CHAPTER V

THE IMPACT OF SOVIET INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN
ON THE DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION IN INDIA

As we saw in the second chapter, India occupies key strategic position in the South Asian region. The partition has not altered its basic significance. "The partition of the Indian Empire," observed O.Hk State, "is so recent, the old concept of India so familiar, the two new Dominions have still so much in common that it is convenient to retain the old name as a geographical expression in general and historical context where no ambiguity can arise". Geopolitically, India occupies a curiously symmetrical position in Southern Asia, a great rhomboidal land-mass hanging like the key stone of the arch formed by the Indian ocean shores. 1 Within three broad physical features - the Himalayan Mountain chain, the peninsula blocks and the Indo-Gangetic plains-free from outside influence, there has developed the extra-ordinary complex and self-sufficing culture. Most students of Indian History, Geography and Politics have credited the Indian subcontinent with a fundamental unity eclipsing other factors of diversity. According the V.A.Smith "India beyond all doubt possesses a deep, underlying, fundamental unity far more profound than that produced either by geographic isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerably diversities
of blood, colour, language, dress, manners and sect". More emphatic political historians like Coupland R. also observed that "the political and economic Unity of India is natural because it is the natural response to its geography". Politicians like L.L. Amery, the British Secretary of State for India until just before independence went to the extent of saying that "if some sort of Indian unity had not existed, it would have to be invented".

However, there has existed and still exists manifold diversities Social, geographical, economic, political, cultural amidst this unity. So, the people have many ways of looking at the same thing. Nehru made it quite clear when he said that "the desire for political unity, in India as in other countries before the advent of nationalism, was usually the desire of the ruler or the conqueror...the people were far more interested in their local freedom and rights". But even after the advent of nationalism in the British India, subsequent events resulted in the political divisions. And still there exists now diversity of ideas, views, opinions leading to various political movements. The external event is perceived differently with different outcomes repercussions by people. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has been such event affecting all sections of opinion in India.

**INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN:**

There has always been a close connection between what is historical India and the present Afghanistan. In the early
days Afghanistan had been known as Ariana. For Indians Ariana, the home of Aryans, has got a friendly fascination and a heartening vibration. Some say that Afghanistan was a name first used by the Indian sage Varahamihira in the 6th century A.D. Be that as it may be, this mountain country is close to India geographically, although Pakistan's political emergence does make a difference in proximity. There are references to the rivers of Afghanistan region in the Vedas as the Aryans came to India along this route. Apart of from them, the Greeks, the Huns, the Scythians and the Turks, all came to India by crossing the passes in the Hindukush and Sulaiman ranges of mountains. Afghanistan also formed the parts of the empires of Persians, the Greeks the Mauryas, the Kushans, the Guptas, the Turks and Mughals. Thus the course of event in India had ever been influenced by the happening in Afghanistan and in such conditions the safeguarding of Indian frontiers from the side of Afghanistan has ever been a prime occupation of the Indian rulers and peoples.

Pakistan, inherited the problem of the Durand line, the Pushto speaking area of NWFP. Afghanistan which considered this part a portion of Pakhtunistan became angry and a dispute started between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the legacy of this Durand Line and for the establishment of Pakhtoonistan. The Government of India accepted in toto the legality of the Durand line to the much annoyance of Afghanistan. And thus India could not extend her support to the Pakhtoonistan issue in favour of the either country.
There was a feeling in the Government circles that if India supported the Afghan demand for self-determination in Pakhtoonistan, she herself may have to yield to the application of the same principle in Kashmir. However, India sympathised with the Pakhtoonistan movement more openly whenever its relations with Pakistan worsened. This led to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan to say, "You (Indians) left us for jackals (the Pak rules); you promised to help us but you betrayed us". Earlier he spoke "India was never serious about Azad Pushtoonistan but used the slogan only as a stick to beat Pakistan with." When Pakistan integrated the proposed Pakhtoonistan areas into Pakistan in 1955, Pakistan-Afghan relations worsened but India calmly saw the situation.

