

EXCURSUS 1

Lucy Komisar on INDIA & THE U.S.: TWO STRATEGIC REALITIES

New Delhi

When Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made his first official visit to Washington this past June, one of the main topics of conversation—and disagreement—was security policy in South Asia, and particularly the Indian view of American policy in Afghanistan. The Indians oppose the Soviet presence there, and they have said so, albeit not as loudly and publicly as Washington would like. But they vehemently oppose America's arming of Pakistan in return for that country's harboring and aiding the Afghan *mujaheddin* in their guerrilla war against the Soviets and the Soviet-backed Afghan government.

Aside from their argument that the Pakistani military buildup is aimed not at the USSR but at India, with which Pakistan has fought three wars, members of the Indian foreign policy establishment offer an analysis of the problem of Afghanistan and its place in the East-West conflict that is at wide variance with Washington's. Rajiv Gandhi and Ronald Reagan—and their foreign policy advisors—not only disagree about tactics but have different basic conceptions of strategic reality.

According to Washington, the Soviet entry into Afghanistan is just one more example of the bad Russian bear swallowing a helpless country. A Western diplomat here said that this poses a threat to U.S. security because "you feed the bear and it makes him hungrier." Indian analysts view such comments as naive or, more likely, disingenuous.

They say the Afghanistan issue is really about the Middle East.

Some U.S. officials might agree, asserting that the move into Afghanistan is the beginning of a Russian thrust toward the Gulf, with an eye to strangling the West by denying it oil. But Indians are more likely to assert that the Russians were responding to forward moves by the Americans.

G. K. Reddy, political commentator for *The Hindu* and a man close to the Foreign Ministry, says: "We don't believe that Russians entered Afghanistan with the intention of strengthening their strategic position to make a dash to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf area. If that intention was there, they would have taken advantage of the crisis in Iran and moved in." He, like several other analysts interviewed, believes the Soviet Union was responding to the establishment of the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force, which added to an existing American presence that was backed up by arms agreements with the Pakistanis, Israelis, and Saudis. In Reddy's view, the Soviets feared that what had been a pro-Soviet buffer state would turn into an anti-Soviet satellite of the West. What is more, "they have a large Muslim population in that area [of the Soviet Union]. If the regime were unfriendly, they would feel politically threatened."

Inder K. Gujral, a former minister and the Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union when its troops entered Afghanistan at the end of 1980, says: "Afghanistan became strategically important to the Russians after the fall of the shah of Iran, which meant to Russian strategists that the vast and mighty American influence had been expelled from their doorstep, and they made up their minds not to let Americans back again, whatever the cost."

As a result of developments in Iran, Washington sent the 6th and 7th fleets to the Persian Gulf to protect the oil sheikdoms from revolutionary threats. Gujral says that the



*"The economic miracle is slowing down.
We'd like you to lose another war."*

Russians expected President Carter to invade Iran, especially after American hostages were taken, and Indian analysts note that this was the time of a power conflict inside Afghanistan; the Soviets, believing the Americans might eventually move into Iran, foresaw Afghanistan becoming part of the American strategic scheme. After the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Force in the Gulf and NATO's decision to rearm Turkey, maintains Gujral, the Soviets thought they had to make a fast countermove to send a message to Washington.

Pan Chopra, visiting professor at the Center for Policy Research, explains Moscow's move in the following way: "By going to Herat and Kandahar in the south of Afghanistan, from where aircraft can fly to the Straits of Hormuz, the Russians showed that their tactical aircraft could counter the moves of the U.S. fleets in the Gulf. Russia used the events in Afghanistan to position a large and effective force on the flanks of Iran, for which it otherwise might have had difficulty finding an excuse."

Most Indian analysts believe the Soviets probably would not have gone into Afghanistan had there been a better understanding between Washington and Moscow and had the U.S. government not tried so systematically to exclude the Soviet Union from a Middle East settlement. "Some U.S. foreign policy writers seem to believe that Afghanistan can be dealt with separately," says Gujral, who considers this a mistake. "The Russians [put together a] new command setup for the Gulf and Indian Ocean, Diego Garcia [an Indian Ocean island with a U.S. base], the Iran situation, the Iran-Iraq situation, and the Saudis. They believe they have one strategic vantage point—Afghanistan."

