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## Soviet Fortunes on the Southern Tier: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan

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*The thrust of Soviet power southward has become a reality. Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a dramatic illustration of Moscow's new willingness to extend its control over an area it considers vital because of shared borders. Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, the three countries on the southern rim of the U.S.S.R., have experienced or have the potential to experience major changes. The implications of these changes and their effect on the internal, regional, and global environment are analyzed here.*

## SOVIET FORTUNES ON THE SOUTHERN TIER: AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, AND PAKISTAN

by

Shirin Tahir-Kheli

**Background.** The internal dynamics of the region under study were subject to major strains after 1978. The culmination of events that followed the April 1978 Marxist coup in Kabul led not to stability under a new order, but to a series of coups and countercoups.<sup>1</sup> Although the Afghan Communists shared their dependence on Moscow, any other form of agreement was precluded by feuding between the Parcham and Khalq factions. United under the common name of People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the split between the Parchamis and the Khalqis manifested itself in the different style of the major personalities.

Noor Mohammad Taraki, the first Marxist leader who was from the Khalq faction, soon ran up against problems in overhauling Afghan society to match the Marxist vision of the new order. His reforms in education, land, and social policies were challenged by a majority of

Afghans in most of the 28 provinces in Afghanistan. By May 1978, Afghan refugees had begun arriving in Pakistan, and lack of public support for Communist programs was becoming evident.<sup>2</sup>

Growing discontent with the turn of events was also demonstrated in the spirit of active noncooperation that transcended simple dislike of the Marxist programs. The Afghan populace, trained over centuries in individualism, began to make life difficult for the government through a variety of responses ranging from absenteeism from work to individual acts of terrorism against Marxist officials.\* Lack

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\*This aspect of the Afghan personality was recognized by none other than Friedrich Engels who wrote in 1881: "The Afghans are a brave, hardy and independent race [with] their indomitable hatred of rule, and their love of individual independence."<sup>3</sup> Engels also noted the unwillingness of the Afghans to tolerate rule by "European infidels."<sup>4</sup>

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of coordinated moves became an advantage for the opposition. By the unpredictability of these actions, the government was denied the opportunity to anticipate and circumvent them.

Opposition to Taraki's policies solidified because those policies were considered by most Afghans to be against their traditional and religious values.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, tribal and religious leaders perceived land and social reforms initiated by PDPA as directly undermining their positions of power. With ever-increasing intensity, the Marxists began to run into personal and professional difficulty. As Taraki felt his base of power erode, he moved to institutionalize his links to Moscow by signing a friendship treaty in December 1978. The treaty not only acknowledged the importance of the U.S.S.R. in the new Afghan scheme of things, it created a Soviet stake in the survival of the PDPA.

In addition to the above, the Soviet treaty with Afghanistan must be seen as enabling Moscow to put greater pressure on Iran and Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> Iran was already in a state of turmoil following the publication of an anti-Khomeini missive in January 1978 that resulted in antigovernment riots in Qum.<sup>7</sup> While the Soviets did not come out against the Shah whom they had cultivated with major economic agreements, the possibility of domestic turmoil providing opportunities remained. This factor, coupled with the tenuous hold of the military in Pakistan, raised the specter of the entire security picture on the southern tier coming unraveled for the Soviets who are hypersensitive to any instability on their borders.

While Soviet involvement in Iran and Pakistan was indirect, in Afghanistan it was both direct, as well as mounting. Between April 1978 and March 1979, 75 new agreements for economic assistance valued at a total of \$200 million were signed by Moscow with Kabul.<sup>8</sup>

These agreements brought an influx of

nearly 4,500 Soviet advisers who helped the Taraki regime govern in the face of rebellion.

Once the Soviet commitment to Afghanistan deepened, Pak-Afghan relations deteriorated, reflecting the pattern established since the mid-1950s. It was a vicious cycle: as domestic opposition to Marxist rule increased, Taraki turned to Moscow and that only strengthened local charges that he had "sold Afghanistan to the Soviet Union." Unable to explain why the Afghan people were resisting the "progressive reforms" sponsored by PDPA, Moscow and Kabul both focused their frustration on Pakistan by accusing it (along with China, Iran, and the United States) of fomenting trouble. The flight of Afghan refugees to Pakistan was a tremendous embarrassment as both Kabul as well as Moscow were loathe to admit the failure of the Marxist revolution. Instead, they put pressure on Pakistan to stop the refugee flow and return those already present. Pressure was applied through violations of Pakistani airspace. Between January and July 1979, Pakistan counted 56 violations of its air and ground space where penetrations of up to 3 miles occurred.

