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# The Afghan Crisis 1979-89

## Indian Interests and Choices

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### Introduction

“THE irony for India is”, says Jagat S. Mehta, the former Indian Foreign Secretary, “that by surrendering our principles and prophylactic diplomacy, an opportunity to serve our long-term interests of regional harmony was allowed to slip by. We are on the sidelines (or considered partisan) and so unable to assist in the un-ulterior search for a democratically responsive, responsibly moderate, non-aligned Afghanistan”.<sup>1</sup> Behind this facade of apparently a painful appreciation of India’s Afghan policy, lies the decade-long patent opportunism of New Delhi, which considered the ‘running wound’ in the neighbourhood as advantageous rather than repugnant to its expressed principles of foreign policy.

For extracting maximum military and economic benefits from the Soviet Union, New Delhi overwhelmingly aligned itself with the Kabul regime which was considered by independent observers as militarily besieged, morally corrupt and politically superimposed from without. However, India’s support of the regime did not go beyond the expression of a few occasional ritualistic sympathetic statements on the Afghan crisis. The Indian leadership not only ignored the Soviet intervention, but also justified it arrogantly in utter disregard of a small country’s national sovereignty and its non-aligned status. For economic, political and military rewards of the crisis, and above all, finding it a unique opportunity of pressurizing and maligning Pakistan, New Delhi successfully used the Afghan crisis as a ‘bargain chip’ in the context of Indo-Soviet influence relationship. The latter aspect would be the major theme of this paper, and the cost-benefit analysis of India’s ‘Afghan policy’ would mainly centre on the hostile orientations of New Delhi’s

regional perspective against Pakistan.

So as to set the record of Indian diplomacy on Afghanistan straight, and see how and why it retarded and obstructed an early peace settlement, one could extract the hard facts from the contemporary history (i.e. 1979-89) of New Delhi’s policy on Kabul, and project that why it completely identified with the puppet regime in Kabul. And such a painful account will definitely contradict India and its sudden awakening to seek a role in the crisis-management in Afghanistan.

### Indo-Afghan Strategic Considerations: 1947-78

The Indo-Afghan foreign policies and security interactions vis-a-vis Pakistan centred for about three decades on mainly the following three common features:

- Irredentist disputes with Pakistan;
- Non-aligned status and opposition to military pacts;  
and
- Friendship with the Soviet Union.

After the Second World War when the British intentions to withdraw from the Subcontinent became obvious, the Afghan Government approached the United Kingdom for a political assurance that after the grant of independence to India and Pakistan, the people of the frontier regions, annexed by the British Raj during the nineteenth century, would be given the choice of becoming independent or rejoining their “motherland” i.e. Afghanistan. In addition to this the Afghans demanded that a corridor be carved out to the sea for Afghanistan, through Baluchistan in order to facilitate that country’s trade with the outside world and thus help improve its economic conditions. In reply to the Afghan irredentist, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress leader

and the then Foreign Minister of the interim government of the undivided British India, said that, if the selective claims of history gave Afghanistan the right to demand parts of NWF (present NWFP) and Baluchistan, then the Subcontinent's erstwhile rule over Kabul also bestowed upon India a valid legal right to lay a claim over the Afghan territory up to the Hindukush beyond the Durand Line.

Be that as it may, after the creation of Pakistan, the same Nehru started backing the Afghan irredentist claims across the Durand Line and went all out to help Kabul politically in projecting the so-called 'Pakhtunistan issue' beyond all rational proportions. Besides staking territorial claims, the Afghan Government pursued an active policy of inciting subversion in Pakistan's tribal belt. After the withdrawal of the British from the Subcontinent, when the boundary between the British India and Afghanistan became the Pak-Afghan border, the new geopolitical situation assumed entirely a unique strategic situation for New Delhi. The emergence of Pakistan not only created a physical gulf between New Delhi and Kabul, but also adversely affected their mutual trade and commerce. They succeeded in improving their trade and aid relations gradually, but there was nothing much they could do to overcome the big handicap, viz. absence of a direct land or sea route between India and the land-locked Afghanistan.

