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GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS OF SOUTHWEST ASIA;
THE AFTERMATH OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN-IRAQ WAR

BY

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GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS OF SOUTHWEST ASIA;
THE AFTERMATH OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN-IRAQ WAR

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Doctrine. *Military Doctrine, International Relations. (TDM/AW)*

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GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS OF S.W. ASIA;
THE AFTERMATH OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN-IRAQ WAR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Though global in scope, the American-Soviet contest has a central priority Eurasia. . . . The struggle for Eurasia is . . . waged on three central strategic fronts, the Far Western, the Far Eastern, and the South Western.

Brzezinski, Game Plan¹

At the conclusion of World War II both U.S. and the Soviets found clearly established fronts in the Far West and the Far East where both powers were actively engaged during the war. The third, South Western front, being a relatively calmer area during the war, became the major focus of contest for political influence between the superpowers. The Far Western and Far Eastern strategic fronts enunciated by Brzezinski were consolidated into the NATO and the Pacific theaters built around the strategy of alliances. But the third strategic front from the NATO southern flank extending upto the People's Republic of China did not receive the same attention as the other fronts.

Although the countries of this third front falling in South and South West Asia, i.e. Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, were brought together in a collective security alliance (CENTO) under British leadership through American initiative, U.S. itself never joined the Treaty. United States, instead, continued gaining political influence, where possible, through bilateral agreements and security assistance in the region.

The British withdrawal from east of the Suez and the United States decision to scale down its commitments in post Vietnam era, encouraged the

Soviets to gain influence in the region through numerous treaties of friendship and cooperation. United States concentration on "two pillars" strategy² centered around Iran and Saudi Arabia was in fact an acquiescence to the Soviets machinations elsewhere. Capitalizing on East-West detente, Soviet Union concentrated on destabilization of Pakistan and Afghanistan with India playing a key proxy role. Towards the end of 1970s, when the Shah of Iran fell through an Islamic revolution demolishing U.S. "two pillars" strategy, Soviets considered it an opportune moment to invade Afghanistan in December 1979. A year later another war broke out between Iran and Iraq completely destroying the peace in an already destabilized region.

After a decade of long gruelling wars of attrition which have resulted in a loss of nearly two million lives in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq and dislocation of many million others, peace is once again returning in this war ravaged region. Soviet Union has decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Almost a decade-long war of attrition between Iran and Iraq has also ended and a delicate cease fire is holding out. Mr. Gorbachev's address to the United Nations General Assembly where he announced a unilateral reduction in conventional forces along with other similar initiatives, really helped in creating a peace climate. But equally important is a new peace initiative in the Middle East by Palestine Liberation Organization. Fallout of these initiatives induced many new peace prospects like agreement for Southern Africa and Sino-Soviet initiative for rapprochement.

This sudden but universal peace prospect that began during 1988 holds promise for an optimism the world over. It must revive hopes of peace in South West Asia and the Middle East--the area which had more than its share of wars in post World War II period.

With this backdrop, the regional dynamics of South West Asia will be analyzed to ascertain their influence on future regional and extra regional policies and politics. Focus of the study will be on three countries i.e. Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan with general coverage of other regional and outside actors having bearing on the security of the region. The subject relates to the very recent and ongoing developments of global significance. Therefore everything is in a state of flux. As the dust has not yet settled, distant vision is relatively hazy. In an unstable area like the one under study, things can swing from one to the other direction. Following a geo-historic approach for the analysis, future projections will be based on empirical evidence and hypothetical propositions. This paper will be from regional perspective of the United States interests and policies. Interests and objectives of the other actors will be discussed against the basic United States interests to identify conflicts if any as viewed from the above stated perspective.

ENDNOTES

1. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Game Plan, The Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1986, p. 30.

2. Gary Sick, The Evolution of U.S. Strategy Towards the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, The Great Game, Praeger New York, 1983, p. 58.

CHAPTER II

U.S. INTERESTS AND EVOLUTION OF U.S. STRATEGY FOR SOUTHWEST ASIA

South West Asian Region is the farthest from North America. During the Second World War this area became significant to the United States for two reasons. Firstly, allied forces operating in the Pacific started making increased use of the Gulf oil¹ and secondly, the area became a supply route to the Soviet Union for delivery of lend-lease equipment and supplies.² A U.S. Middle East Command was thus created for the latter purpose which maintains its token existence to date. During postwar period U.S. and particularly its allies became ever more dependent on the Persian Gulf oil. Thus an unhindered access to the oil and freedom of the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) became important strategic objectives for the United States policy.

The region became the first arena between the postwar superpowers when Soviet Union failed to withdraw from northern Iran in 1946.³ Though the withdrawal was eventually secured through Anglo-U.S. diplomatic pressure in the United Nations, the area remained the arena of the Cold War rivalry and an important link in the chain of John Foster Dulles's policy of containment of the Communism. This area was the British sphere of influence, therefore the United States preferred staying out of the Baghdad Pact and its successor CENTO that included Turkey, Iran and Pakistan under the British leadership. The United States, however, strengthened its influence through bilateral agreements on security and economic assistance.⁴

The British decision to withdraw from east of the Suez gave impetus to a new debate on U.S. strategy. But stung by the Vietnam experience U.S. was not prepared to step in place of Britain to fill the vacuum. In the meantime a

new policy of "detente", initiated by Nixon and Kissinger, was taking shape instead of confrontational containment.⁵ The Nixon Doctrine in the spirit of "detente", relied on the regional countries to safeguard the scaled down U.S. interests as best they could with U.S. security assistance and its air and naval support.⁶

The new strategy for South West Asia and the Persian Gulf was erected on "two pillars" of Iran and Saudi Arabia.⁷ This arrangement was considered adequate to keep peace and stability in the region and ensure access to the Gulf oil. The United States policy relied on "detente", hoping to restrain the Soviet Union from expansionism by way of compensating economic and technological benefits, promised by that policy.