The acceleration of fighting brought increased Soviet military participation. By mid-1979 reports of Soviet pilots flying missions against opposition strongholds were circulating in Afghanistan. Furthermore, both the East Germans (who opened an Embassy) and Cubans were being drawn into assisting the Soviets in Afghanistan as they have done elsewhere, e.g., South Yemen. While coping with the problems of retaining control, Moscow was becoming painfully aware of the alienation of the Afghan population. Yet, Taraki as well as his successor, Hafizullah Amin, were in no mood to compromise on the rapid pace of reforms. In fact, Amin was intent on speeding up the process of change. He declared that his 16 September 1979

coup against Taraki marked "the beginning of a new socialist order."<sup>9</sup> The harshness of Amin's policies resulted in the deepening of Afghan resentment. His dependence on Moscow grew in direct proportion to the weakening of his hold on his own populace. Yet, Amin was unwilling to listen to Soviet advice to moderate his policies somewhat. Nor was he able to create a nation where none existed. Afghanistan, a country characterized by regional disunity, ethnic and linguistic diversity, coupled with a fundamentally traditional social structure, continued to outpace Marxist reforms.

Myriad explanations have been offered for the Soviet decision to intercede in Afghanistan with troops on 27 December 1979 and occupy the country and replace Amin with the Parcham leader, Babrak Karmal.<sup>10</sup> They range from Soviet fear of Islamic revivalism on the Muslim population of Central Asia to the protection of the Socialist doctrine and a playing out of the Brezhnev Doctrine. Overall, it can be said that Soviet interest dictated a policy of neutralization of Asia *vis-à-vis* the Western alliance system.<sup>11</sup> The departure of the Shah of Iran in January 1979 had impinged on U.S. fortunes not only in Iran but throughout the region by virtue of the Shah's role as an anchor of the American position in Southwest Asia.

Pakistan ceased to offer Moscow much challenge except as an annoyance because of its close ties to Beijing. The Carter administration's singular lack of enthusiasm for Pakistan left it generally to fend for itself. Nonalignment and the Islamic bloc offered a new focus for Pakistani foreign policy. The Soviet move into Afghanistan increased political pressure upon Pakistan because of the Soviet military presence on adjacent soil. However, the invasion itself unleashed a storm of international diplomatic fury that was led by the United States and Pakistan.

Washington finally recognized what it had failed to acknowledge almost a year earlier when American Ambassador Dubs had been murdered in Kabul on 14 February 1979. That is, the Soviets controlled Afghan governmental machinery to a great extent and had obviously decided to end even the nominally neutral position Afghanistan held after 1978. President Carter claimed that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had finally taught him something about the Russians. In an about face on U.S. strategy in Southwest Asia, he ordered that henceforth "any attack by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the U.S.A. And such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."<sup>12</sup>

The view from Islamabad was equally alarming. Pakistan had suddenly become a frontline state, its new position in South Asia commensurate with that occupied in the past by Afghanistan. Pakistani leaders saw the Soviet move as being deliberate and part of a plan to move beyond because Afghanistan, in and of itself, offered no prize.<sup>13</sup> The potential for further destabilization of Pakistan, as well as Iran, seemed a very likely part of the "great game." Although Islamic revivalism in Iran and Pakistan was a force to reckon with, there were fundamental differences between the two, and it would seem unlikely that Moscow could have been impelled by the fear of pan-Islamic sentiments reaching its Central Asian Muslim population.<sup>14</sup> Islamabad considered it much more likely that Amin had become far less pliable than was desirable from Moscow's point of view. The latter also suspected that in his attempts to dodge Soviet pressure, Amin was likely to turn to Washington, Beijing, and Islamabad. After years of indirect and 19 months of direct control, this was not a scenario to Moscow's liking.

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Pakistan's role within the Islamic bloc is critical for the diplomatic isolation of the Babrak Karmal regime. According to General Zia: "The battle for Pakistan will be fought in Afghanistan."<sup>15</sup> If this is indeed the case, then Pakistan is forced to internationalize the crisis by keeping it in the forefront of world opinion. The Soviets have repeatedly warned that Pakistan must cease and desist from all activities construed by the former as denying legitimacy to the Karmal regime.

