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The recent coup in Afghanistan raised more questions for U.S. strategists than it answered. For Moscow however, at least for the moment, the changes all appear favorable. This paper examines those and similar implications of events in the area.

THE SOUTHERN FLANK OF THE U.S.S.R.: AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, AND PAKISTAN

by

Shirin Tahir-Kheli

Events of recent months have once again raised the question: Has there been a significant change in Soviet fortunes? This question is applied in this paper to three countries on the southern flank, the underbelly so to speak, of the U.S.S.R., namely Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The Soviet Union has actively pursued relations with all three countries with varying degrees of success. The history of these relations has also differed.

I

Afghanistan, the smallest of the three, has the longest history of interaction with its northern neighbor. After Britain completed her takeover of India, she competed with Russia for influence in Kabul with money and guns. The Afghans never gave in to either side completely. They learned to play one against the other and continued this

strategy when withdrawal of Britain from the subcontinent was followed by her replacement by the United States as Moscow's major challenger. The 1950s and 1960s were full of benefits derived by the Afghans from this Great Power rivalry. Airports, roads and factories were built as Washington and Moscow competed to demonstrate the advantages of their friendship. The Afghans took without joining the Soviet orbit or subscribing to the alliances pressed earlier on them by the United States.

Iranian relations with Moscow were not good after the Second World War. The occupation of Azerbaijan, attempts to set up an independent Socialist republic there, the subsequent crackdown on Communists in Iran, all added to the deterioration of relations. Soviet criticism of Iran's membership in pro-Western alliances was intense and frequent. Both Iran and Pakistan were criticized for giving into "the insidious

policy of divide and rule"¹; disastrous effects on their economies that would make these countries "vassals of the United States"² were predicted.

Coupled with these general denouncements, Moscow retaliated in specific ways towards Pakistan. It supported India's position against Pakistan by calling Kashmir an integral part of India. It supported Afghan calls for autonomy in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan and for their formation into "Pakhtoonistan."

The Soviets no doubt recognized the place of Afghanistan in the emerging scene in Asia. As Pakistan joined the military pacts, Afghanistan, which had created the issue of "Pakhtoonistan" against Pakistan, looked on with disapproval, stating that American military aid to Pakistan was a threat to Afghanistan. Knowledgeable sources in Pakistan have pointed out that this was the beginning of direct "outside influence" on Pakistan-Afghan relations, meaning that Soviet and Indian opposition to Pakistan's alliances actively encouraged Afghan hostility towards Pakistan. They cite as an example the abrogation by Afghanistan in December 1953 of the 1921 Treaty that had acknowledged the Durand Line as the international boundary between Afghanistan and what was then British India.³

The years between 1956 and 1959 saw no appreciable thaw in East-West relations. In Asia, Soviet policy aimed at the strengthening of ties with non-aligned states, and condemnation of states that were part of the Western alliance system. The crises in Hungary, Suez, Lebanon and other distant parts did not have any direct bearing on the three states under study here, except that it usually put them on opposite sides; the allies of the West naturally siding with the West, and the nonaligned countries, India foremost among them, usually with the Soviet Union. And in the United Nations, the Soviet Union

continued to veto resolutions on Kashmir.

In an attempt to pursue a "soft" policy in Iran, the Soviet leadership invited the Shah of Iran and the Queen for a State visit to the Soviet Union. The Russian leaders stated that their policies were geared towards peaceful coexistence and noninterference in the affairs of other nations and that this mitigated the need for Iranian membership in the Baghdad Pact. They then asked why had Iran joined the pact? The Shah said in reply that the answer could be found in the history of the relationship between Iran and the Soviet Union; reminded his hosts that for centuries the Russians had tried to advance southwards through Persia; that in 1908 the Russians had "invaded Iran in an effort to check our rising tide of constitutionalism"⁴; that during the First World War the Russians had aggressed against Iran; that during the Second World War, treaties of friendship notwithstanding, the Soviets occupied Iranian territory; and that in 1946 the Soviet Union had set up a puppet government in an attempt to take over control in the Iranian province of Azerbaijan. To this lesson in history, Khrushchev, who could not have been unaware of these events, replied that he was "not responsible for these acts."⁵