It was apparently a good strategy but in retrospect flawed on many counts. Though economically profitable, as both Iran and Saudi Arabia could pay for the arms sales, it was dangerously narrow based. It also tacitly conceded the other countries on the Soviet periphery namely Afghanistan and Pakistan out of the United States sphere of interest. The Shah of Iran was an oppressive ruler with an appalling record of human rights. The United States' support to the Shah was thus interpreted as exploitative and ideologically hypocritical⁸ by the Iranian people. They had not forgotten the overthrow of Mossadeq by the United States and now perceived U.S. perpetrating the Shah's oppression. All these factors helped build the explosive anti-American feelings amongst the masses. Fall of the Shah thus proved cataclysmic for United States-Iran relationship and overnight transformed Iran from the chief anchor of U.S. strategy into an acrimonious opponent of its policies in the region thereby demolishing the "two pillars" concept.⁹ Along with the U.S. strategy, the Nixon Doctrine of which Iran was the true manifestation was the next casualty.

Two pillars strategy had even earlier proved ineffective when during 1973 Arab-Israel War, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf countries put an oil embargo. Since then the United States had been contemplating such contingency plans as to seize the oil at the wellhead.¹⁰ These and other similar considerations must have been the forerunners of the United States strategy of establishing increased military presence in the region.

Some U.S. analysts had argued that at the time of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, U.S. was operating without a strategic concept for the region.¹¹ Detente had failed¹² and Carter Administration was already working on a more aggressive policy of containment that was later enunciated as Carter Doctrine. When Reagan came to the White House in 1981, he immediately picked up a more proactive policy. Discarding the policy of detente, Reagan orchestrated a new philosophy of "peace through strength".¹³ He began more active assistance of Afghan Mujahideen (holy warriors) and Pakistan to withstand Soviet pressure. He also upgraded Carter's Joint Rapid Deployment Force (JRDF) into a new U.S. Central Command as a symbol of U.S. commitment and determination. This strategy has shown an amazing success in not only containing but also for the first-time rolling back the Soviets through use of force.

Now that the Soviets have withdrawn from Afghanistan, what will be the future U.S. strategy in South West Asia? What are the options for the United States to consolidate its gains? What strategy can the Soviets pursue in post withdrawal periods? What are the geopolitical dynamics of the regional countries especially those of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan? Should the United States need to maintain increased military presence in the region?

These are some of the relevant questions to be debated before projecting the United States strategy for the future which will be done before ending this paper.

ENDNOTES

1. James H. Noyes, The Clouded Lens, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford California, 1982, p. 45.
2. Gary Sick, The Evolution of U.S. Strategy Towards the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, The Great Game, Praeger New York, 1983, p. 49.
3. Ibid., p. 50.
4. Ibid., p. 51.
5. Donald E. Nuechterlien, America Over Committed, The University Press of Kentucky, 1985, p. 204.
6. Ibid.
7. Sick, p. 58.
8. Richard W. Cottom, The United States and Revolutionary Iran, Soviet-American Relationship with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, Ed Hafeez Malik, St. Martin's Press New York, 1987, p. 219.
9. Sick, p. 70.
10. Ibid., p. 64.
11. Ibid., p. 70.
12. Neuchterlien, p. 197.
13. Ibid., p. 196.

CHAPTER III

SOVIET UNION'S INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES IN SW ASIAN REGION

Soviet Interests

Soviet Union is an ideological state whose ideal and raison d'etre is the establishment of a world order based on Marxist-Leninist philosophy.¹ Marxists concede that there is a long and arduous journey before they can reach their goal, therefore, till that time the base of the struggle that is provided by the "Soviet Socialist State" must be defended against all threats. During the World War II and afterward, as the Communism started spreading through the military victories or influence of the newly emerged Communist Superpower, the defensive umbrella kept extending from the Soviet State over to the entire Communist world thereby enormously expanding the defendable area.

Soviet State like its predecessor Russian Empire feels seriously handicapped by its geography. Soviet Union--the dominant resident power of Eurasian land-mass does not have a free access to the world oceans. It must therefore always strive for reaching some point on the Eurasian rimland that can provide exit into the open and warmer oceans.²

Soviet Strategic Appraisal

The Soviet future regional strategy must be viewed in the overall global context. Since the World War II, Soviet Union and the United States have emerged as global superpowers competing for the world domination. In Europe, both powers had delineated the spheres of respective influences well before the war ended. Neither, therefore, could extend its influence without a heavy cost that included possible nuclear holocaust. Soviet effort in Greece--the undemarcated area, was firmly checked by the United States.³ In the

Far East and the South East Asia Communism gained major successes in China and Vietnam but none was with Soviet conventional forces. Though Soviet military assistance and nuclear deterrence played a role, the indigenous Chinese and Vietnamese factors were more weighty in that success.

During the sixth and seventh decades of this century when U.S. was involved in Vietnam, Soviets made substantial gains in Asia, Africa and Latin America.⁴ This success was achieved at relatively low costs through military assistance and arms sales. But none of these countries were included in world socialist order. Emboldened by the successes, Soviets decided in 1979 to invade Afghanistan and assimilate it into the "socialist world order" through a direct use of its military might and also perhaps move a step closer to warm waters. Results were disastrous for the Soviet arms, economy and above all, its prestige as a superpower.

South and South West Asian region forms a thin rimland between the Soviet Union and the warm water seas. This region being predominantly Muslim can also stir troubles in Soviet Central Asia. Therefore Soviet Union always had strong incentive to cultivate good relationship with the countries on its southern periphery and counter the influence of its rival superpower. A flexible polity of constant adjustment and adaptation from minimalist to maximalist or vice versa with changing geopolitical realities has been the cornerstone of the Soviet approach.⁵ When the regional countries (Turkey, Pakistan and Iran) joined Western sponsored alliances, Soviet Union was able to neutralize this effect through outflanking diplomatic manoeuvres by gaining influence in Iraq, Syria and India. Local conflicts between regional states provided opportunity to the Soviet Union to expand its influence through arms sales and thereby outflank or encircle those countries having western orientation.⁶ And if a country showed signs of discontent with its

dependence on the West as was the case of Pakistan in 1965 and Iran after Islamic revolution, Moscow was quick to grab the opportunity for improving relations. This policy pattern is likely to continue in future.⁷ The expansionist model, where USSR perceiving no U.S. interest in Afghanistan, intervened militarily in 1979 and suffered a set back, may not be repeated unless an inviting international climate exists.