Analysts here contend that if the U.S. wants to solve the Afghanistan problem, it is going about it in all the wrong ways. They say that on the simplest level—that of *stated* U.S. policy—the *mujaheddin* can't push the Russians out, and they also point to evidence that Washington doesn't want them to. According to K. Subrahmanyam, director of the government-funded Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, the U.S. has "prevented the *mujaheddin* from coming together to form a united national liberation front. Abdul Rahman Pazhwak, who was promoting it, was put under house arrest [in Pakistan]. The Americans have been telling us every year that a national liberation front will be formed and the whole thing will escalate. In more than five years, not much has happened." The Indians say that Americans want to keep the Afghanistan guerrillas as a thorn in the Soviets' side. "They think, 'These bastards are stuck there. Let them remain,'" says commentator Reddy. Furthermore, Indians believe the Pakistanis themselves have no interest in a *mujaheddin* victory. The rebels have declared that only a fifth of U.S. aid sent through Pakistan reaches them, and Indian analysts say that the Pakistanis want to keep *mujaheddin* activities at a relatively inefficient level to avoid angering Moscow and provoking reprisals against bases in Pakistan.

It is also thought that the strategy of bleeding the Soviets won't work—that they don't have the same problem of public opposition that bedeviled the Americans during the Vietnam war and that Soviet casualties are fewer than the Americans have claimed—under 1,500.

Not only is Washington's policy not working, it has negative political and military results. Says Reddy: "Instead of using the Afghan crisis to wean us away from Soviet influ-

ence, you followed the monumentally foolish policy of arming Pakistan and pushing us towards the Russians."

"American policy's first effort should have been how to unify South Asia in its attitude toward Afghanistan," Ambassador Gujral declares. "If the Russians decide to come down to South Asia, only we can resist them. India's long-term security interests are that South Asia be unified. But American policy is dividing us."

Critics of U.S. policy claim that the only solution is political, and on a much wider level than simply the future of Afghanistan. Washington must deal with Moscow's security concerns: The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan will not be revoked until the Russians think the wider strategic need has vanished, which necessitates U.S. assurances it will not take over Iran. Some analysts go so far as to say that there will have to be a general improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations on such issues as *détente* in Europe and arms negotiations.

No one expects much change in the fortunes of Afghanistan. "Afghanistan can be a nonaligned country, but it can never be an anti-Soviet country," says Reddy. Gujral is more pessimistic. According to him, "it is inevitable that Afghanistan will be a satellite of the Russians."

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EXCURSUS 2

James Como on THE HABIT OF PERUVIAN DEMOCRACY

Lately we have been revelling over "resurgent democracy" in the Americas, especially in the two giants, Argentina and Brazil. But amidst the revelry we have forgotten the country that began the current wave of neo-democracy: Peru, the center of the Andean world. And we have nearly ignored the fact that now, against all odds, Peruvian President Fernando Belaunde Terry is about to complete his five-year term and leave the office to a democratically elected successor. We ought to appreciate what has happened. Despite incendiary inflation and unemployment, eviscerating foreign debt, febrile terrorist assaults, a military more attentive to domestic political affairs than to foreign threats, and a national fragmentation so pronounced that consensus seemed a metaphysical impossibility, democracy prevailed—*again*. Not since 1945 has such a succession occurred in Peru.

We have difficulty understanding, let alone appreciating, this achievement. After all, most serious U.S. newspapers (*The New York Times* being the worst offender) offer up a litany of pessimistic, condescending clichés; and our social scientists tend to concentrate on such phenomena as "Gender and Culture as Determinants of the 'Ideal Voice' in Latin America," or "Alignment Practices in Latin-Anglo Dyads." A few years ago a prominent scholar of Latin American affairs was in Lima to study "constitutionalism." His Spanish was broken and far from idiomatic, and he had not yet read the Peruvian Constitution, which he was surprised to learn is