However, as a consequence of the Shah's visit, the Kremlin during 1956-57 pursued a conciliatory policy and concluded several important agreements with Iran dealing with the security of their common frontier, transit rights through the Soviet Union for Iranian exports to Eastern Europe, and the feasibility of irrigation and hydroelectric projects along the rivers dividing their common frontier. But when in 1958 Iran began negotiating bilateral agreements with the United States,⁶ the Soviet Union showed its disapproval by breaking off, after 2 weeks, talks for a nonaggression treaty with Iran then underway in Teheran. The Shah has

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written that the Soviets required as a price for their treaty Iran's nonentry into any new pact with the United States (saying that as the Soviets were willing to enter into a nonaggression treaty, it was unnecessary). Iran, remembering how ineffective the 1921 Treaty of Peace and Friendship had been in discouraging Soviet encroachment against Iran, refused to go along. The talks were broken off, but the Shah is said to have given Khrushchev his personal guarantee that Iran would not permit medium or long-range ballistic missile sites on its soil.

By 1959 the tone of Russian diplomacy was changing. Khrushchev declared that the Soviets would overtake the West, not as a consequence of war, but would "bury" it in peaceful competition, particularly in the economic sphere. Peaceful coexistence became the ideological justification for policies that prevented nuclear confrontation, and such countries as India were said to be valuable members of the "zone of peace." In an attempt to arrive at some understanding with the Americans, Khrushchev met with President Eisenhower and emerged talking of accommodation in the "spirit of Camp David."

Following the U-2-triggered crisis in Pakistan-Soviet relations in May 1960, Pakistan-Afghan relations (which tend to follow the trend in Pakistan-Soviet relations) worsened. Reports began to circulate that Afghanistan was threatening Pakistan militarily because of the support it enjoyed from the Soviet Union, reportedly \$400 million worth of arms. On the one hand the Soviet Union, because of its growing rivalry with China, was making overtures towards Pakistan (friend of China) with offers of aid in 1960. Yet, on the other hand the U.S.S.R. continued its policy of supporting Afghan claims against the territorial integrity of Pakistan. Reflecting the Soviet attitude towards the worsening border situation between

Pakistan and Afghanistan, Moscow stated in March 1961 that it could not remain indifferent as the Soviet Union bordered directly on this region. The Soviet Government therefore supported a "just" settlement of the problem, by which it meant "respect for the interest of the people inhabiting Pushtunistan,"⁷ i.e., total support for the Afghan position.

A visit to Afghanistan by road from Pakistan gives an impressive demonstration of what competitions between the superpowers can do for a small, strategically located country. Roads are considered essential as Afghanistan has neither rail nor water transport facilities. The Russians have built two strategic roads in Afghanistan; one that terminates in the south, at Kandahar, a short distance from the Baluchistan border with Pakistan (and close to Iran) and the other at Kabul. The Americans have improved and considerably widened the road from Kabul to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border at Torkham.

The United States replaced Britain as the traditional guardian of the northwest. Americans were increasingly worried at the prospect of advancing Soviet influence in Afghanistan, a major preoccupation of Britain throughout the 19th century. The United States was also concerned that its supply route for aid goods destined for Kabul lay through Pakistan, while the Soviet Union was contiguous to Afghanistan. The 1961 diplomatic break between Pakistan and Afghanistan disrupted the flow of American aid. Concerned about growing Afghan dependence on trade routes through the Soviet Union, the White House announced that Mr. Merchant, the American Ambassador to Canada, was to go to Pakistan and Afghanistan to offer his "good offices" in settling the dispute between the two countries.