Future Outlook

The post-Afghanistan strategic reappraisal in Kremlin must have laid bare many stark realities. In post-world war period, Soviet Union's ever growing conventional military machine had not achieved much. Instead it had become an unbearable economic burden. The economic model has not worked either, and the political philosophy lost appeal. A confrontational "offensive strategy" has kept historically antagonist West Europeans united and the United States public opinion focused on Moscow to perceive every single move as a threat thus urging their leadership to resist all such moves (Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan). With a narrow, unidimensional (military) power base, Soviet Union may not be able to compete any longer. In the long run, its own survival may be at stake. A dispassionate analysis must lead policymakers in Moscow to this painful conclusion. Soviet State is getting more vulnerable from within than without. Why then should Soviet Union not change its strategy from a "confrontational offensive" to a more peaceful defensive one. After all Lenin must have meant the same thing when he advised that "by no means should we (Soviets) tie ourselves down to one strategic method."⁸ A change on new lines will help Soviet Union in two ways. First, it would defuse the threat that has provided a common ground for the unity of the West and the focal point of their public opinion and second, resultant reduction in conventional forces will release additional resources for restructuring the

stagnant economy. Soviet Union could be guilty of ignoring Engel's advice that "a strong economy is a must for building military strength."⁹

Otherwise how could there be such disparity between the elements of economic and military power? Soviet Union thus needs time, resources and peace to catch up economically. This all has been ingeniously packaged into Perestroika and Glosnost and communicated through Gorbachev's charm and "peace offensive" diplomacy. Today Gorbachev rides the Western media to convey his message abroad as well as strengthen his position against reluctant bureaucracy at home.

Perestroika, accommodating some of the values dear to the West like democratization, openness (Glosnosts) and human rights, has disarmed many hard liners. Today there is a better climate of cooperation than confrontation in the West as has been recently demonstrated by the Armenian earthquake case. There is also a visible desire in the West for Gorbachev's success more than his failure and provided Soviet Union allows, there may be the investors looking for an opportunity both in the West and Japan and perhaps Korea to invest in Soviet economy. But this all is not without risks. Through Perestroika and Glosnost, Soviet genie could get out of Gorbachev's bottle with disastrous ramification and perhaps Gorbachev is aware of it. But if he succeeds, not only the West would have given him time but also the means to recover and reemerge as a competing superpower.

The main issue of strategic significance is therefore Gorbachev's Perestroika. Is Perestroika a screen to cover Soviet strategic withdrawal, trade space for time, dilute his opponents, regroup his own forces and strike again or is it an ideological departure from Marxism-Leninism and reemergence of a new Russian empire? Are the trade tensions between U.S. and its allies the early symptoms of the dilution? With a budget deficit and

increased domestic demand, can U.S. consolidate its successes? And above all what should be the United States' response to Perestroika? Finally will Gorbachev be able to regain his strength and regroup his forces which also includes rapprochement with China? These are the questions which have future relevance but no clear answer.

Soviet future strategy and posture in South and South West Asia may thus be viewed in an overall perspective. There is likely to be an increased reliance on politico--diplomatic and sociopsychological elements of power backed by military assistance and selective economic or technological aid. Soviets would capitalize on the new gained respect from the regional countries as a result of its withdrawal from Afghanistan. The immediate objective is a "damage control" but the Soviet policy will also keep an eye on any opportunity that may come for improving their image and strategic position. Soviets see some opportunity of exploiting Iranian rift with the West and a robust diplomacy is underway to make politico-economic inroads there. Soviet Union is keen on improving relations with the countries in its South, and may be seeing a chance of success if the United States focus shifts from the region. However the Soviet policy would maintain its links with countries like India, Syria, South Yemen and Iraq. Soviets are clearly building India to play a role in the Indian Ocean to counter the United States influence. After leasing of nuclear submarines to India, its subsequent aggressive interventions in island countries of Srilanka and Maldives closer to the United States at Diego Garcia are the pointers in this direction.

ENDNOTES

1. C.N. Donnelly, The Development of Soviet Military Doctrine, International Defense Review, 1981, p. 1591.

2. Persian Gulf does not qualify as an open sea due to the Strait of Hormuz. Even the Mediterranean is bottled by the Suez Canal and the Gibraltar Strait.

3. Nuchterlian, p. 105.

4. India, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, South Yemen, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Angola, all fell under Soviet influence. Sudan, Somalia and Egypt fell out later.

5. Shireen T. Hunter, Soviet Union and Islamic Republic of Iran, Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, Ed Hafeez Malik, p. 253.

6. Morris McCain, Soviet Strategic Interests, p. 41.

7. Ibid., p. 48.

8. Lenin, Complete Colletive Work, Fifth Edition, XXXVI, p. 37.

9. K. Marx and F. Engels, Works, Second Edition, XX, p. 171.

CHAPTER IV
REGIONAL DYNAMICS

AFGHANISTAN

Internal Dynamics

Afghanistan emerged as buffer state between the British colonial power in India and Czarist imperial expanding power in Central Asia in the 19th century.¹ Consequently its boundaries were drawn to suit these two imperial neighboring powers. For this reason, the boundaries cut across various ethnic groups. Afghanistan thus appeared a conglomeration of diverse ethnic and cultural groups with their co-ethnic population spilling across its borders into the other neighboring countries.² Besides ethnic diversity, the country is also divided geographically by the HinduKush Mountain Range running northeast to southwest (north of Kabul). Ethnic groups in northern Afghanistan like Tadzhiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen are indistinguishable from those living in Tadzhik, Uzbek and Turkmen republics of the USSR. Eastern, Southern and Central Afghanistan is inhabited by Pushtuns (the largest ethnic group), Balochs and Hazaras who have their co-ethnics in Pakistan and Iran.³ Thus Afghanistan has cultural, linguistic and ethnic linkages with its three main neighbors, USSR, Pakistan and Iran. The most important rally point for Afghanistan's ethnically diverse population is their religion. Ninety-nine percent of the Afghans are Muslims.⁴