The birth of Pakistan, brought in its trail, for the new-born state on the one hand, the Kashmir dispute with India, and on the other, differences with Afghanistan over the legality of the Durand Line, which subsequently came to be popularly known as the 'Pakhtunistan issue'. These Indo-Afghan disputes with Pakistan provided new Delhi and Kabul with a new basis of friendship and their common perspective on Pakistan eventually helped them to conclude an anti-Pakistan trilateral friendship with the Soviet Union, which in due course had developed its own peculiar grievances over Pakistan's joining of the Western military pacts. The Indo-Afghan hostile attitude towards Pakistan, among other things, led to an escalation of arms race in the region which had several undesirable consequences for

all.

During the height of the Cold War, India and Afghanistan heavily relied on the readily-available support of the Soviet Union as a counterbalancing power against the United States. Moscow having a score of its own to settle with Pakistan for the latter's openly pro-American policy, took a definite stand in favour of India and Afghanistan in their disputes with Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> Thus Pakistan as their common enemy and the Soviet Union as a common benefactor, provided a solid base for friendly relations between India and Afghanistan. The non-aligned policy was always emphasized by both countries and hailed by the press on both sides. Besides the non-aligned elements of their foreign policies, both India and Afghanistan took identical perspectives on various global and regional issues, i.e. the Korean War, liberation of Tunisia and Morocco, the racial discrimination, and the Congo crisis, etc. Indian leaders paid good will visits to Afghanistan which were reciprocated by their Afghan counterparts with the same enthusiasm.

Afghanistan's Pakistan policy and Indo-Afghanistan friendship, were mainly built by Sardar Daud Khan, a close lieutenant and cousin of the former King Zahir Shah. Prior to his unceremonious dismissal as the Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Daud had a wide reputation of being anti-Pakistan, pro-India and a staunch supporter of the 'Pakhtunistan issue'. Since his foreign policy orientations were much the same as those of India and the Soviet Union, he was viewed entirely to the liking of both Moscow and New Delhi. Consequently, after a decade-long interlude, when he supplanted Zahir Shah and declared Afghanistan a Republic, India and the USSR went all out to strengthen his hands in dealing with the possible adverse reaction to his coup. Hence in a well coordinated military move, India moved its troops on Pakistan's border and Soviets to the Amu Darya, thus giving a clear signal to the Chinese, the former Shah of Iran and Pakistan to desist from exploiting the initially unsettled situation in Afghanistan to their advantage.

After consolidating himself, Daud moved steadily to rid himself of the military and leftist influences in his government and in a bid to strike

a balance in Afghanistan's relations with the USSR and the West, he concluded economic assistance arrangements with pro-Western countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, both of whom backed by the USA offered him "unlimited economic assistance provided he jettisoned Russia."<sup>3</sup> In order to lessen his dependence on the USSR, Daud began sending Afghan officers for military training to India and Egypt. These attempts to erode Soviet influence in Afghanistan were resented by the USSR who expedited her efforts to get rid of Daud, who was finally assassinated in the April 1978 coup.

The advent of the USSR-oriented and Soviet-backed Saur Revolution in Afghanistan, led to a highly confused and imprecise political situation in the country. In order to control, direct, channellize and above all, sustain the intractable chain of events and pro-Moscow character of the various regimes in Kabul, the Soviet military personnel and troops gradually began to arrive there at the requests of Taraki, later of Amin and finally of Karmal, who had invoked the mandatory clause of the Soviet-Afghan Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. The arrival of the so-called 'limited contingent' of the Soviet troops to save Afghanistan from the 'counter-revolutionaries' plunged that country into a bloody undeclared civil war which is still continuing unabated.

The continued internecine Afghan warfare forced not only the neighbours of Afghanistan, but also other countries to readjust their security and foreign policy perspectives to suit their respective national interests. While the Soviets concentrated their efforts on stabilizing the crisis in the hope that it would be advantageous to Moscow's policies south of Central Asia, the Indians having their own stakes in the Afghan crisis began to exhibit excessive signs of opportunism and thus headed for extracting maximum number of benefits from the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan. Contrary to the expectations of the non-aligned countries that India would help resolve the imbroglio through political means, New Delhi, in effect, chose to make a common cause with the Soviet Union against the national aspirations of the Afghans.