Although the Merchant Mission was, ostensibly, to deal with the issue of

transit trade through Pakistan, the basic disagreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan lay over Pakhtoonistan, and no compromise was possible here. Mr. Merchant met with no success and announced within weeks that his Afghanistan transit trade mission had failed.⁸ The Soviet Union continued to be a strong supporter of Afghan policies. And neither was the Soviet Union willing at this time to modify its position on Kashmir. Its veto of a mild resolution on Kashmir in the Security Council in the summer of 1962 was indicative of its support of India.

However, two events took place in 1962 that greatly affected Soviet policy in South Asia and its foreign policy in general. The first event, the Cuban missile crisis, was important for two reasons. It worsened still further the Sino-Soviet dispute and it increased Soviet fears about confrontation with the West. Soviet support of India in the Sino-Indian border clash revealed the extent to which the Soviet Union and China were working at cross-purposes in Southern Asia.⁹ At the same time the clash revealed the weakness of India alone as a counterweight to China, both militarily and politically, because India's declining prestige in the developing world was indicated by the failure of many developing countries to denounce the Chinese attack. Finally, the Sino-Indian border clash was significant because it resulted in Western military aid to India that angered Pakistan and turned her towards China.¹⁰ Thus, the Cuban missile crisis and the Sino-Indian border clash combined to increase Soviet fears of confrontation with the West, worsen the Sino-Soviet rivalry in South Asia to show the weakness of India as a counterweight to China, and to push Pakistan closer to China.

Soviet concern with China was reflected in Soviet mediation in the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, and her more even-handed policy towards Pakistan vis-a-vis relations with both India and

Afghanistan for a period thereafter. Yet there was little success in winning Pakistani friendship away from China. As Sino-Soviet relations worsened after the 1969 border clash, Moscow decided that the Pakistani position was no longer acceptable and was particularly displeased with Pakistan's role in the Sino-American rapprochement of 1971. In retaliation, the U.S.S.R. signed a treaty with India that ensured Indian victory in the 1971 war and led to the defeat of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in what was formerly East Pakistan.

The situation in Afghanistan changed rapidly as the King tried with little success to achieve some measure of modernization. However, opposition to the King remained and when the King was in Rome on a private visit in July 1973, his first cousin Daud Khan successfully executed a *coup d'état*, assumed leadership, abolished monarchy, and declared Afghanistan a Republic. The coup was carried out by the Army, had total Soviet support, and was well received in Afghanistan by the supporters of Pakhtoonistan, who saw in that scheme a rekindling of the age-old dream of an Afghan empire to the River Indus, a perfect vehicle for mobilizing tribal support, and by the students who saw in the abolition of monarchy a chance for Afghanistan to finally move forward.

As expected, shortly after his takeover Lieutenant General Daud renewed the Pakhtoonistan issue with the statement: "As regards our relations with Pakistan, we have a political dispute with that country, the only country with which we have an unresolved dispute."¹¹ After that, Pakistan-Afghan relations chilled noticeably, and clashes occurred on their border. Furthermore, Afghanistan, backed by the Soviet Union, encouraged secessionists in Baluchistan, which drew in Iran, a friend of Pakistan worried that separatist movements could ultimately lead to similar attempts along the Iranian-

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Pakistani border—the Baluchi tribes, after all, are on both sides of the border.

II

The defeat of Mrs. Gandhi in 1977 was a setback for the U.S.S.R. The speed with which Foreign Minister Gromyko arrived in New Delhi to consult with the new Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Desai, indicated Moscow's nervousness at the turn of events and talk of a more balanced Indian foreign policy. Nothing substantial changed but the level of intimacy of the Gandhi era was reduced.

The difficulties encountered by Mr. Bhutto after his reelection in March 1977 increased his reliance on the Soviets. Convinced that the American Embassy in Islamabad was engineering attacks on his regime because of the confrontation between the United States and Pakistan over the nuclear reprocessing plant issue, Bhutto is said to have turned to Moscow for information and advice. The fact that at the forefront of Bhutto's opposition were members of the Islamic parties who are traditionally anti-Soviet added to Moscow's stake in Bhutto's survival.