However, a perceptible change took place in India's stand over Pakhtoonistan after 1961. India's then Deputy Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Dinesh Singh announced full support for the legitimate aspiration of the Pakhtoon people. The Indian delegate to the United Nations also asked Pakistan to arrive at just and honourable solution of Pakhtoonistan dispute. Such an Indian move was appreciated by a spokesman of the Afghan Foreign Ministry. Afghanistan lent its support to India on Kashmir issue. The permanent representative of Afghanistan at the UN stated that "in the case of Kashmir, Pakistan claims that the people of Kashmir have the right of self-determination, despite the declaration by the Kashmiris to be part of India". Afghanistan continued to observe neutrality on Indo-Pak armed conflicts of 1965 and
1971 in particular and Indo-Pak animosity in general. and welcomed Simla agreement between India and Pakistan. Afghanistan also refrained from the US-sponsored alliances. The emergence of Daoud in 1973, which saw a tough period in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, also did not affect adversely India's policy and opinion towards Afghanistan.

The opinion in India was divided over the Saur Resolution in Afghanistan on April 27, 1978. The leftist leaders and intellectuals hailed it as new Afghan dawn ushering a new era in the history of Afghanistan, leading to the broad transformation in the socio-economic system and political structure in Afghanistan as well as changing the entire complexion of politics in the region. The Soviet Union was also characterised with having taken by surprise when the Saur Revolution took place in Afghanistan despite the fact that the two factions of the PDPA, namely Khalq and Parcham became united in July 1977 due to the efforts made by the Soviet Union and Communist Party of India in New Delhi to form Jamiat-e-democratiqi-e-Khalqi. To their opinion, as the intensity of reforms increased in Afghanistan, the fundamentalist feudal elements went on increasing the resistance to the PDPA regime, actively helped by Pakistan and its mentor the United States. Thus, to them, it was the US imperialism which now started subverting Afghanistan by giving aid to the Afghan rebels.

While the Janata Government headed by Morarji Desai asked the PDPA Government in Afghanistan to solve the
internal problems peacefully within its own sphere. Morarji Desai, while on his visit to Moscow in June, 1979 clearly emphasised that the Government of Afghanistan should try to acquire credibility among the Afghan people instead of blaming Pakistan for its troubles. He also suggested the Government of Afghanistan to be slow in reforms. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who visited Kabul on September 18, 1978 at the invitation of the then Afghan foreign minister Hafizullah Amin, also made India's this stand clear in pursuit of genuine non-alignment. He outrightly rejected Amin's advise of having "a secret pact, you take one part of Pakistan and we take the other part." However S.K.Singh, India's ambassador to Afghanistan viewed the Saur Revolution with the epochal changes in the power structure in Afghanistan as well as within a new political framework of the entire region. To him it was in India's interests that in place of reactionary or regressive government in Afghanistan, a secular, democratic and socialist oriented government came to power.

The Janata Government maintained balanced approach towards the Saur Revolution in Afghanistan when Morarji Desai declared in June 1978, India's opposition to any interference from outside forces in the internal affairs of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, while the then Defence Minister, Jagjivan Ram specifically mentioned Pakistan's interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