The Soviets will continue to exploit opportunities present, as well as seek new ones in building a string of anti-American nations in Southwest Asia. This policy has created an American stake in Pakistan for continued stability. In other words, Pakistan has become crucial in the achievement or denial of the Soviet strategy. In this context, a number of options faces Pakistan today: first, it can accept Soviet tutelage, promise to "behave" itself by becoming totally passive *vis-à-vis* India and the U.S.S.R. It can abandon its role in the Islamic Conference and cut its special links to China. It can refuse any assistance from the United States. Having thus been thoroughly neutralized, the Soviets will (in concert with the Indians) permit its continued existence, at least in the short run. While there are advocates of this view within Pakistan, even they recognize the fact that despite Pakistani acceptance of Soviet demands, Moscow is likely to continue covert assistance to undermine Pakistan, most likely through support of dissident Pathan and Baluchi elements.

Secondly, Pakistan could continue to seek assistance from China and the Islamic bloc outside the purview of any collaboration with the United States; in other words, a regional response organized and carried out solely with regional means. The problem with this response, beyond the use of purely diplomatic means, is that it is untenable.

Because the Pakistani Government

believes that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a military move that, if it is to be met at all, must have a military component, regional reliance is not the sole answer. Despite limited Chinese assistance and Saudi money, modernization of Pakistani Armed Forces cannot be accomplished without American assistance. All of this is necessarily predicated on the assumption that a Soviet move into Pakistan will occur in tandem with an Indian putsch. And increasing Pakistani military preparedness on either the northern or the eastern front delays the move by raising its costs.

Thirdly, Pakistan can renew its links with the United States. Despite Pakistani withdrawal from CENTO in March 1979 because, according to Zia, it was "useless," a new American commitment to the security of Southwest Asia is underway. Pakistan recognizes that, in the final analysis, only the United States can prevent the Soviets from moving further south. Part of this strategy relies on the psychological and diplomatic signals that stem from demonstrating that the United States recognizes and will challenge the ambitious plans of the Soviet Union. It also signals that Washington no longer accepts the "slow process of self-Finlandization."<sup>16</sup> While this strategy may not end Soviet undermining of Pakistani security through covert assistance to opposition groups, it does impede the success of the plan by slowing it down. Because the Soviet Union is held as being responsible for changes in the status quo, Moscow has to be sure that it is prepared to accept the consequences of Pakistani destabilization. This option is, of course, viable only if the American commitment is a sustained attempt to check further Soviet expansion and not merely dependent on the preferences and proclivities of a single administration.

**The Regional Context.** Soviet fortunes in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan

are also helped or hindered by the regional environment. Here too events of recent years have provided arenas of opportunities for Moscow to exploit. A number of these can be specifically mentioned.

The full effect of the Iranian revolution is yet to be played out. Because of the close identification of the Shah with the United States, the anti-Americanism of the Khomeini regime as demonstrated in the hostage crisis remains monumental. The Soviet Union reinforces the image of American exploitation of Iran through radio broadcasts and in direct contact with Iranian officials. Denial of Iran to the United States has become as important to Moscow as denial of Southwest Asia to the U.S.S.R. is currently to Washington.

Events in Iran have the potential of impinging on other regional actors. The Khomeini call (by design or example) to Shia populations to overthrow existing regimes in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates makes regional governments uneasy. Because these governments are conservative and dependent on American protection, and also are crucial for Western economic survival because of their vast oil resources, any change that has the potential of disturbing present alliances with the West is extremely important. In particular, if the overthrow of existing regimes who are friendly with the West can be achieved from within the system, then Moscow cannot be held accountable although it could turn out to be the main beneficiary. It is with this kind of a scenario in mind that Moscow was careful not to alienate Iran in its current war with Iraq despite its treaty relationship with the latter.

Thus, Moscow carefully cultivates whatever opportunities may present themselves while Iran remains intact. In the event that Iran splinters into a number of ministates, e.g., Khuzistan, Baluchistan, Azerbaijan, then the

Soviets have two options. One is to infiltrate dissident groups in advance of any dissolution. Soviet links with the Tudeh Party are of long standing. The Iranian Government from the time of the Shah's downfall has been aware that many Iranian Marxists who were residents of Eastern Europe were active in Iran. In fact, Mehdi Bazargan accused them of playing a double game in Iran. That is, using the Tudeh Party, they were claiming to support the Iranian Government, but their ultimate game was to seek the "total disarming of the government."<sup>17</sup> Other left-wing groups such as the Marxist Fedayan-e-Khalq are also dependent on Soviet support. The other Soviet policy that may rebound to Moscow's advantage is the image of the Soviet Union as a determined and ruthless country with a dramatic capability "to lift and support substantial forces over long distances."<sup>18</sup> Despite the diplomatic flap over Afghanistan, the above image of the Soviet Union could spawn new opportunities for opposition groups seeking internal support.