With the declaration of martial law in Pakistan on 5 July 1977 and the overthrow of Bhutto, Soviet policy in Pakistan suffered a setback as the military was more likely to be pro-West and suspicious of the Soviet Union. Soviet statements in support of Bhutto were bound to alienate them from the new rulers of Pakistan.

There were other reverses for Soviet policy in the area. The expulsion from Somalia with the loss of important base facilities at Berbera was a definite drawback. It was reminiscent of earlier Egyptian actions and the magnitude of Soviet help to Ethiopia and the intensity of Moscow's support to Addis Ababa may well have been meant as a lesson to nations that expelling the Soviet Union was henceforth not an action to be undertaken lightly.

In addition, aid coupled with pressure led to the end of support given by the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen to the rebellion in Oman. Increasing Saudi influence in the PDRY did not augur well for Moscow there.¹² As an important foothold in the Arabian Peninsula, Moscow could ill afford to lose South Yemen to conservative and anti-Communist Saudi Arabia.

More recently, Soviet relations with Iraq worsened after the government of President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr foiled a plot by pro-Soviet Communists to overthrow the Baath Party and its leader. Although the Iraqi-Soviet Treaty of Cooperation signed in 1972 remained in effect, it was being ignored in Baghdad.

Economic cooperation between Iraq and the U.S.S.R. has declined rapidly since 1975 from a level of 150 million rubles in Soviet loans to only 25 million rubles in 1977. Instead, with its annual income of \$13 billion from oil, Iraq can and does buy American and West European technology. Charges of Soviet support for Kurdish self-determination in Iraq¹³ and penetration by Communists of the Kurdish movement has caused further deterioration. The seriousness of this charge was reflected in reports that Iraq was considering joining Iran and Saudi Arabia in some form of a security arrangement for the Persian Gulf. In addition, Iraq is in the process of diversifying the sources of its military supplies in order to break its dependence on Moscow. Iraqis are also angry with Soviet and Cuban moves against the Muslim population of Eritrea.¹⁴

Against all of the above-mentioned setbacks one must weigh the gains for Soviet foreign policy in the region. First, the Ethiopian victory against Somalia was not only a successful demonstration of the advantages of Soviet support, it was also a lesson to Somalia (and other nations so inclined) that the expulsion of the Soviet Union had been a great mistake. While success

in Addis Ababa has not returned Berbera to Moscow, it has provided a strong foothold in the region and a base for future action.

A second and more recent gain for Moscow is reflected in the coup in the PDRY where President Salem Ali, who had been in contact with both Washington and Saudi Arabia, was overthrown and killed by the supporters of Moscow. The new President, Mr. Ismail, leader of the ruling National Liberation Front, is expected to keep his distance from the West and the Saudis. In fact, Aden has gone further. The improvement in relations between the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the PDRY that had taken place under the aegis of Saudi Arabia was destroyed when an emissary of the PDRY visited North Yemen, carrying a bomb in a briefcase that exploded and killed the President. This assassination has led to Arab League censure of the PDRY coupled with strong warnings of further sanctions. But it has returned Aden to the fold as far as Moscow is concerned.

Part of the same trend but of even greater significance was the bloody *coup d'état* in Afghanistan that overthrew Daud Khan. Not only was he killed along with members of his family, the entire Cabinet, all members of the Afghan elite, was also killed. Other members of the Durrani family and the Mohammadzai clan who were suspected of loyalty to Daud were either killed or relieved of their posts.¹⁵

The 1973 coup also had been engineered by the Moscow-trained military, and Daud had a reputation as a supporter of Moscow. His turned out to be the first revolution that was necessary before the second, more basic revolution could take place. The question is whether the pro-Moscow faction used Daud, recognizing that only a man of his stature could overthrow the King and once that was done were going to have to replace Daud; or whether it was Daud's failure to deal with problems

and his slow shift away from Moscow that led to his demise?

There is no doubt that fears of Socialist reforms and pro-Soviet policies that were voiced after the 1973 coup proved largely unfounded. Political power in the country continued to rest with traditional leaders usually linked to the Mohammadzai clan.¹⁶ However, when Daud revived the Pakhtoonistan dispute with Pakistan immediately after taking over, it seemed that he was once again the exponent of this cause which was also dear to the military. The rapid deterioration of Pakistan-Afghan relations reflected, as was usually the case, the poor state of Pakistan-Soviet ties.