## India's Afghan Perspectives: 1979-89

### a) *The Janata Government's Response*

After the Saur Revolution in Afghanistan and excessive Soviet involvement in the internal affairs of that country, the Indian foreign policy perspectives on the deterioration of political situation in Kabul seemed irreconcilable to New Delhi's expressed principles on non-alignment. Prior to the arrival of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, New Delhi had more than once, expressed the "hopes for a return to stability in Afghanistan and an end to the interference of outside powers."<sup>4</sup> That the Janata Government in India led by Morarji Desai never fully accepted the Soviet explanations and perspectives on the Afghanistan issue can be seen from a joint statement issued after a meeting between Mr. Morarji Desai and Mr. Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet Premier on 14 June 1979, in Moscow:

India and the Soviet Union declare their desire to develop friendly relations and cooperation with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. They expressed themselves firmly in favour of the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan for the preservation of their national independence and their development. They oppose any interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the above diplomatic cliches, it was later reported that the Indian Premier had advised President Brezhnev (who had said that the USSR could not "look on indifferently" if Pakistan continued its alleged incursions into Afghanistan) that the Kabul government "should try to acquire credibility among Afghan people instead of blaming Pakistani interference for its troubles."<sup>6</sup> The Indian Premier, Mr. Desai, after his visit to the USSR, issued a statement on 25 June 1979, in New Delhi, to the effect that his government was ready to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan welcomed the Indian stand as "wholly in accord with Pakistan's position."<sup>7</sup>

On the occasion of the Soviet military intervention, New Delhi, then under a caretaker Prime Minister, Charan Singh, realizing the adverse implications of Moscow's blatant actions, could not refrain from expressing her deep anxiety and concern over the developments. Although Mr. Charan

Singh's perspective wholly coincided with India's expressed principles, at least on the non-aligned philosophy, yet his detractors and 'hawks' motivated by ulterior intentions, dubbed him as a man who was "as familiar with the intricacies of international politics as buffalo with the philosophy of Kant."<sup>8</sup> However, following the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, contrary to the Moscow's expectations, the Charan Singh government made it clear to the Soviet ambassador that in India's view "the sending of military troops would have far-reaching and adverse consequences" for the entire region. The Soviets should withdraw their troops and return the situation to "normal."<sup>9</sup> Later on, with the assumption of power by Mrs Indira Gandhi in New Delhi, the Janata Government's Afghan and regional foreign policies were totally reversed. The resultant poignant contrast between the policies of two successive Indian governments were summed up by Samarendra Kund, the Minister of State for External Affairs in the Janata Government, in the following words:

During the Janata period, we improved our relations with the superpowers, and at the same time, brought Pakistan into the non-aligned movement. But during the last days of Charan Singh's caretaker Government Soviet troops stormed into Afghanistan. Charan Singh did not support the aggression and asked the Soviet Union to withdraw. When Mrs. Gandhi became Prime Minister our permanent representative at the U.N. virtually supported the Soviet intervention, an action that tarnished India's image as a non-aligned country.<sup>10</sup>

b) *Enters Mrs Indira Gandhi*

In order to completely reverse Charan Singh's stand on the Soviet military intervention into Afghanistan, on 12 January 1980, Mrs Gandhi, even before being formally reinstalled as the Prime Minister of India, instructed the Indian envoy, Brajesh Mishra at the United Nations, to make a statement on the Indian policy on the Afghan crisis along these lines:<sup>11</sup>

- The USSR sent troops to Afghanistan on 26 December 1979 at the request of Kabul's Karmal regime.
- While India was against the foreign troops and bases in any country, it had

no reason to disbelieve a friendly country like the Soviet Union when it said that it would withdraw troops from Afghanistan when asked to do so by the Government in Kabul.

- India hoped that the Soviet Union would not violate the independence of Afghanistan and would not keep troops in that country a day longer than necessary.
- India was gravely concerned about the response of the United States, China, Pakistan and others to the Soviet action because the arming and training of Afghan rebels and the encouragement of subversive activities in Afghanistan amounted to interference in the Afghan affairs.