Afghanistan is a land-locked country. It has to transit through its neighbors, Pakistan, Iran and the USSR. In the 1950s and 1960s the Soviet Union fully exploited this weakness by estranging Afghanistan with its southern neighbors Iran and Pakistan. Daud was the key player in this estrangement of relationship.⁵ After becoming prime minister in 1953, he

was instrumental in snapping Afghanistan's links with its southern and western neighbors Pakistan and Iran and firmly pushing his country into the Soviets arms militarily and economically.⁶ Ironically, after 25 years it was same Daud trying to reverse this very relationship that brought a cataclysm for himself and his country. That his countrymen had to pay in blood of over a million lives and devastation of their country through an intense struggle spread over a decade to let loose of the shackles put by Daud and his cousin, King Zahir Shah, is a sad testimony of political ineptitude of these rulers. Afghanistan is still entirely dependent on the Soviet Union economically. An economic reorientation is vital for an independent Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is an Orthodox tribal society and an underdeveloped Muslim country. It has a tribal system where the chief or "khan" of a tribe commands his own clan. Despite their independence these tribes get united in a bigger ethnic or linguistic grouping when threatened from without. But when such a threat is removed, their inter tribe feuds would surface again. The religious establishments transcend tribal boundaries and their influence is more on regional basis. The structure of the Afghan State was built on the foundation that was created by balancing the tribal Khans, religious establishments and the central authority.⁷ After the Soviets withdrawal, there is no central authority to establish balance between tribes and ethno-religious establishments. Success or failure of a future order will depend on how much power the tribes and the religious establishments can voluntarily give up to help reestablish a central authority. This establishment of a central authority and providing it the requisite power to bring order amongst the numerous warring factions is the real test of future Afghan leadership.

Soviet Union has been concentrating on the minority ethnic groups in Afghanistan during the occupation period. Out of an approximate population of

sixteen million in 1979, five million are Tadjhiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen who live in northern Afghanistan north of the HinduKush barrier.⁸ Most of these ethnic groups did not migrate to Pakistan or Iran during the war and stayed back. Only six percent of the refugee population in Pakistan⁹ had come from these groups. As stated before, these groups have their co-ethnic cousins in Soviet republics of Tadjhikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmen living in contiguous regions across the Amu Darya (Oxus River). During their occupation Soviets have been encouraging local trade between these co-ethnic groups on either side of the Russo-Afghan border. Their small percentage in refugee population may be indicative of the fact that Russo-Afghan forces did not treat them harshly during the counter insurgency operations, though Panjsher Valley north of Kabul inhabited by Tadjhiks may have been an exception. In post-withdrawal Afghanistan, if a power struggle breaks out, these ethnic groups geographically separated from the south may be compelled to gravitate towards their co-ethnic Soviet Central Asian republics. But it is not likely particularly in the presence of strong guerilla leaders like Ahmed Shah Masoud who is a Tajik and led a brave and heroic struggle against the Soviets in Panjsher Valley.¹⁰

Afghanistan had a small but influential educated elite that provided technocrats and administrators for the government machinery, business circles and the armed forces. In 1950s when Daud's policies moved Afghanistan closer to the Soviet Union, a division began in this educated elite.¹¹ The division was broadly into three groups. The largest of the groups was composed of moderate technocrats and other bureaucrats educated in Western school systems who wanted to benefit their country through democracy and free enterprise. This group has virtually been eliminated or scattered after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The second group was the hard proponent of

Islamic thoughts which strongly opposed the pro-Soviet policies. This is the group that today provides leadership to Afghan resistance. The third group is of the communists that advocated Soviet model for economic development. With the first group eliminated or melted into the other two, there is an obvious polarization between Communists and Islamic or resistance groups. To strengthen the Communists educated cadres, Soviets have recruited thousands of youths and young children--most of them orphans, and taken them to Soviet Union for education and indoctrination.¹² These cadres once back may create serious problems of absorption. Alternatively, this group in Soviets hand will provide them ever-ready tool of interference in Afghanistan as and when the need may arise. It will thus be a hanging sword over the head of any future Afghan government.

The United States Role

United States has a continuous and important role to play in Afghanistan. First, a continued support of the Mujahideen will help quick ending of the present pro-Moscow regime in Kabul that would open the way for further efforts towards restoration of peace in the country. Second, there is an acute food shortage inside Afghanistan that would need a relief effort on an emergency basis. It is hard to imagine it could be done without U.S. involvement. Thirdly, Afghanistan today is totally devastated. There are hardly any houses or shelters left for the people. There are no markets, no hospitals, no schools and above all no farms and pastures.¹³ There is hardly anything left to begin a living. The countryside is littered with mines, booby traps, unexploded bombs, rockets and numerous other explosive devices. Rehabilitation of over five million refugees and another two million people inside the country is a daunting task with no precedence. United

States may have to take a leadership role in this effort without which a bleak future stares these unfortunate people in the face. And it could become a major destabilizing factor in the region.

Regional Countries

Iran and Pakistan are the countries bordering Afghanistan. China also has a common border with Wakhan strip but has no road link. After Afghanistan, it was Pakistan that suffered the most due to Soviet intervention. Pakistan has the vital interests in Afghanistan which need to be understood and viewed sympathetically by both superpowers and the other regional countries. There are still over three million Afghan refugees on Pakistan's soil who must return to their homeland. Another two million are in Iran as well. Both Pakistan and Iran are keenly interested in some workable arrangement that ensures return of the refugees. Most important of this arrangement is the establishment of a government that is acceptable to these refugees. Given the bitterness of last ten years between the Soviet Union and Afghan people, it is impossible for them to agree to a pro Moscow government. Soviet insistence on a coalition arrangement participated by Communist elements is a non-starter. Pakistan and Iran may also not be fully satisfied with such arrangements. As things stand today, any government in Kabul must be acceptable to the people of Afghanistan including the refugee population and must be able to work with Pakistan and Iran and the world at large to ensure rehabilitation of the refugees. Iran itself is devastated by the war and has its hands full of the internal problems. Pakistan, on the other hand, will be more than willing to extend a helping hand to reestablish the refugees whom it has looked after for those many years and had developed more than the working relationship with them. A pro-Moscow government can neither survive nor bring any stability to

this war ravaged region. Stability is one thing that interests both the superpowers, therefore they should work towards that objective taking due stock of the regional realities.