The press in India characterised the new regime as leftist-oriented. Times of India editorially expressed that
"the new regime that has seized power in Afghanistan after a fighting mounted mainly by air force is identified by diplomatic sources in Kabul as leftist oriented. The bulk of air force officers were trained in the Soviet Union and the MIG planes constitute the mainstay of the air force."22 The daily Tribune reported an Afghan exiled leader's statement of June 16, 1978 that 80,000 persons had died in fighting between Muslim rebels and the Soviet backed Afghan government of President Noor Mohammed Taraki...that 70 per cent of the Afghan population had risen against the Central Government.23 The daily Hindu mentioned "the three pronged attack launched by Muslim rebel tribesmen on the important garrison town of Jalalabad in Afghanistan to make only slight progress. However, the Afghan Government led by President Noor Mohammed Tarakki. was coming under increasing pressure from rebels."24 The Statesman reported the trouble flared up on June 23, 1978 when opponents of President Noor Mohhamed Taraki's administration staged an armed demonstration and opened fire following intervention by police. The trouble makers gathered in Kabul bazar and tried to stage a procession by raising anti-revolution slogans.25 The daily Hindustan Times also carried out that "the rebellion of Pashtun tribes in east Afghanistan is marking time and their attacks in early June against the military establishments, were checked by the Army. The tribes" failure is attributed in general to the intervention of heavy fire power "Gun Ship" helicopters recently delivered to Noor Mohammed Tarakki's marxist regime
by the Soviet Union. However, there remains considerable insecurity in the rest of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{26} The Statesman also reported earlier that Chinese had accused Russia of defaming Pakistan in an attempt to divert the world people's attention from Soviet involvement in the civil war in Afghanistan. Quoting the Chinese agency the paper said Moscow increasingly became involved in Afghanistan's civil war.\textsuperscript{27} The daily Indian Express reported that "some 24,000 Afghan refugees had fled to Pakistan since May this year, bringing the total number to 1.24,000. The refugees began arriving late last year after rebels began fighting against the pro-Moscow Government of President Noor Mohammed Tarakki. The refugees are staying in tents in the princes of NWFP and Baluchistan, Food rations are being supplied by the Pakistan Government which has requested the United Nations for assistance.\textsuperscript{28} The paper later carried a report of armed clashes between the Afghan refugees and Pakistani students.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, the press in India frankly commented upon the nature of the Afghan regime, its opposition inside Afghanistan, its refugees and rebel problem and the connection of the regime with the Soviet Union. Only two dailies in India namely Patriot and National Herald carried the stupendous efforts by the PDPA Government to change the face of Afghanistan. The daily Patriot reported the abrogation of the old constitution and announcement of the now eight point charter and the setting up of a judicial council and a special commission.\textsuperscript{30} However, the Indian press also carried the report of quarrel between Amin and Taraki,
exacerbated by extraneous factors.\textsuperscript{31} Amin determined to crush Parcham and Taraki willing to patch up with it.\textsuperscript{32}

The Saur Revolution in Afghanistan was seen in India both as coup and a revolution for socio-economic changes it sought to bring inside Afghanistan. Nonetheless its reforms alienated a number of Afghans, leading towards the strong and armed resistance. This was taken into notice by the all sections of public opinion in India with surprise and concern.

\textbf{THE SOVIET INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN}

The Soviet troops entry into Afghanistan on December 27, 1979 presented India with the most difficult situation, affecting her India’s strategic environment and ‘impinges on her relations with the Super-Powers as well as with the immediate neighbours. Ever since the last week of December 1979, the main objective of India’s foreign policy had been to prevent such an eventuality.”\textsuperscript{33} At that time, India was in the process of general election. The Prime Minister, Chaudhari Charan Singh called the Soviet Ambassador, Yuri M. Vorontsov and conveyed India’s deep concern at the substantial involvement of Soviet military forces in Afghanistan which would have far reaching adverse consequence for South Asian region and sought their withdrawal as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{34} The Soviet Ambassador later called on India’s Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ram Sathe on December 28, 1979 and handed over a message from the Soviet Union of intervening in
Afghanistan on the request of the Government of Afghanistan in terms of treaty and Art 51 of the UN charter. Mr. Sathe met with Charan Singh and an official statement issued later said that "The Government of India had taken note of the events in Afghanistan since December 21, and had been kept informed about them by its mission in Kabul. It had also received a message from the Soviet Government. Consistent with the Government of India's commitment to principles of non-alignment, it supports the sovereign right of the Afghan people to determine their own destiny free from foreign interference. The Government of India's attitude to such situation is well known. India has always opposed any outside interference in the internal affairs of one country by another. It is also the Government of India's earnest hope that no country or external power would take steps which might aggravate the situation and that normalcy would be restored there early". 35

The official spokesman also told reporters that the Government knew that Hafizullah Amin was not in power in Afghanistan and the Indian Ambassador had not seen his successor, Babrak Karmel then. On being asked whether India supported or opposed the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, he said that "we are not supporting or opposing anyone. We are still observing the situation. We are assessing whether the Soviet assumption that they extended their help and assistance on the request of the duly constituted authorities in Kabul, is right or wrong. I do not
know who invited the Soviets. We are awaiting analytical assessment from our embassy in Kabul. We have, however, taken note of the justification given by the Soviet Union.\(^\text{36}\)

Charan Singh’s Government also took note of Pakistan being armed by the USA. On December 30, 1979 when the Prime Minister, Charan Singh received a letter from Carter about the seriousness of the Afghan crisis, the Government of India expressed its concern at the US decision to supply arms to Pakistan. This will be dealt in the next chapter but it is sufficient to point out here that Charan Singh expressed concern that the US should not relapse into its old misguided policy of arming Pakistan in response to a temporary phase of development in Afghanistan.\(^\text{37}\)