When the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution on 14 January 1980 deploring the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and calling for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of the foreign troops from that country, the Indians chose to side with the non-voting nations. In a bid to please the Soviet Union, the Indians also tried to deflect the world attention from the real issue by highlighting the irrelevant regional problems which had nothing to do with the Afghan crisis. For instance, Mrs Gandhi emphasized that building of bases, pumping of arms into small and medium-sized countries, and expanding of naval activities in the Indian Ocean would intensify the cold war and pose a threat to the Indian nation.<sup>12</sup>

During the next two years, the Indian policy was characterized by a much higher profile in seeking to limit the global and regional responses to the Soviet action that might threaten new Delhi's national interests. The Indian leadership, in effect, approbated and reprobated the Soviet Afghan policy with great inconsistency and astonishing speed. And the whole gist of the Indian policy on the Afghanistan crisis in the context of Indo-Soviet relations was to deliberately put it aside as an irrelevant irritant which with the passage of time might automatically crawl towards a political settlement.<sup>13</sup>

During the February 1981, NAM Foreign Ministers Conference, held at New Delhi, the par-

ticipants hoped that India being the host and one of the leading champions of the Movement, would give a lead on the Afghanistan crisis by denouncing the Soviet military action against a non-aligned country and would demand an immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. But the draft resolution prepared by New Delhi did not go beyond supporting Kabul's independence and non-aligned status; it totally ignored the presence of Soviet forces in that country.<sup>14</sup>

During her 1982 Moscow visit, Mrs Gandhi gave a vague impression as if India favoured a Soviet pull-out from Afghanistan, but she soon nullified it by taking the stand that it was for the Afghan government to ask the Soviets to withdraw their troops from her territory and in the same breath posing question that, while the rebels were getting arms from external sources, how could Kabul ask the Soviets to go back?<sup>15</sup> In effect, what she was saying was that neither the external intervention would end, nor the Soviets could be expected to withdraw their forces. However India wanted the Western powers to see the Afghan crisis in its "totality" and favoured a negotiated settlement of the crisis, implying thereby direct talks between Islamabad and Kabul.<sup>16</sup> By 1983, New Delhi had rationalized its Afghan perspectives on the following grounds:

- The Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, because the Kabul regime was in difficulty and would not have survived without the Soviet help.
- The Soviets had sent their troops to Afghanistan at the request of the Kabul regime.
- The Soviet presence in Afghanistan was not so bad, because its absence would have destabilized the whole region.

However, the whole Indian policy and attitude towards Soviet intervention was influenced and guided by a host of factors, including:<sup>17</sup>

- New Delhi could not afford to alienate Moscow which stood by India on the Kashmir dispute, as well as in the East Pakistan crisis.
- India had signed a defence treaty with the USSR in August 1971; and Moscow and Kabul were also bound by a similar

treaty relationship. Therefore India had to keep quiet on Soviet logic that the latter was under treaty obligations to have honoured the Kabul government's request for Soviet troops (though in actual fact the Soviet invasion of Kabul was totally uncalled for, and was not preceded by any such request from the Afghan government).

- Mrs Gandhi believed that the Soviet action in Afghanistan was reaction to Washington's moves in West Asia.
- Indian Premier Gandhi's personal factor that influenced New Delhi's stance in favour of the Soviet Union was that the Americans had completely ignored her when she was out of power, in 1977, while the Soviets stayed in touch with her.
- The Soviet military intervention provided India with a fine opportunity to physically encircle Pakistan and this was precisely what Mrs Gandhi was planning to do around the time of her assassination in late 1984; and finally,
- India did not want to annoy Moscow with which it enjoyed huge military transactions and bilateral trade and economic relations.

### **Selling of the Soul to the Soviet Russia**

The Indian loyalty and pro-Soviet stand on the Afghan crisis was fully reciprocated by the Soviet Union as well. During a visit to New Delhi, in 1980, the former Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko pleased the Indians by hurling wild threats of repeating Bangladesh history in Pakistan again. And the visit to India by the Soviet Defence Minister Ustinov, in March 1984, left little doubt that the Soviets were over-eager to provide India with the latest weaponry at generous terms to counter the "security threats" to its existence very effectively. There were indications that, if need be, the Soviets would not hesitate even to undertake a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan to promote the common Indo-Soviet strategic interest regardless of the fact that there could hardly be anything more ludicrous than to imagine that Pakistan posed any threat to both

India and the Soviet Union and they needed any strategic consensus against Pakistan. Let alone the Soviet Union, even India by itself enjoyed an overwhelming military superiority over Pakistan. Even then, the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, justified Indian fears of encirclement hatched by the United States and China, who had identical interests in South Asia, including the strengthening of Pakistan militarily against India and the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> On account of these and numerous other anti-Pakistan Soviet gestures, the Indians ensured that the USSR were not censured on the question of military presence in Afghanistan on any world forum.