IRAN

Geo-Historical Background

Like Afghanistan, Iran's preoccupation for last two centuries has been the threat of an expanding Russian/Soviet power in Central Asia. Iran or Persia has always been a power either expanding or shrinking till the 19th century when Russians arrived in Central Asia and the British imperial power in the South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The expanding Czarist armies occupied northern Iranian provinces which extended up to Georgia and from the north, Iran was shrunk back to its present borders.¹⁴ The Bolshevik Revolution succeeding Czarist Russia did not make things better. During the World War II Iran was divided into three zones--northern Iran occupied by the Soviets, southern by British and central zone remaining neutral. After the war, Soviets declined to withdraw from the northern provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan and instead declared these as democratic republics.¹⁵ But the United States' pressure on Soviet Union forced them to withdraw from Iran. Soviet efforts to influence events in Iran, however, continued afterward through the Tudah Party.¹⁶ But the heavy-handed policies of the Soviet Union towards Iran during and after the war proved harmful to the Soviet interests. These policies made clear to Iran the Soviets real intentions, weakened the Communist Party, increased Iranian apprehensions and fears, made Iran's option of neutrality less attractive and pushed it into the Western Camp. Soviet-Iran relations have blown hot and cold since then but the Soviets have never ceased to press their advantage nor been able to remove

Iranian suspicion about themselves. A victim of a century old competition between British and Russian imperial powers, Iran thankfully welcomed U.S. helping hand in restoring its sovereign independence.¹⁷ But after a bitter experience with U.S. role in toppling Dr. Mossadeq's government who had a popular appeal with the masses, U.S. was thenceforth bracketed with the other past exploitative powers and was seen manipulating Iranian political system to perpetuate the Shah and the vested interests.¹⁸ The major consequences of this U.S. support to the Shah were two fold. Firstly the Shah increasingly seen as the symbol of the United States and the other external exploitative forces was isolated from masses and secondly, the democratic and liberal elements who supported Mossadeq got suppressed, dispersed and dispirited started rallying around the religious and the leftist elements. The Shah's regime lacking more and more in nationalistic legitimacy got increasingly dependent on the armed forces and the American support as his power base. As the opposition to the Shah grew, the oppressive forces headed by Savak (Shah's secret service) were let loose to control the situation. Thus as the hatred against the Shah's oppressive rule grew, it was transmitted with equal intensity against the Americans who were considered the very perpetrators of this rule. When the Shah's rule evaporated as a result of Islamic Revolution in Iran, U.S. was seen as a residual vestige of those decades of oppression and a target of all the rage and fury accumulated over the years.

This brief background puts into perspective the Iranian experience and provides some basis for understanding the Iranian policy and their adversary relationship with super and other big powers. It is a result of this historic experience that Ayatollah Khomeini declared:

America is worse than Britain; Britain is worse than America. The Soviet Union is worse than both of them. . . . But today it is America that we are

concerned with. . . . All our troubles today are caused by America.¹⁹

Islamic Republic's Policy Imperatives

Iranian world view is the reflection of their own domestic revolutionary struggle and the past experience as a model for seeking fulfillment. Most Muslim and Third World countries suffered long colonization and exploitation by the imperial powers--East and West. In postwar decolonization process these countries had got their freedom back but their expectations are yet not met. They still continue to be the slaves of poverty, hunger and sickness. Internally, most are ruled by despots whose only interest is the perpetuation of their rule (the Shah was an example). These Third World people are referred to by Ayatollah Khomeini as the Mostazafan (the oppressed) and their lot is determined by the present unjust world order perpetrated by what he calls the Mostakbaran (the oppressors) led by the two superpowers and their supporters.²⁰ The way out of the present state as seen by the revolutionaries is rejection of the present order and fighting the status quo forces. In practical terms this policy led Iran to a confrontational policy against the superpowers and a slogan of neither East nor West.²¹ At regional level, it implied Iran's opposition to the States that were allied to or dependent upon any of the superpowers. It also implied encouraging subversion and revolts in the States perpetuating (the Shah like) despotic rule. Out of the two superpowers, Iran's latest experience was with the United States as an oppressive power. It was treated as the "Great Satan" and the greatest enemy of the revolution. Soviet Union was a close second with the United States.

Iranian Revolution has an Islamic character. Its legitimate constituency is the Muslim World where its appeal is naturally the strongest and universal. The 20th century had witnessed numerous Islamic revivalist movements in Sudan, Egypt, Iran and prepartitioned India. Each strove to replace the Western social and political system with an Islamic one based on the tenets of the Quran and the Sunnah (the prophet example). None enjoyed much popularity. Now suddenly frustrated by the West and the East, Muslims are keenly looking at Islam not only for spiritual but also for temporal guidance. Islamic Revolution is a practical demonstration of an Islamic State and therefore holds promise for the Muslims across the board. It is a symbol of pride and hope and transcends sectarian boundaries in its appeal. To dismiss it as a Shiite revolution will be a gross understatement. Today all the Muslim states of any order (moderate, leftist, monarchies and republics alike) face an unprecedented threat from Islamic activism. Imam Khomeini's concept of "exporting the revolution" must be viewed in this context. It is not an export over the tanks, warships or airplanes, it is strictly ideological against which no arms can defend. It is this all pervasive Islamic Republic's influence which created caution and fear amongst the other Muslim States particularly Iran's Arab neighbors in the Gulf region whose rulers felt seriously threatened by Iranian's appeal to the populace to emulate their example of demolishing unpopular despotic regimes.

The third pillar of the Iranian policy which is not necessarily compatible with the first two is the geopolitical reality of Iran. This has mainly been dictated by the war with Iraq and had a moderating effect on Iranian early radicalism.²² As the war needs increased, a more pragmatic approach was adopted in Iran's relations with the world. State to state relations began to be assessed against the demands of the war and the revolution and policy

adjustments were made to avoid damage to the war effort. Thus despite neither West nor East slogan, some deference was shown towards the USSR and Iran's relations with pro-West Turkey and Pakistan improved considerably.²³ With the war now over, there is some skepticism about Iran continuing with the pragmatism that was visible towards the closing stages of the war. But with her economy devastated and with ever increasing need of technology and assistance for reconstruction perhaps this posture is likely to continue with occasional spurts of ideological rhetorics.