The results of the general elections held on January 6, 1980 gave a two-thirds majority to Indira Gandhi Congress and she took office as Prime Minister on January 12, 1980. Even before formally assuming office, she had expressed her opposition to foreign military intervention anywhere but the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan "should not be considered in isolation—that foreign intervention in the internal affairs of that country had been going on for a long time prior to intervention". She also pointed out the growing US presence in the Indian ocean areas and US-Chinese collaboration against the Soviet Union.\(^\text{38}\) Under her instructions the Indian envoy at the UN made the statement that, "India had received assurances from Moscow that the intervention has been at the specific request of Afghanistan".

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and that Soviet troops would be withdrawn whenever Kabul asked for it; India has no reason to disbelieve the assurances of a friendly country. India was concerned about the attempts of outside powers to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan by training, arming and encouraging subversive elements to create disturbances in that country. India was vitally interested in the peace, security, independence and non-alignment of Afghanistan. She made it clear on January 16, 1980 that the Soviets did act on the request of the government existing in Afghanistan prior to the first big airlifts and the troops would be withdrawn as soon as Afghanistan asked for it. She also perceived more danger to India's security in the context of cold war response of US and China together with Pakistan to the Soviet action. Calling the Soviet Union as always a natural ally of the non-aligned states, she told the correspondent of Italian daily Corriere della Sera, that "the Soviet Union is exerting every effort to normalise the situation in Afghanistan. However, the rebels are getting modern weapons from abroad and this complicates the situation. They are fighting against the revolutionary changes taking place in the country." 

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's policy received approval of Parliament notwithstanding right wing opposition members being more critical of the USSR than of the US and their demand of India holding China Card against the USSR. Many members asked for a stronger position on the question of
dovetailing the regional concerns of India with the global considerations of the Soviet Union, it was going to be extremely difficult to persuade Moscow to make the first move for defusing the Afghan situation.\textsuperscript{91} But owing to Indo-Soviet differences on Afghanistan the Afghan factor was being isolated step by step from the main-stream of Indo-Soviet relations so that the two countries "can agree to disagree on this issues without impairing their wide-ranging co-operation. India understands why the Soviets moved into Afghanistan: it realized that Soviet troops withdrawal can only be part of a wider accord between the superpowers".\textsuperscript{92}

This is what exactly happened in 1988 when Geneva accords were signed. The daily Indian Express said editorially that the talks had failed to throw up a resolution of the Afghan crisis. "This is the first time in 25 years that the two countries have clearly differed on a major international question. Let alone a time-span for the pull out, the Soviet Union has not given a specific assurance of its intention to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan".\textsuperscript{93} Times of India also expressed that the Soviet Union's and India's positions of Afghanistan "remain as far apart, the Soviet foreign minister has taken an extremely tough stand in his discussions with the Indian Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs.\textsuperscript{94} Touching the entire gamut of the problem Hindustan Times expressed editorially that "the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan is the only step which can halt the current drift to disaster. The Soviet Union would do well to realise this, and also Pakistan's predicament to
which it has been singularly insensitive. Indeed, Pakistan's dilemma is all the greater because all the Islamic states, including Iraq, whose ties with the Soviet Union are close and warm, have taken a serious view of the invasion of Afghanistan and would frown upon any indication of Islamabad's hostility to the refugees from the other side of the border. Here lies the crux of the problem. It is the shelter granted to the refugees which Moscow views as a deliberate stocking of guerrilla activities in Afghanistan. But even if it is conditioned to regard Pakistan as a hostile country friendly to the US and China, it should understand that there must be something very wrong and ominous about the Afghan adventure for even genuine friends of long-standing like India and Iraq to feel disturbed.95