Soon after succeeding to her mother as the new Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi visited Moscow in May 1985, and thus underscored the special place which the Soviet Union held in the Indian foreign policy. He pleased the Soviets by his remark that "India alone among nations in the region has refrained from criticising the Soviet military action in Afghanistan." And interestingly enough, unlike the earlier Indo-Soviet joint communiqués, this time both Moscow and New Delhi chose to completely erase the Afghan issue from their joint statement. Thus by 1986, the Indians had already bartered away the soul of their non-aligned foreign policy to the huge Soviet military and economic assistance to their country. However, this selling of the soul was well-thought-out, carefully designed and meticulously tailored to an ulterior motive and that was to keep Pakistan constantly pressurized and exploit the situation in Afghanistan to the maximum.

### Me-Too Policy

India has sacrificed the non-aligned status of Afghanistan to the immense benefits of Indo-Soviet bilateral relationship, but when the prospects of a political settlement in Afghanistan seemed brightened in early 1988, she heightened its diplomatic efforts to get anxiously into the acts of Afghan crisis-management. In this context, Rajiv Gandhi's abortive invitation, which sounded more like a sheriff's summons, to President Zia to visit New Delhi for consultation on Afghanistan, looked to many as 'clumsy' and an ostensible U-turn from 'sabre-rattling to sweet symphony'.

This sudden shift in New Delhi's Afghan

policy became an object of ridicule for the Indian intellectuals, retired diplomats, and opposition politicians, and even the otherwise biased, loud and hilarious media of that country did not fail to take notice of it. Some leading Indian newspapers openly questioned New Delhi's pro-aggression policy against one time non-aligned and neutral Afghanistan. For instance, on 25 January 1988 *The Times of India* in its editorial entitled, "Unseemly precipitation" advised the Indian leadership that "nothing would expose the country's relations with the outside world to greater ridicule than a sudden attempt by New Delhi to seek a mediatory role for itself in the search for a political settlement in Afghanistan". The newspaper also asked Rajiv Gandhi that "he can afford to leave Afghanistan severely alone and concentrate on Sri Lanka where Indian troops, prestige and interest are deeply and heavily involved."

Criticizing Indian bids to work at Zahir Shah option with whom Natwar Singh's meeting, in Rome, was termed by President Zia as giving the monarchy a 'kiss-of-death', and similar other moves "to studiously involve itself in approaching all parties concerned" on the Afghan crisis, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in its article entitled "Afghanistan – the lessons for India and others" observed that in the wake of Afghan crisis, New Delhi decided that "Indo-Soviet relationship was simply too important to be sacrificed at the altar of Afghanistan. She successfully isolated a tragic Soviet decision inimical to Indian interests, to enforce its will in Afghanistan by force from luxuriant plant of friendship with Moscow." However, in this newspaper's perspective, such an option "came at a price. India chose to be out of step with the overwhelming majority of the developing world and with her neighbours in the South Asia. Second, it placed itself at a disadvantage in its ability to play a significant role in what is in effect part of the region. And now New Delhi is scrambling to mitigate with this grievous disability."

In sharp contrast to such poignant observations and sarcastic comments in the Indian media and numerous similar conclusions drawn by the world press, the Madras-based paper, *The Hindu*, supported the New Delhi's moral and *realpolitik* pretensions to play a leading role in the Afghan

settlement and wrote in its issue of 19 January 1988:

What happens in Afghanistan is a greater concern to India than to either of the superpowers. As a neighbour, as a leading non-aligned nation and as votary of world peace, India is eminently fit to play a role in settling the Afghan problem.

The sudden and surprising razzle-dazzle of Indian diplomacy on Afghanistan may impress some outsider, but the Afghan men, women and innocent children who suffered untold miseries under the heavy feet of the Soviet forces and their coterie in Kabul, would certainly like to know why the Indians had been so indifferent to their plight during the last decade. Likewise, there is no dearth of impartial observers throughout the civilized world who would go all out in denouncing the Indian opportunism on Afghanistan and The Hindu's remarks as nothing else but an age-old and typical proof of *Baniya* mentality.