While Daud ruled with the assistance of a Central Committee, he made important decisions himself. He soon began to run into difficulties and there were several attempted coups against him.¹⁷ He was aware of the demand for greater reform and the expectations of a faster pace of modernization made by what were called the "progressive" or leftist elements. He was also attacked by the right wing for his Soviet contacts. Perhaps because of his inability or his unwillingness to move to adopt any real social reforms Daud slowly shifted his foreign policy.

Crucial in this phase of Afghan policy was the relationship between the Shah of Iran and Daud. By 1974 the Shah was actively trying to lessen Soviet influence and was using his new found oil wealth toward this end. He was seeking an end to Iraqi support of Baluchi rebels in Iran and wanted a cooling off in Afghan border problems with Pakistan on the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan. In March 1975 an accord between Iraq and Iran settled their problems with the former ending support for the Kurds in Iraq (and the latter support for Baluchis in Iran) and the solution of the Shatt-al-Arab dispute according to Iranian wishes. Following this agreement, Daud

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visited Teheran in April 1975. The Shah committed \$2 billion in economic aid for Afghanistan, much of it for the construction of Afghanistan's first railway network connecting Kabul with Kandahar and Heerat with Zahidan and Bandar Abbas in Iran, thus providing landlocked Afghanistan with direct access to a port and relieving Afghan dependence on Moscow.¹⁸

The improvement of Iranian-Afghan relations had a favorable effect on Pakistan-Afghan relations. The Shah had apparently correctly assessed that Daud was prepared to be more flexible in his dealings with Pakistan over Pakhtoonistan because shortly thereafter, Bhutto was invited to visit Kabul in 1976. Bhutto's visit to Afghanistan was returned by Daud, and gradually a new spirit of accommodation replaced the old hostility. Both nations committed themselves to an "honorable solution of their political and other differences."

There were several reasons for the Afghan shift in policy. First, Daud was considerably shaken by domestic discontent as represented in the Panjsher uprising of July 1975. Second, the record clearly demonstrated the lack of success for Daud's anti-Pakistan policy. Third, Pakistani actions against pro-Afghan elements in the NWFP were judged as being legal by the court which weakened the Afghan case for interference. Finally, there was pressure from the Muslim world, Saudi Arabia and Iran in particular, to normalize relations with Pakistan. And Daud, in search for new sources of aid¹⁹ and needing to show the rightist elements in Afghanistan that he was on good terms with Muslim countries in spite of ties with the Soviet Union, had to oblige.

With the diversification of Afghan options, Daud's reliance on Moscow decreased. The Soviet Union continued to be an important country to Afghanistan; its sheer size and the fact that it has the longest border with Afghanistan and has remained a major partner for

trade and aid insured that. But the cycle of almost total dependence was broken.

While successive Afghan rulers were (in the 19th and 20th centuries) able to play Russia off against Britain and later the United States without seemingly giving in to either, this game became more complicated with the building up in Afghanistan of domestic forces, trained in Moscow, who demanded change. In other words, Moscow acquired local allies who could press for reforms and policies that would work in favor of the U.S.S.R. and that the latter could not press for itself directly. Elements in the Afghan military, a crucial source of support and power in the Afghan system, are a good example of this.

Daud's moves away from a revolutionary path (which existed at least in name in 1973) towards monarchical, conservative regimes like Saudi Arabia and Iran, both openly anti-Soviet, may have pleased the traditional religious elements in Afghanistan but it did not sit well with the young more modern officers of the army and air force. In a backward country such as Afghanistan the army is the only real source of modernization. Their education and training, both completed under Soviet auspices, gave them a very different set of values from those they perceived were Daud's.