Iran's Relations With Superpowers

The USSR welcomed the Iranian revolution as it ended the Shah's politico-strategic relationship with U.S. Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-Americanism, his withdrawal from CENTO and permission to Tudah Party to function openly enormously encouraged the Soviets. Their long desire of winning Iran as strategic prize of the Persian Gulf seemed near fulfillment.²⁴ Soviets attempt to ingratiate with Tehran by adopting a pro-Iranian position in the hostage crisis soon waned with its military intervention in Afghanistan. But when Iraq attacked Iran in 1980 with whom USSR had a treaty of friendship and cooperation, Soviet Union took a carefully neutral stand and even encouraged its satellites to provide arms to the Iranian regime. The immediate Soviet objective was obviously to give no opportunity to the United States to regain its former position in Iran.²⁵ Despite waxing and waning relationship between the two countries, the Soviets have been successful in their basic objective. Though they have not allowed a foothold to United States of America, they could not prevent a relative rapprochement in Iran-West European relationship. Soviet-Iranian working relationship has continued despite a period of rift when Moscow openly sided with Iraq along with U.S. and others

to prevent Islamic Revolution winning a clear victory.²⁶ In postwar period and after Soviets have agreed to withdraw from Afghanistan, Soviet-Iranian relationship has been warming. Ayatollah Khomeini's emissaries have been visiting Moscow and official level contacts have increased between the two countries. Iran is taking a more active role in Afghanistan.²⁷ The latest rift between Iran and the West is being fully exploited by the Soviets and Mr. Shiverdnatze recently had an unique audience with Ayatollah Khomeini. How Soviet-Iranian relations will develop in future is not easy to predict. Iran has learned to maintain working relationship with Soviet Union even during periods of political differences. As in the past, they may continue to have periods of relative rapprochement and estrangement depending on regional and international politics, but their religious and ideological incompatibilities and past history do not guarantee a permanency of good relationship over a prolonged period of time.

Iran has been a key state in U.S. regional security perceptions. It had a central role in Dulles's containment policy and security pacts. Later when Nixon Doctrine was enunciated Iran had a major role along with Saudi Arabia in a "two pillars" policy arrangement to safeguard U.S. interests in the Gulf. Thus even when the United States interests in the region were scaling down, Iran continued to be prominent in U.S. strategic arrangements. The 1973 Arab-Israel War and a resultant Arab oil embargo triggered changes in U.S. strategic thinking. Whereas the "two pillar" policy was satisfactory, it was ineffective if oil was turned off at the wellhead.²⁸ For such a contingency the "use of force" could not be excluded.²⁹ And therefore U.S. military presence was necessary for such a contingency. The "two pillars" policy had in effect lost its efficacy though it remained operative for a few more years. Fall of the Shah demolished the United States strategy in the Persian Gulf and

the South West Asia. United States had not only lost an ally but instead found a bitter opponent in its place overnight, necessitating a fresh calculus of threat to its regional interests. United States relations with Revolutionary Iran is a strange story of diplomatic disconnect; each side outdoing the other in worsening their mutual relationship. Iranians under the revolutionary fervor and Americans under the anguish of an injured pride have pulled themselves too far apart. It would need both time and skillful diplomacy to bridge the gulf. But war ravaged Iran doing repairs and rebuilding will provide ample opportunities to the United States for extending a hand of goodwill and friendship. Immediate objective for the United States policy should be a "damage control" to prevent the Soviets getting entrenched there. United States regional allies like Turkey and Pakistan and Japan can play a constructive role. How long the United States will continue in the unenviable position of a "chief oppressor" or a "great Satan" is not easy to predict. But unless both sides follow a more pragmatic approach, there is a lesser scope for a near term rapprochement. After the inauguration of the new Bush Administration, there were encouraging signals from Washington and Tehran providing enough room for optimism for an early restoration of some kind of communication between the two countries.

Iran's Relations with its Neighbors

Gulf States. Pre-revolutionary Iran was perceived as a dominant power of the Gulf but after eight years long stalemated war, it is no more regarded that way. Accounts of this attrition oriented war are not meant to be covered here but it has left some deep scars on the regional politics. In this war many things that many people expected did not happen. To start with Saddam expected the Khuzistan Arabs would revolt and come over to his side but it did

not eventuate. Similarly Ayatollah Khomeini's call to the Iraqi Shiite population to rise against Saddam did not have much effect. Iranian depiction of the conflict as one between Islam and the secular forces also did not cut across the traditional antipathy between Iranians and the Arabs. Syrian, Libyan and Algerian support to Iran was more due to secular than Islamic reasons.³⁰ That Iraq held out against Iran in the war is because of the support of the other Arab countries and Iran is not likely to forget that fact easily. Then there is that basic difference between Iran and Saudi Arabia about Hajj being used as a political forum to awaken Muslims which resulted in an unfortunate bloodbath of the Iranian Hajis during 1987.³¹ Iran also suspects Saudi Arabia indulging in "oil politics" and the price war by increasing its oil production to limit Iran's capacity to generate enough funds.³² In fact during the last OPEC meeting after the war, Iran was forced to swallow the bitter pill of an equal quota with Iraq. Iran is very suspicious of the Arabs manipulating the oil politics against its interests. This economic coercion may ultimately prove a useful tool in Arabs hands to compell Iran improve relations with the Gulf countries. There is already a visible move in that direction. Iranian influence in Lebanon is yet another area which provides common grounds for a better understanding with its Arab neighbors. On the other hand, Gulf war has also exposed Iranians vulnerability of its oil exports. Iraqi attacks on tankers and oil terminals and U.S. threats of blockade taught a painful lesson to Iran that its oil shipment through the Gulf and the Straits of Hormuz was fraught with grave dangers. There are reports that Iran is planning to reorientate its oil exports by pipeline system through terminals east of the Straits of Hormuz.³³ This capability, once developed, will give more flexibility to Iran in the Gulf matters. Peace in the Gulf would largely depend on the

ability of Iran and Iraq to resolve their basic outstanding issue of the Shatt-el-Arab which is a very thorny problem. Unless that is done peace may not hold out very long.