### **Fundamentalism: A Red Rag to Indian Diplomacy**

After extracting huge quantities of military hardware, economic assistance and financial grants from the USSR as a 'price' and 'bargaining chip' to keep its mouth shut up on the Afghan tragedy and never displaying even the slightest sympathy for the shameless cruelties perpetrated by the Russians on the innocent Afghan masses for almost a decade, the Indian diplomacy began working, in the last few months, on the following three options:

- New Delhi contacted Zahir Shah and then tried to lure Islamabad so as to 'work together' on a possible settlement in Geneva.
- When baffled in the above grotesque diplomatic efforts, India instigated the beleaguered regime in Kabul to raise the dead issue of Durand Line in the Geneva talks demanding the involvement of India, too.
- Having failed in such negative diplomatic moves and unable to open Afghan gates to Indian influence, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi finally embarked on trumpeting the danger of 'fundamentalism' that, the possible installation of a

Muslim fundamentalist government in Kabul was not in the interest of both Afghanistan and India. Such a regime according to Mr. Gandhi, would also be a threat to the national security of Pakistan.

The Indian objections to the fundamentalist character of a regime in Kabul and its possible implications for the Indian security are too premature to engage us here too long because it is too early to say anything with certainty about the future set-up in Afghanistan in the days and months to come. Moreover, how Pakistan fairs with the future government of Afghanistan should not be a source of undue worry for the Indian government, because if Pakistan could put up with four decades of pro-Indian and pro-Soviet regimes in Afghanistan, she should also be able to cope with the possibility of an Islamic order in that country.

The fact that having been closely associated for a long time with the Soviet designs to obliterate the Islamic character and identity of Afghanistan, the brightening up of the prospects of the emergence of a Mujahideen-dominated government, has alarmed the Indian policy makers as to the future course of Kabul's foreign orientations which, they fear, might turn out to be in line with those of Pakistan and also very sympathetic to Iran. A trilateral combination of these three Muslim countries—Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, does not fit in India's cherished desire for a subdued neighbourhood. The coming together of these three countries portending to wreck the Indian hegemonic ambitions in the region would be nothing short of a horrible nightmare for New Delhi.

The Soviet concern about the resurgence of Islamic peoples, however, far exceeds that of the Indians. The Soviets and their predecessors, the Tsars, have applied for years the crude tactics of suppression, uprooting and elimination of the Muslim entities, but have never fully succeeded in their ignominious cause. However, the expansionist policies introduced by Tsars in Central Asia assumed altogether new and unprecedented dimensions with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in December 1979, to forestall the possible installation of an Islamic regime in Afghanistan.

With such a Soviet perspective on the Muslim entities south of Central Asia, what is the major difference between the Indian apprehensions about possible installation of an Islamic government in Kabul and the Soviet-Tsarist policies on the Central Asian Muslim republics and Afghanistan? Or for that matter, do the Indians intend to tread the footprints of the Tsars and the Soviets, though in a different direction?

Whether it is the USSR, the USA, India or any other powerful actor in international politics, all have been trying to make the Muslim resurgence docile, fragmented and stagnated. The whole rationale of their policies and perspectives on the Islamic resurgence could be summed as: states live by their geography, and geographic location more than anything else is a matter of fate not of choice or preference. The unique strategic location of the Muslim world, its predominance in oil and other natural resources, its economy and markets, its vital sea lanes and, indeed, being a fine rendezvous of the world's three important continents, i.e. the Asia, Africa and Europe, are an eye-sore to both the Western capitalist world and the communists. Moreover, the vigour and determination with which the Muslim entities are resisting encroachments on their territories, identity, faith and independence, have stunned them all, and there could be nothing closer to their hearts than obstructing the emergence of a united and territorially linked Muslim bloc embracing the entire West Asia and the Middle East. Finally, it is the potentiality of such a scenario which the Indian leadership along with other powers has opted to oppose because the Islamic countries of West Asia would be quite capable of collectively resisting the Indian hegemonic ambitions and would possibly be able to turn the tide back on India itself.