There are two schools of thought about Soviet intentions. One feels that indeed the Soviets have moved from a defensive to an offensive posture in implementing their plan to put men and governments pliable to Moscow in charge in various countries.<sup>19</sup> Others, finding the above explanation to be "ludicrously easy," point to the existence of a debate within the Soviet system that acts to preserve the collective security network. The strategy in the latter case is deemed to be defensive. Its aim, however, is to "deny the West and China additional strategic assets, to acquire such assets for the Soviet Union itself, to engender the 'conainment' of China and erode U.S. presence."<sup>20</sup> The ultimate goals of Soviet strategy are thus the same irrespective of whether they are arrived at from offensive or defensive intentions. Furthermore, from the regional standpoint, the end

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result of Soviet policies is the same, i.e., the denial of the area to Western interests.

Thus, from the point of view of an internal threat to regional interests, Afghanistan sharpened the heightened sense of vulnerability unleashed by the downfall of the Shah. At the same time, however, that regional states became part of the American protective umbrella, they were careful not to appear to do so.<sup>21</sup> In large measure their reluctance was the result of the successful identification by Khomeini, and supported by the Soviets over the years, of the United States with all that is considered illegal and immoral by the indigenous population. Continued U.S. support of Israel further prevented host governments, particularly in Arab States, from moving into closer open collaboration with the United States.

Regional conditions can be exacerbated by an outbreak of hostilities such as the Iran-Iraq War. While Moscow may not have wished to see that particular eventuality,<sup>22</sup> it did provide the Soviets with opportunities by offering Teheran new routes for trade and a tacit understanding of the Soviet presence nominally to counter American policy. While Soviet official neutrality may have had costs in Iraqi resentment, Baghdad already had multiplied its options while Iran needed to break out of the siege imposed by the hostage crisis. In other words, the gains in Iran were immediate, while those in Iraq were more long term when future opportunities could be exploited to redress that balance.

**The International Context.** Soviet explanations of their invasion of Afghanistan went beyond the purely domestic and regional factors and put the action in the international context. By stating that "external imperialist forces" had been cooperating with internal counter-revolutionary elements, Moscow put blame squarely on the doorstep of the

United States, China, Egypt, as well as Pakistan. The Soviets went so far as to justify their action on the basis of their 1978 treaty with Afghanistan and Article 51 of the U.N. Charter sanctioning self-defense. Moscow termed its action in Afghanistan a "limited Soviet military contingent" to be used "exclusively for assistance in rebuffing the armed interference from the outside" that would be "completely pulled out of Afghanistan when the reason that necessitated such an action exists no longer."<sup>23</sup>

Also important in recent Soviet behavior in Afghanistan and surfacing in Soviet interaction with Pakistan has been the element of prestige. Moscow demands recognition as a superpower and the only superpower with legitimate credentials in Asia. In rejecting U.S. charges of Soviet actions resulting because of "temptations offered," Moscow has claimed its status as an Asian power. As such, it would not tolerate the weakening of its position in the Middle East and Southwest Asia,<sup>24</sup> because Soviet strength is matched not only against regional countries, but also the United States. In fact, the Soviets have started to talk of the necessity of forming zones of "neutral states" that provide a buffer on the Soviet southern flank.<sup>25</sup> Since 1969, Moscow has pressed various Asian countries, and those on the southern rim in particular, to sign a collective security agreement as a first step towards institutionalizing Soviet presence to the exclusion of Western and Chinese interests.