The showdown was precipitated by the assassination of Akbar Khaibar, the chief Communist ideologue. His funeral procession consisted of 10,000 men and women (very unusual for Afghanistan) who denounced Daud and the United States. When Daud responded by rounding up Communists and arresting their leaders, the army and air force moved. And in the ensuing bloodshed, Afghanistan became a Democratic Republic. A young air force officer, Col. Abdul Khadir, who had led the way, gave power to Nur Mohammad Tarakki, who had been incarcerated by Daud under his anti-Communist crackdown.

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A shift in emphasis by the new government was indicated in statements that implied that this was the real revolution in Afghanistan, "the true democratic and national revolution."²⁰ In his first press conference after taking office Tarakki stated that "our main objective is to secure the welfare of the workers and peasants right here in Afghanistan . . . We are not the aristocrats . . . we came out from among the people."²¹ He added that the government had nationalized the holdings of the royal family and would implement land reform.

The takeover of Afghanistan by avowed Communists was certainly a victory for Moscow, it having at last gained a foothold in a region that it had coveted for centuries as part of "the Great Game"²² for control of Afghanistan. The new Prime Minister and chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Council is also general secretary of the Khalq Party, regarded by both foreigners and Afghans as the country's Communist Party. The new Cabinet of 21 ministers consists entirely of members of this party that comprises a broader ethnic base than the upper-class Pathan domination of previous regimes.

The Soviet Union immediately extended recognition to the new regime while the United States took it under advisement and expressed surprise at the coup.²³ The change was taken as being an unfortunate one by other countries in the region. Coming on the heels of Soviet successes in the Horn of Africa it appeared to be another thrust by the U.S.S.R. towards vital sealanes.

Other neighbors of Afghanistan responded with alarm. The Chinese attacked expanding Soviet influence and pointed out once again that "this superpower, flaunting the label of socialism, is more aggressive and adventurous than the other superpower; it is the most dangerous source of a new world war and is sure to be its chief instigator."²⁴

The effect on Pakistan was electric. Suddenly, the improvement in relations that had been achieved so painfully was wiped out. Sealing of the border seemed ominous. Although the new Afghan leadership tried to reassure "our Muslim brethren" of good relations, the fact that Moscow's role appeared enhanced in Kabul was not a favorable development from Islamabad's point of view. There are several reasons for this. First, the new Afghan Government could revive talk of a "Greater Afghanistan" and renew claims on Pakistani territory. This could have serious implications for Pakistan which is in the throes of internal troubles. Also, lacking access to weapons, the Pakistani Military Establishment could feel the effect of the Afghan military supplied and backed by Soviet arms and officers. The examples of such Soviet roles in Addis Ababa and Aden are not lost on Islamabad.

Second, the Afghan coup once more interjects an element of uncertainty into this volatile area. A limited amount of normalization had occurred between several hostile countries after 1975; for example, between Iraq and Iran, Afghanistan and Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pakistan and India, China and India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. For the first time in many years, there was some hope for the development of more positive relations. The shift in Kabul could affect the normalization in a very real way by altering relations with Pakistan and Iran.

Third, from 1969 onwards when Brezhnev first spelled out his scheme for collective security in Asia, Moscow has regularly pressured Islamabad to join. After the East Pakistani debacle, the Soviets pressed their case pointing out that only membership in the collective scheme could guarantee their future security. Recognizing the anti-China nature of the scheme, Pakistan has steadfastly refused to have anything to do with it. The Soviets may now hold a trump card in their hands in that they

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can use their influence with the Afghan military to renew the Pakhtoonistan issue and thus raise the stakes for Pakistani friendship with China.

Finally, Afghanistan's former President Daud had visited Pakistan earlier in 1978 and was about to agree to the Durand Line as constituting the legal boundary between the two countries. The new government in Kabul not only seems unwilling to sign any agreement, it has in fact renewed its concern for Pathan tribes on the Pakistani side of the border, indicating that it did not consider the region as a part of Pakistan. With increased Soviet influence in Kabul, the agreement becomes remote. Even if Moscow does not immediately press for claims against Pakistan, it could always hold the threat in reserve, hoping to extract concessions at an appropriate time.