### **Embracing Najib in Kabul**

In the contemporary regional realities, India has its own image of a big power, at least in South Asia and is well rehearsed in the notorious art of bullying and sending arms and troops into its neighbourhood.<sup>19</sup> However, in the case of Afghan crisis, after being baffled at President Zia's rebuff to Rajiv's abortive invitation, and also being left-out from the Geneva peace process on Afghanis-

tan, the Indian leadership turned to the faltering regime of Najib in Kabul. On the eve of Najib's visit to New Delhi, India offered to prop up the Kabul regime through its military and economic assistance which under the Geneva accord was forbidden. But having lost "the trust of the Afghans, India had no choice but to make a common cause, first with the Soviet occupation forces, and then with the puppet regime of Dr. Najibullah. India shares commonality of interest with Najibullah in defeating the Mujahideen, conceding a measure of Soviet primacy and keeping Islamic influences out."<sup>20</sup> Precisely for such reasons, the Indians embraced Najib in Kabul and the latter "found a guarantor in India after the superpowers guarantors in Geneva had written his regime's certain demise into the accord."<sup>21</sup>

In their bid to find a role in the Afghan crisis, the Indians did not confine themselves to supporting the Najib administration in Kabul: the former Indian ambassador to Afghanistan, Dikhshit, allegedly forced the people of Indian origin living in Afghanistan to actively side with the Soviet-backed regime against the Mujahideen forces. The President of the interim Afghan government, Mr. Sibghatullah Mujaddadi, has even charged India of practically sending her troops to Afghanistan and its pilots flying the Kabul war-planes against the Mujahideen. However, the whole Indian exercise in Afghanistan is aimed at succeeding where the Soviets have already failed. Moreover, being more loyal than the king himself, the Indians invited Najib to New Delhi which even the East European countries never contemplated. Whereas the Soviet Union has withdrawn from its "running wound" in Afghanistan, the Indian leadership has come forward to provide the most wanted credibility and loyalty to the Kabul regime little realizing that this blatant opportunism will further marginalize India in the protracted chaos in Afghanistan, and expose her disregard for the national aspirations of the Afghan people.

### **What Motivates India's Afghanistan Perspectives?**

New Delhi's 'spoil-sport feeling' on the Afghan crisis, its sudden yearning for a role, and frantic diplomatic manoeuvres to enlist itself as a



so-called peace-maker in the region, could be visualized as follows:

- To establish a close rapport with anti-Pakistan, anti-Mujahideen, pro-India and pro-Soviet regime in Kabul.
- Throw weight on the Soviet side, and oppose what the Western media calls 'Islamic Fundamentalism in Afghanistan'.
- To establish credibility as a champion of non-aligned and Third World causes which has been completely eroded because of New Delhi's anti-people and anti-non-aligned policies on Afghanistan and Kampuchea.
- To pressurize Pakistan through the Kabul-Delhi-Moscow axis, to compel Pakistan-based Mujahideen to cohabit with the Kabul regime.
- Through a pro-Moscow and pro-India regime in Kabul, keep the Afghan irredentism alive against Pakistan an ulterior strategic objective to entangle Pakistan's national security into two-pronged scenario, that shall continue to create enormous difficulties for logistic support from the western to the eastern frontiers in case of any potential or actual contingency along the India-Pakistan border.
- By sending food supplies, military advisors and even by asking the 50,000 strong Indian community settled in Afghanistan, to support the Kabul regime, New Delhi intends to substantiate, at least symbolically, its arrogant and blind pursuit of a regional power status.
- Like most of peripheral countries around India, political instability and social chaos in Afghanistan, suits the Indian interests, i.e. New Delhi deliberately projects itself to be seen as a powerful stable actor among perpetually unstable entities, the flotsams and jetsams and of history.
- Having a political leverage on the future regimes in Kabul, which could prevent Afghanistan from joining any cohesive

regional organization with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.

### Conclusion – the Sole Objective

India's increasing interest and yearning for a role in the uncharted wilderness and protracted political chaos in Afghanistan, mainly stems from New Delhi's nightmarish preoccupation and excessive venom against Pakistan. Any tension within Afghanistan which the Indian leadership reckons, shall hurt Pakistan, suits New Delhi. Measuring from any yardstick, "Afghanistan is not India's immediate neighbour, nor is India's security at stake. Afghanistan is not a source of critical raw materials or a vital commercial market for India, nor do the two countries share any racial, religious or cultural affinities. India's only interest in Afghanistan is its use as a potential pressure point against Pakistan. India's entire Afghan policy is determined by its desire to confront Pakistan with the prospects of a two-front war."<sup>22</sup> Thus a gut hatred of Pakistan and settling score with it, is the sole objective of India's Afghan policy.

