugees. The third is an agreement on the withdrawal of soviet troops from Afghanistan and the fourth is a declaration on the international guarantees by the Soviet Union and the United States.

There are no fine prints in the third document, while in all the rest there are. The signing of an agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan means the recognition of the latter by the former with all the legal implications of the act for each other. The agreement on the return of refugees is fraught with uncertain consequences. The refugees and their rebel fighters are not a party to the settlement process. The Mujahideens have rejected the Geneva agreements and vowed to continue the fight. The new Afghan government must create a situation inside Afghanistan so that the refugees spontaneously feel like returning home. The Mujahideens use the Pakistan territory as their sanctuary but with the agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan signed, Pakistan cannot allow its territory to be used by the Mujahideens for

the same purpose. If the Mujahideens are determined to remain intransigent they may face a 'Black September' or Pakistan may have to be accused of violating its legal obligations with Afghanistan.

Paradoxically, the two guarantors have been allowed to continue their military supplies to the two fighting parties in Afghanistan. It will create a confusing situation, because it is not understandable how the United States will reach its military supplies to the Mujahideens without using Pakistan's territory. Even if the United States tries to make use of any third country for the purpose, the task can not be accomplished without the help of Pakistan.

All parties have prudently agreed that for an end to the strife and restoration of peace inside Afghanistan, the formation of a broadbased government in Kabul was an indispensable requirement. Now it is upto the ingenuity of the Afghan people to form a suitable government. The success of this process is, however, dependent on the participation of all segments of Afghan people, including the Mujahideens, the refugees and the PDPA. It is plausible to think that the United States reserved its right to arm the rebels in order to use it as pressure tactics to pursue Mujahideen representation in the future Afghan government. The Soviets also might have agreed to the "symmetry issue" with the hope that whatever might be battled out by the Afghans themselves, will not result in anything prejudicial to basic Soviet interests in Afghanistan.

The superpowers may seem to be complacent of their role in the Afghan affairs. The Americans might now say that they have made the Soviets roll back from Afghanistan while the Kremlin may say that they have withdrawn their forces only after they succeeded in stopping the outside interference in Afghanistan, the *raison d'etre* for their move into Afghanistan. However, for Afghans themselves, peace is yet to achieve. The Soviet military withdrawal has at best lit the dark tunnel but has not brought the Afghans to its end.