Iran is concerned that direct Soviet influence has been activated in Kabul. The Shah spent a good deal of time and pledged a considerable amount of money towards weaning Daud away from Moscow. His policy had succeeded to a considerable degree. He was able to check Soviet expansion through Afghanistan, particularly by encouraging Daud to settle with Pakistan. All this has now come undone.

The Shah has ridiculed statements by Tarakki that he will keep Afghanistan nonaligned, calling the statement absurd in view of the dominant Russian role and the fact that Tarakki heads the Communist Party of Afghanistan. These statements are viewed in Teheran as being aimed at impressing the devout Muslim and strongly anti-Communist hill tribes who could pose a threat.²⁵ There are already reports of some opposition to the Moscow-oriented regime of Tarakki in most of the provinces surrounding Kabul. President Tarakki himself lent credence to these reports in an interview with the BBC.²⁶

The Iranian Government has stated that it will use "all means" to keep

Afghanistan from renewing trouble in Baluchistan and the NWFP, and the Soviets from expanding influence to the Persian Gulf's shipping routes for oil from the Middle East. Iran would, in such event, call on concerned countries to respond, militarily if necessary. Such action had been undertaken in Oman to the south of the Strait of Hormuz in the early 1970s and could again occur to keep the northern side of the strait and Gulf of Oman out of Communist control.²⁷

Events in Afghanistan have raised another issue as well—that of Soviet access to the Indian Ocean.²⁸ Given the importance of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean as strategic and economic trade routes for the United States, Europe and Japan, direct access would certainly be welcomed by the Soviets.

Soviet access through Pakhtoonistan and Baluchistan to the Indian Ocean, a distance of only 300 miles, would enable the Soviet Navy to operate for extended periods at a great distance from Russian shores, to service Soviet ships that increasingly patrol the area, and to permit a Soviet naval presence in areas close to important oil tanker routes to Western Europe, the United States and Japan. Russian concern with the importance of the Indian Ocean has led it to object strongly to the proposed establishment of an American naval communications base at Diego Garcia, with the statement that it was an "endeavour by the Pentagon to secure for itself a military staging ground with far reaching aims in this strategically important part of the world."²⁹ This area's importance lies not only in the fact that trade routes linking Asia with Europe and America run through it, but also because, as *Pravda* pointed out: "the countries of the Indian Ocean basin possess more than half of all proven oil reserves; the world's rubber and tea production and the extraction of tin ore is largely concentrated there."³⁰ Moscow called Peking's role

in all this one of duplicity, where the Chinese leadership is said to be paying lipservice to the transformation of the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, while in fact backing the establishment of the American base by "repeating the imperialist fabrications about the Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean . . ."31

In recent years, the Soviet Union has seen its carefully built influence in the Middle East slip away. It may be anxious to hold onto influence in Afghanistan, where the absence of normal relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan has once again offered Moscow a chance to take advantage. The formation of "Pakhtoonistan," for which Moscow's support is a prerequisite, would certainly lead to a chain reaction in the entire area extending up to the Soviet Union. It would serve as a lesson to Pakistan that further dismemberment would require its membership in the Soviet proposed collective security system. Finally, it would demonstrate the weakness of China in its inability to prevent the disintegration of Pakistan, a point already made in 1971.

III

Soviet fortunes in the south appear to have undergone a favorable change. From a position of neutralized presence, as one of many powers in the area, it has now become crucial to Afghanistan. Moscow's influence in Kabul is bound to increase and, given the fear of such involvement in Teheran and Islamabad, the future looks more uncertain than it did prior to the Afghan coup.

The history of Soviet relations with Pakistan has been such that whenever Moscow has perceived Pakistan as being unfriendly or inimical to its interests, pressure has been applied through Afghanistan. The more recent improvement in Pakistan-Afghan relations after 1976 was undertaken to prevent Mos-

With the overthrow of Daud and his replacement with the Communist Party, pressure will certainly be applied on Pakistan, pressure it may not be able to withstand.