Besides the contemporary threatening attitudes of both India and the Soviet Union reminding Islamabad time and again to make its face horrible on the Afghan crisis, ever since its independence, Pakistan has been facing the consequences of its physical location and potential strategic importance as the geographic contours involve it intimately with the crucial issues of the Central-West Asia and the South Asia. Viewing in this perspective, the politico-strategic considerations have already forced the Soviet Union and India to have identical perspectives on the India-Pakistan mutual disputes and Pakistan's problems with Afghanistan. For its own military objectives, New Delhi is bound to see the major developments around Pakistan through the Soviet eyes. Whatever the character of a regime in Kabul, if she opposes Pakistan, New Delhi would prefer to nurture close links with it.

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## Articles Concluded

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### 6TH OF SEPTEMBER AND THEREAFTER

(Continued from page 10)

they belonged to West Pakistan, or had migrated from Bombay, Bihar or U.P., and the expected economic growth was not visible anywhere. Resentment was natural. Pakistan did not fulfil the dreams of poor people. To top it all, there was a Hindu minority in Bengal which exploited the situation.

The September war laid bare a major contradiction in the government propaganda also. On the one hand, it was stated that Pakistan was too poor to defend itself and on the other, it was claimed that the economic developments of the last ten years had transformed the country into the most developed of the developing countries. Decade of development was being celebrated while there had been no tangible change in the life of the poor people.

To sum up, as the US could not achieve all its objectives linked with the 1965 war, the American interest demanded a perpetuation of hostilities between India and Pakistan. The natural culmination of this situation turned out to be the secession of East Pakistan from the Federation with all its ghostly consequences.

Ironically enough, Henry Kissinger went to China on a secret mission, via Pakistan, in July 1971, as a prelude to President Nixon's historic visit, in February 1972, to that country. As a consequence of these visits, America gradually normalized its relations with China, exactly the same thing which, under unavoidable geopolitical compulsions, Pakistan had embarked upon to do and had to pay heavily in terms of its national prestige and territorial integrity.

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### THE AFGHAN CRISIS 1979-89

(Continued from page 19)

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20. Ghani Eirabi, "What motivates India's Afghan Policy," *The Muslim*, Islamabad, 12 July 1988.
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## IDEOLOGICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF PAKISTAN

(Continued from page 33)

36. Nicholas Mansergh, *op. cit.*, pp.357-58. See also *ibid.*, pp. 562-72.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-33. See also *The Indian Annual Register 1942*, Vol.I, pp. 121-22; Tara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Lahore, 1972, Vol.II, p.337.
38. Nicholas Mansergh, *op. cit.*, p. 233.
39. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Hinge of Fate*, New York, 1950, p.181.
40. Latif Ahmad Sherwani, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-88. See also Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-33; Penderal Moon, ed., *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, London, 1973, pp. 141-42; Lal Bahadur, *The Muslim League: Its History, Activities and Achievements*, Lahore, 1979, p. 306, H.V. Hodson, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
41. Penderal Moon, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
42. Latif Ahmad Sherwani, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-91. See also Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad, *Speeches*, *op. cit.*, vol.II, pp. 489-91, Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 449; M.H.Saiyid, *Muhammad Ali Jinnah, A Political Study*, 2nd ed., Lahore 1962, pp. 400-01; M.A.H. Ispahani, *Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah As I Knew Him*, 3rd ed., Karachi, 1976, pp. 136-36.
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50. For Cabinet Mission Plan, see Nicholas Mansergh, *op. cit.*, Vol.VII, pp:582-91. See also V.P.Menon, *op. cit.*, pp. 466-75; Mohammad Ashraf, (comp), *Cabinet Mission and After*, Lahore, 1946, pp. 39-53; Penderal Moon, *op. cit.*, pp. 471-80; Latif Ahmad Sherwani, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-15; *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, 17 May 1946; Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-39. *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, 16 March, 1946. See also Mohammad Ashraf, *op. cit.*, p. 1; H.V. Hodson, *op. cit.*, p.133; A.K. Majumdar, *Advent of Independence*, Bombay, 1963, p. 218.
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## IDEOLOGICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF PAKISTAN

(Continued from page 33)

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