The international implications of the Soviet move into Afghanistan were substantive. The Soviets lost hard won prestige with Third World countries, a majority of whom joined in January 1980 at the United Nations to vote 104 to 18 (with 30 abstentions or absences) to condemn the Soviet invasion. Even though Moscow may well have been aware of the ephemeral nature of past condemnation (e.g., against the Soviet

move into Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968), suspicion of the Soviets may linger awhile because Afghanistan was a nonaligned country outside the Soviet empire. The Islamic conference voted unanimously in January 1980 to sever diplomatic relations, cut off all economic aid to Afghanistan, and withhold recognition from the Babrak Karmal regime until all Soviet troops were withdrawn. Periodic Soviet proposals for legitimizing the Karmal government have gotten nowhere in the face of Pakistan's and Iran's unwillingness to have terms dictated to them. Despite Islamabad's initial willingness to discuss the Afghan situation under the aegis of the United Nations, it seems unwilling to make peace on Moscow's terms, particularly if the price is friendship with China.

Invading Afghanistan cost the Soviets dearly in *détente*. The United States, in particular, perceived the move as representative of a fundamental shift in Soviet strategy to henceforth seek an alteration of the "correlation of forces" in their favor by undermining the regional and global power of the West.<sup>26</sup> Coupled with the extension of the Brezhnev Doctrine to all self-proclaimed Marxist states, Moscow demonstrated a new willingness to intervene in the Third World as opportuneries presented themselves. To counter any such move in an area of vital importance because of its vast energy resources and its access to sea lines of communication (SLOCs), the Carter Doctrine was unveiled on 21 January 1980. As a result, the United States undertook to provide a military shield around the Persian Gulf in order to check Soviet expansion. As an important component of its new policy, U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean was augmented and host-nation support actively sought. Furthermore, the United States planned to expand its naval fleet to a 600-ship Navy giving it a capacity to establish a new fleet for the Indian Ocean rather than rely on

temporary naval deployments. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could also result in the creation of a new command for Southwest Asia. Finally, ratification of SALT II was sacrificed and negotiations for SALT III put off indefinitely. Washington's actions were made more credible because of the shift in public mood regarding Soviet intentions. Soviet actions have played a major role in destroying the "Vietnam syndrome" that precluded U.S. military involvement overseas for nearly a decade.

The process of normalization of Soviet relations with West European nations was also affected. Washington pressed NATO allies to come out strongly and demonstrably against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, reminding the West Europeans (and Japanese) that they were even more dependent on Persian Gulf oil than was the United States. Other European issues in East-West relations that were set back for the Soviets were the talks for mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) and Soviet attempts to condition European NATO countries into rejecting positioning of *Pershing IIs* and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) in Europe. Afghanistan, particularly when it was followed so closely by the Polish crisis, strained European *détente* causing some Europeans to realize that while cooperation with the U.S.S.R. was important, confrontation was still an integral part of the relationship.

Despite its commitment to a new U.S. strategy for Southwest Asia that shifts the burden of regional stability from the "twin pillars" policy of Iran and Saudi Arabia to American shoulders, there is a number of limitations that impinge on American effectiveness. For example, there is general reticence within even the pro-Western nations to become directly involved in anti-Soviet security schemes. Memories of past U.S. inaction linger in the region, as well as violent policy swings that are endemic to the U.S. political system,



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make it difficult for the United States to obtain military access. The nations who have thus far offered host-nation support (with the sole exception of Oman) are distant from the center of ongoing crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, there is the difference between U.S. perceptions of the Soviet threat as constituting the primary threat resulting in the "arc of instability"—as Dr. Brzezinski was fond of noting—from the perception of regional countries who view continuation of the Israeli threat a primary issue of concern. In order to maintain a sustained presence in Southwest Asia, the United States will need additional allies. But it cannot get these regional allies until it demonstrates that its interest is indeed a long-term one. Washington's ability to resolve the above difficulties will influence the tone of Soviet relations with southern neighbors.

**Soviet Options.** Finally, an examination of Moscow's future options in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan as they enhance or detract from Soviet fortunes on the southern tier is in order.

Clearly, the first order of business for the U.S.S.R. is to end the rebellion against the Marxist government in Afghanistan. A successful culmination of the conflict means a Soviet-backed PDPA government in effective control. In order to achieve this objective, the Soviets have to do one of several things: First, escalate the fighting by bringing in additional troops. Estimates of minimally required numbers range around the 250,000 mark. Given this number, the Soviets could then presumably hold the cities and also move to wrest control of the countryside from the *mujabadeen*. This strategy would result in massive killing of Afghans, but presumably the Soviets would be willing to pay the price. They have already been ruthless towards the civilian population. However, the magnitude of the effort should be recognized.<sup>28</sup> While the U.S.S.R. may

be able to kill the rebellion in the short run, it would cost a good deal in the long run to maintain the high troop level for occupation. Given Soviet perception of threats via Europe and the PRC, additional troop deployment would involve harsh choices for Moscow. However, it is not a totally imponderable option because the settling of the Afghan rebellion is necessary for full future exploitation of opportunities in Iran and Pakistan.