Pakistan and Turkey. Iran's relations with these countries have been generally cooperative. Before the revolution, these three countries participated in a joint security arrangement--CENTO and in a regional economic cooperation organization--the RCD (Regional Cooperation for Development) with its headquarters at Tehran. Even after the revolution, despite minor irritants the relations between these countries have been good. During Iran-Iraq War both Turkey and Pakistan had pursued a policy of strict neutrality which created some ripples initially. But gradually Iran came to understand the policy constraints of its neighbors and has since been appreciative of this even-handed approach. Turkey and Pakistan have served as overland trade routes for Iran and barter trade also increased considerably. In the postwar period, Iran frustrated from its southern neighbors there is a greater scope for improved relations and cooperation. The major problem area appears these countries ties with U.S. which Iran obviously considers detrimental to increased cooperation. But a new pragmatic Iranian approach holds potentials for mutual cooperation in economic field.

Afghanistan Situation and Pakistan-Iran Cooperation. Pakistan and Iran were seriously affected by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Besides a direct threat to their security they had to bear the burden of over five million refugees--the greatest refugee population in the world. Both countries, therefore, had complete harmony and convergence of interest over Afghanistan. Iran being heavily involved in its own war with Iraq, the entire burden of politico-diplomatic activity was taken on by Pakistan including the proximity talks under the auspices of the U.N. which finally secured the

Geneva Agreement. During this entire process, Iran was kept posted about the various diplomatic initiatives and progress. Though following its own "principled" stand on Afghanistan, Iran has been generally supportive of the Pakistan policy. Now that the Afghanistan issue has reached a critical stage and a possibility of the refugees returning to their homes is opening, there is even greater need for a closer cooperation than the competition between the two countries. In recent weeks there are indications of Soviet-Iranian relationship getting warmer whereas Iranian leadership appears less enthusiastic towards Pakistan's new leadership.³⁴ But Pakistan has been showing a better understanding of such occasional lapses by a revolutionary regime. Iran surely realizes that both countries are important for each other and they must work out a combined and mutually beneficial strategy on Afghanistan to achieve their objectives of a non-aligned, Islamic regime where refugees can return. Both countries must also understand that the task of rehabilitation is a gigantic one which would need the support and cooperation of the entire world.

PAKISTAN

Historical Background

Pakistan became an independent country in 1947 from British colonial rule. It was carved out of the Indian sub continent where Hindus and Muslims had lived together over a thousand years but could not socially, culturally and religiously be integrated into one nation. The Muslim religious principle of universal equality of mankind ran contrary to the Hindu social structure that was built around the caste system (the social stratification of the society). Thus the two communities could not coexist without antagonizing one another.³⁵ This social tension turned into hostility within the communities

culminating into a communal blood bath after independence resulting in a loss of thousands of lives and dislocation of millions just because they lived on the wrong side of the border.³⁶ Thus the birth of India and Pakistan was a bloody event that carried on ever since with another three wars between the two countries in their short history.

Pakistan's chief concern has been the preservation of its security against a much bigger and hostile neighbor--India. This concern drove Pakistan very early after its independence into the United States sponsored alliance system.³⁷ This strategy did not prove successful in the long run. On one hand, the United States either did not share Pakistan's threat perception or was unwilling to strengthen its defense beyond a certain limit against India due to its own geostrategic interests. On the other hand, Pakistan's entry into these alliances antagonized its Communist neighbors particularly the Soviet Union. Thus instead of improvement, Pakistan's security environments deteriorated further. Hostility towards Pakistan became a common denominator in Indo-Soviet relationship. India and Soviet Union got together in a strategic relationship through a treaty of friendship and cooperation in 1971, whereas U.S. had stopped all military assistance to Pakistan.³⁸ With a common objective of punishing Pakistan for their respective reasons the Indo-Soviet coalition moved forward with a well planned strategy. Soviet Union being less acceptable to the western world and especially U.S. took a back seat to provide material and moral support including diplomatic support in the United Nations. India took the front seat and did the field work of physically dismembering Pakistan. The coalition strategy worked effectively with Pakistan's allies either neutralized or unwilling to intervene.

Before the end of the decade the process was once again repeated. The regional geopolitics in the meantime had dramatically changed. A truncated

Pakistan was amidst serious internal crisis and had pulled out of the Western alliance system. Iran, once anchor of U.S. policy in South West Asia, had turned into a bitter enemy after the Islamic Revolution. United States was deeply involved in hostage crisis in Iran. The coalition was on the move once again. But this time Soviet Union was on the front seat driving into Afghanistan leaving India to contain weakened Pakistan. But the things moved differently. Pakistan stood up to make a stand. United States having recovered from the Vietnam trauma was determined to resist despite loss of Iran. Afghans were even more determined to defend their religion and liberty against Godless Communism. Iran despite differences with the United States and its own involvement in war with Iraq stood by its Pakistan and Afghan kinsmen. Rest of the world also joined in. India however, remained faithful to its ally in the United Nations and elsewhere, pressurizing Pakistan with aggressive diplomacy and military exercises close to the Pakistan-India border. But the coalition ultimately failed against a coordinated opposition. Soviets had to pull out of Afghanistan.

Pakistan's Relations with its Neighbors

The Soviets withdrawal has only marginally improved Pakistan's security environments. A direct action by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan had attracted reaction by the United States. Past experience shows that an indirect threat transmitted through a regional player stands a better chance of success. Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship and cooperation is still operative. Pakistan thus continues to be threatened by India with a backseat role by the Soviet Union. The United States' policy of showing deference to India's subjective perceptions regarding Pakistan-United States relationship further exacerbates these concerns.

Pakistan on its part has been striving consistently to improve relations with India. But besides numerous outstanding disputes, the biggest hurdle is India's determination to assert its claim of hegemony over the smaller neighbors. Such a claim runs contrary to the very genesis of Pakistan. Therefore, it is unlikely to become a basis of stable relationship between the two countries. Frustrated with its South Asian neighbor--India, Pakistan will naturally turn towards its West Asian neighbors within the ambit of regional and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) polity.

Pakistan has maintained good relations with Iran ever since its inception. Both countries had close cooperation on Afghanistan issue and are intimately linked with the early and peaceful settlement of the Afghanistan problem in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal from that country, because it is then only that over five million refugees on their soil can return. Both the countries need to develop a common diplomatic strategy and evolve a consultative machinery to ensure firstly, the early end of the pro-Moscow regime in Kabul and secondly return and rehabilitation of the refugees. This latter task will be gigantic one needing the help and cooperation of the entire world community. Pakistan recognizes that U.S. has to play a big role in repatriation of the refugees and restoration of peace in the region. But the present state of United States-Iran relationship may prove a serious hurdle.