Iranian cultivation of a zone of influence has also been affected by Soviet successes in Kabul, in Aden and in the Horn of Africa. The Shah envisages a role for Iran as a keeper of regional peace. Such a role may become more difficult in the face of active Soviet involvement with the neighbors of Iran. The special relationship with Afghanistan that was so carefully nurtured at a considerable cost is bound to be affected adversely by the changes in Kabul.

Finally, there is the larger question of the strategic results of the revolution in Afghanistan and its implications for the United States and its allies. Soviet expansionism has been moving rather aggressively and could signal a changed Soviet strategy from a "no-win" to one in which Europe could be neutralized, sealanes brought under Soviet control and a second (or even third) nuclear strike capability would give Moscow a decided edge against the West. Iran, a major U.S. ally, faces the possibility of an eastern neighbor not only armed with Soviet weapons over 10 years, but also being advised by Soviet advisers.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



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Pakistan, poorly armed and already besieged by internal problems, may feel the pressure of Soviet expansion through Afghanistan. As stated recently by an American general: "If Pakistan

should fall apart, the Russians would have a clear road to the Arabian Sea and the capability to build bases near the exit from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz."³²

NOTES

1. *Izvestia*, 20 May 1954, *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, (CDSP), Vol. VI, No. 20, 1954.
2. Donald N. Wilber, *Contemporary Iran* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 196.
3. The rationale given by Afghanistan was that the treaty had been signed with Britain and could not be transferred to the inheritor of the boundary, i.e., Pakistan.
4. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlevi, *Mission for My Country* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1960), pp. 118-119.
5. *Ibid.*
6. As did Pakistan and Turkey.
7. *Pravda*, 21 March 1961, CDSP, Vol. XIV, No. 13, 1961.
8. Relations were finally restored in 1963 through the Shah's mediations.
9. R. Vaidyanath, "Some Recent Trends in Soviet Policy Towards India and Pakistan," *International Studies*, June 1966, p. 432.
10. China was the only country willing to help Pakistan. The U.S.S.R. was pro-India and anti-China, and as far as Moscow was concerned, Islamabad had once again chosen the wrong ally.
11. *The New York Times*, 29 July 1973.
12. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Soviet Persian Gulf Policy," *Middle East Review*, Winter 1977-78, p. 53.
13. *The New York Times*, 11 June 1978.
14. *The New York Times*, 15 June 1978.
15. The ruling family in Afghanistan.
16. "The power of the family has been put to an end . . . Daud is gone forever, the last remnants of imperialist tyranny and despotism have been put to an end" stated the first broadcast after the coup. *The New York Times*, 28 April 1978.
17. Dilip Mukerjee, "Afghanistan under Daud: Relations with Neighboring States," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIV, 1974.
18. Thirty percent of Afghan trade passes through Pakistan; the rest through the U.S.S.R., which is also Afghanistan's chief trade partner.
19. In addition to the \$1.5 billion thus far given by the U.S.S.R., \$500 million by the United States and \$75 million by China. Soviet aid combines both economic and military. Aid from the United States and China is economic.
20. *The New York Times*, 6 May 1978.
21. *The New York Times*, 4 June 1978.
22. Labeled as such by Rudyard Kipling.
23. Statement by the State Department spokesman, reported in *The New York Times*, 2 May 1978.
24. Speech by the Chinese Foreign Minister, Huang Hua, to the U.N. General Assembly special session on disarmament, 29 May 1978.
25. *The New York Times*, 20 May 1978.
26. *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 4 July 1978.
27. Statement reported in *The New York Times*, 20 May 1978.
28. For the growth of Soviet interest and activity in the Indian Ocean see Alexander O. Ghebbardt, "Soviet and U.S. Interests in the Indian Ocean," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XV, 1975, pp. 672-683.
29. *Pravda*, 27 February 1974, CDSP, Vol. XXVI, No. 9.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. Stated at the "Sea Link" Symposium at Annapolis. Reported in *The New York Times*, 24 June 1978.