Secondly, Moscow could continue its policy of fighting the Afghan rebellion at current troop levels. While this would not enhance its present fortunes, it may in the long run provide greater flexibility because it keeps the cost of occupation sufficiently low so as to concomitantly keep up pressure on Pakistan which remains a key to the overall solution. The Soviets could hope for the rebellion simply to fizzle out because of lack of supplies for the Afghan groups, although the *mujabadeen* have demonstrated an ability to sustain the rebellion with elementary arms.

Thirdly, the U.S.S.R. could officially direct its energies at the neutralization of Afghanistan. While France proposed the holding of talks to discuss the prospects of Afghan neutrality as a condition for Soviet withdrawal, the Soviets themselves have coupled any such move with a number of preconditions. Namely, the cessation of all "world aggression" against Afghanistan, normalization of relations with Iran and Pakistan, and the continued existence of the Marxist regime. From the Soviet perspective, if Afghan neutrality is brought within the context of the above requirements then the turmoil in Afghanistan will have been successfully terminated given the fact that Soviet troops would be stationed just across the border. A neutral Afghanistan under Soviet tutelage will buy time for the Soviets to pursue options in Iran and Pakistan without being encumbered by the diplomatic

and military costs of the present Afghan imbroglio.

Fourthly, Moscow could reach a compromise solution to the Afghan problem. In order to do so, the Soviets would first have to admit that opposition to PDPA is genuinely Afghan rather than an internal manifestation of external mischiefmaking. Any compromise formula would have to include Pakistan because 1.5 million Afghan refugees now reside in Pakistan and legitimizing any government in Kabul would require Pakistani concurrence before the Islamic Conference. Islamabad considers compromise to mean a government acceptable to a majority of the Afghan people. So far, Moscow has not shifted its position from its formula calling for a Marxist government that clearly is not acceptable to the Afghan populace. However, if the U.S.S.R. decides that it would prefer to deescalate the conflict, then it may become amenable to a government whose composition allows some PDPA participation but is not controlled by PDPA. A compromise formula would not be much better from the point of view of the Soviet Union than a return to the *status quo ante* that always recognized a special role for the Soviets in Afghanistan. However, there is little indication at present that compromise is uppermost in the minds of Soviet leaders. As one analyst has pointed out, the "operating costs" of Soviet intervention are not high and Moscow has displayed great tenacity in supporting expensive and protracted counterinsurgency campaigns, e.g., Angola and Ethiopia.<sup>29</sup> Soviet notions of prestige may also militate against acceptance of any resolution that does not provide for PDPA (and thus Soviet) control. If Moscow opts for compromise in Afghanistan, it is likely to do so only as part of a larger package that changes the overall tone of East-West relations from their present state of confrontation.

Pursuit of Soviet fortunes in Iran is at

present less subject to control than it is in Afghanistan. The longevity of Khomeini's rule impinges on Moscow's options. There are several directions in which Soviet policy could move in Iran. First, Moscow could normalize its relations through an improvement of presently held images of the Soviet "Satan" held by the revolutionary government in Teheran. In a bid towards such an improvement, the U.S.S.R. has offered use of its facilities for trade, kept itself neutral in the Iran-Iraq War, and sent signals that it would like to resuscitate its economic relations with Iran.

A second option that can be pursued simultaneously with the first provides covert Soviet assistance for leftist groups in Iran, including the Tudeh Party. This way, if the Islamic revolution falters, Moscow is in a reasonable position to help these groups achieve power, if not in the central government, then at least in certain parts of Iran, e.g., Azerbaijan or Khuzistan.

Thirdly, in case of a civil war that leads to the splintering of Iran, the U.S.S.R. could provide overt assistance to groups to its liking in order to achieve a government it could manipulate. The Soviets, who have a 1921 treaty with Iran (which justifies Soviet involvement) are unlikely to watch passively if they see Iran change from a friendly bordering state to a militantly unfriendly one. The fact that the Khomeini regime's anti-Soviet stand is tolerated is because of the display of even more intense anti-U.S. feelings in Teheran. Were things to change and the United States once again to become actively involved (either by invitation or because of a deterioration of law and order), Moscow may well decide that in order to keep its southern border calm, it must intercede. This was the rationale for its invasion of Afghanistan and, if the stakes are sufficiently high, it may also be the case in Iran.