The new geopolitical realities of the region point towards a cooperative relationship between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan and if peace can be restored in Afghanistan which by itself is a tall order, a new economic grouping may emerge in the region. Turkey, with whom all the countries have good relations may join in this economic grouping. Their common ties with OIC and Pakistan's link with South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

(SAARC) can become the foundation for extended regional cooperation that should improve peace and stability in the region. Such an arrangement would also serve U.S. and Chinese interests and would ensure stability on the periphery of the Soviet Union. However, an improved United States-Iran relationship is very vital for the success of this grouping.

Pakistan's relationship with China and the Persian Gulf States are time tested. Pakistan is concerned with present state of relationship between Iran and the other Gulf States particularly Saudi Arabia. But now that the fear of Iranian domination of the Gulf is over, those relations should improve considerably both bilaterally and under the auspices of OIC.

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CHAPTER V
FUTURE PROSPECT

U.S. ROLE - SHORT TERM

Role in Afghanistan

Containment of the Soviet expansion and influence has been a consistent U.S. objective in the postwar period. United States strategy in the region has not only checked but for the first time rolled back the Soviet Union from a country on the latter's periphery. This is a historic success from any standard. That it was achieved without loss of American lives--the severely constrained asset politically, should be even more gratifying to the United States. But Afghanistan--the most important ally in the success has been devastated. Besides a loss of a million lives, another five million Afghans had been forced out of their homes and hearth, now refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Their success is still far away. It will come only when they are rehabilitated inside their country. Soviets have withdrawn but peace is still very far. A pro-Moscow government continues holding out in Kabul. Apparently weak but this regime could hold out for a prolonged period if the opposition gets diluted. Continuation of support to the Mujahideen is vital. Any hint of change in U.S. policy may weaken their resolve and unity which already looks very fragile. Along with this support is the important question of food shortages in Afghanistan. Prolongation of the present regime would aggravate the food situation further, which may get out of control resulting in loss of lives through starvation. Rushing of emergency relief will need a coordinated effort by the world community. United Nations may be the most convenient organization to take on this work, but it would need full support of the West led by the United States.

Repatriation of over five million refugees is a gigantic and daunting undertaking never done before. It would need an active support from the entire world community. Afghanistan today lacks the very basic facilities to begin a living on the countryside. Bare minimum facilities will have to be created for these five million people. That is the magnitude of the problem. But, above all, peace is pre-requisite for making a start for this rehabilitation. Mujahideen leadership did not make an auspicious beginning to their stupendous task of providing leadership. Though too early to say but U.N. may ultimately have to step in to restore order in Afghanistan. Pakistan and Iran, the two countries with refugee population, have to complement rather than compete with each other. Present State of United States-Iran relationship may prove a serious hinderance in rehabilitation effort. Both sides appear willing but waiting for the other to take initiative. Payment of promised U.S. compensation to the families of Iranian airbus victims could be a good start point.

Geopolitical Dynamics of Iran

As stated earlier, Iran-Iraq War had a devastating effect on Iranian economy. Iran is in urgent need to begin its economic reconstruction. Present state of United States-Iran relationship is providing Soviet Union with unique opportunity to entrench itself in that country. Ayatollah Khomeini would never tolerate the Soviet Union but his successors may not show the same resolve especially in the face of growing political and economic benefits.¹ It is not only the rehabilitation of Afghan refugees, there are even higher security and economic stakes for the United States to improve relations with Iran. Time is at the premium as a robust Soviet diplomacy is gaining ground. United States must take some immediate initiative to prevent this

greatest ever strategic prize falling in Soviets way. Such a development will setback the entire geostrategic equation and enable Soviet Union to outflank both South and West Asia.

Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan share a similar experience of frustration with their most other neighbors. If peace can prevail in Afghanistan, with a prospect of mallowed revolution, there is a good possibility of a new cooperation emerging among these three countries. Such a cooperation can bring stability to the region which will advance U.S. interests of stability and containment of Soviets future southward expansion. Turkey can join in this grouping having a common history of good relations with these countries. However this grouping will take time to materialize after achieving considerable progress in peace and stability. United States should encourage this development to reduce Iranian economic dependence on Soviet Union. Countries like Japan could provide meaningful assistance in this objective.

Pakistan-U.S. Relations

With the present state of U.S.-Iran relations, Pakistan continues to be important for the geostrategic stability of the South West Asia and the Persian Gulf. But in post Soviet withdrawal period, these relations may be affected on two counts. First is the nuclear non-proliferation issue which remained thorny during the last decade. The United States understanding, of late, that this issue has a regional context has considerably improved the situation.² The United States, however, can make major contribution by bringing around India to help in establishing a nuclear non-proliferation regime in South Asia. The second element is the trend in U.S. policy to defer to Indian perceptions. United States is fully conscious of enormous disparity of military power between the two countries. If the United States even-handed

approach towards the two countries approximates the Indian view, the interests of peace and stability in the region will not be safeguarded. And the United States-Pakistan relations would suffer a decline.

LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE

As stated earlier, U.S. strategy has been remarkably successful in rolling back the Soviet military power from Afghanistan. But the proximity of the region to the Soviet Union gives it a continuous advantage. And unless this U.S. success can be consolidated, the Soviet Union has the resilience to return.

The regional states on its southern periphery are ideologically inimical to the Soviet Union, therefore, local military balance will play a decisive role in overall strategic assessment. United States has a good opportunity to garner this strength to its advantage by encouraging closer economic ties amongst these regional countries and by bringing about stability through either resolution of local disputes or establishing local balance of power. Soviet Union has traditionally benefitted from these local disputes by advancing its interests through military assistance, therefore, it is important to deny her this opportunity.

The increased U.S. military involvement in the region by way of the United States Central Command was a reaction to the Soviets' invasion of Afghanistan. Unless it appears important in U.S. perception for the reasons of local interventions to safeguard its interests, it should be possible to draw down U.S. commitments especially of land forces elements of the Central Command. With improved military capabilities of the regional states, U.S. may concentrate on improving its strategic lift capability and thereby reinforce the local states against a distant Soviet invasion. However the United States

naval and air presence in the region may be important to prevent any one country or a local coalition gaining a dominant position.

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