The scenario for Soviet activity in Pakistan is even more fraught with

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opportunity. Pakistan has been the state most affected by Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and any resolution of the problems Kabul currently faces has to involve Pakistan. Yet, the Soviets find that while Pakistan may put up with a certain amount of diplomatic abuse and occasional border violations, it has so far refused to follow the Soviet (or Indian) line. In order to cut Islamabad down to size, Moscow has a variety of means at its disposal. First, it can continue its pressures to convince Pakistan that continued cooperation with Afghan refugee elements and maintaining a strongly anti-Soviet stand within the Islamic bloc would result in Soviet wrath that, coupled with an Indian response, may destroy Pakistan. The price to be paid by Islamabad in order to escape such a fate would be to accept neutralization.

Pakistani acceptance of the United States \$2.5 billion military and economic aid package that provides renewed ties is clearly not desirable from the Soviet point of view. As a result of the American involvement, Pakistan is less subject to overt pressures and threats that make it less tolerant of a Moscow/New Delhi sponsored plan for neutralization. Official acceptance by Islamabad of Washington's aid offer will result in a great deal of propaganda emanating from both Moscow as well as New Delhi. India's position is helpful to the U.S.S.R. because it puts the Pakistani problem in a regional and a bilateral (U.S.-Indian) context rather than simply as a case of East-West relations.

Secondly, the Soviet Union can exploit the opportunities presented by discontent in Baluchistan in order to pressure the Pakistani Government. Any serious threat to the central Pakistani Government from dissident Baluchi or Pathan elements cannot take shape without Soviet support. Delivering the necessary covert support raises the price of Pakistan's pro-U.S. policy

without offering a target for an American response.

Thirdly, in the final analysis, the Soviets could physically move into Pakistan from the north, incorporating the Northwest Frontier Province into Afghanistan, setting up an independent Baluchistan in the West, while India moves to integrate Punjab and the Sind provinces into its own boundaries. This scenario is more likely in the face of a U.S. "hands off" policy in Pakistan. American willingness to bring Pakistan into the fold of the total security picture of Southwest Asia, guaranteed ultimately by a direct American presence, will make it harder for the Soviets, alone or jointly with India, to invade Pakistan.

Soviet fortunes in the southern region have improved in the last 3 years. Apart from Soviet control of Afghanistan, a number of opportunities present themselves in Iran and Pakistan. Whether these opportunities are exploited to Moscow's advantage will be determined not only by Soviet wishes and capabilities, but also by prevailing conditions within Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, and the place of these countries in the U.S. scheme of things.

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### BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Associated Professor of Political Science at Temple University and Fellow, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, received her Ph.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania. She was a 1980-

81 visiting research professor at the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute. Her articles have appeared in *World Affairs*, *Orbis*, *Asian Survey*, and *Asian Affairs* and she is the author of *The Soviet Union in Afghanistan: Benefits and Costs* and *The United States-Pakistan Influence Relationship After 1972*.

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## NOTES

1. For a discussion of events leading to the 1978 coup, see Shirin Tahir-Kheli, "The Southern Flank of the U.S.S.R.: Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan," *Naval War College Review*, Winter 1979, pp. 30-40. Effect of the coup is also discussed by Hannah Negaran, "The Afghan Coup of April 1978: Revolution and International Security," *Orbis*, Spring 1979, pp. 93-112.
2. What had started as a trickle in May 1978 reached flood proportions by May 1981 as the number neared the 2 million mark.
3. Karl Marx, second draft of a letter of 8 March 1881 to Vera Zasulich, in M. Rubel, ed., *Ouvres-Economie* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliotheque de la Pleiade, 1968), v. 2, p. 1569.
4. Ian Cummins, "Afghanistan: 'The Great Game' or the Domino Theory?" *Australian Outlook*, August 1980, p. 141
5. For details of proposed reforms, see Louis Dupree, "Afghanistan Under the Khalq," *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1979, pp. 34-43.
6. Negaran, p. 105.
7. George Lenczowski, "The Arc of Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1979, p. 806.
8. United States, Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, *Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1978* (Washington: The Center, 1979), p. 10.
9. *The New York Times*, 19 September 1979, p. A7.
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