Eric Gonsalves, the secretary in the foreign ministry was sent by the Government of India to Washington to discuss the Afghan issue. There he met with Brezezinski, Clark Clifford, Warren Christopher and other officials and got an impression of a change in the US stand on the Afghan crisis from military settlement to diplomatic settlement. Commenting on this visit the Hindu pointed out a strand of foreign policy strategic thinking in the Indian foreign policy office that sought a balanced relationship, stressing a conflict of interests and divergence of opinion on Afghanistan between India and the Soviet Union and referring to India's failed diplomacy to seek withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, through balanced approach towards
both the super-powers. The daily criticised, "some in Delhi who in the name of greater pragmatism are not looking upon the Soviet action as an unmitigated evil because they are inclined to believe that its very presence on the other side of the Khyber Pass will have a sobering influence in Pakistan. The argument runs that no matter how far the US and China go in arming Pakistan, it will have to think several times before embarking on any fresh military adventure against India with the Soviet troops breathing down their necks from Afghanistan. The advocates of this strategic doctrine go a step further in professing the theory that China too will be careful not to commit its troops to any course of action in conjunction with Pakistan that would bring them into confrontation with the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The arm chair strategists engaged in this invested thinking do not seem to realize that whatever its deterrent value in narrow Indo-Pakistan terms, the very presence of the Soviet army in Afghanistan would give Moscow additional leverage in exercising further pressures and extending its influence to the subcontinent irrespective of what the US does or does not do to forestall it". The daily conceived the possibility for India to steer a middle course between the US and the Soviet Union, while seeking mutually and beneficial, bilateral relations with both of them. "But its not going to be easy to disengage itself from its far reaching commitments with the Soviet Union without the promise of some consistency in the US dealings with the
countries of the region. It should not be difficult for India to keep up its present level of relationship with the Soviet Union without prejudice to its policy of normalisation with China or better understanding with the United States. A sine qua non for the pursuit of this dual policy is closer links with all the neighbouring countries including Pakistan". 96

While India was pursuing these efforts with further deal, there came in the first week of April 1980 the announcement of the Soviet-Afghan treaty formalising the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan 97 which virtually had a freezing effects on India’s diplomatic efforts. 98

The subsequent efforts by the Government of India - foreign secretary Ram Sathe’s visit to Afghanistan, Narasimha Rao’s visit to the Soviet Union and Brezhnev’s visit to India etc. espoused no any additional reactions in the press in India except playing up Mrs. Gandhi’s reference to the problems created for the non-aligned nations by the prolonged presence of Soviet forces in Afghanistan. 99 Meanwhile, the issue lost its significance over the period of time — so, only sporadic reactions in the said manner could emerge in and out the press. For instance, as late as in March 1988 a letter to editor of Times of India from a Delhi based Sanjeet Singh commended on Rajiv Gandhi’s keenness to find role for India in the resolution of the Afghan tangle by sending Gopi Arora to Kabul while another letter by a Kathgodam based Hargovind Tiwari perceived Rajiv Gandhi suffering from some delusion of
grandeur for championing causes with which our country is not directly involved.100 And after the June visit of Rajiv Gandhi to USA the Indian press could report that the Reagen administration was finally coming round to an acceptance of the concept of the Finalandization of Afghanistan.101

OPINIONS OF THE LEADERS AND INTELLECTUALS:

There existed the fragmentation of the national political leaders and intellectuals into various opinions on the question of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. No longer did the Indian national elite entertain a monolithic image of the Soviet Union. More significantly, the perception of the ruling elite-men and women in the government and their supporters outside of the USSR was considerably at variance with the perception of the rest of the national elite.102 In India, no action taken by a major power produced a wider or more intense debate than the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The debate showed that different segments of the elite saw the Soviet action and its objective differently from another. Indian images of the Afghan situation fell broadly into four clusters. The empathic perception formed in the minds of the two major communist factions the pro-Soviet Communist Party of India CPI and the independent Communist Party of India Marxist CPI-M; a powerful section of the intellectual bureaucratic elite; and minority groups of the national bourgeoisie.103 However, the CPI-M appeared less enthusiastic about the Soviet
intervention in Afghanistan than CPI. The CPM supported the Soviet action in January 1980 at a meeting of its national executive attended by a less than half of the members; the announcement immediately was criticised by the party’s leaders in the West Bengal. All the more, the party’s foreign policy expert, Har Kishan Singh Surjeet described the intervention as regrettable, including the US, Chinese and Pakistani response to the Afghan situation. The anti-panthic images were projected by the Janata Party, a section of intellectuals, a segment of the bureaucracy, and some small political groups. Global-geopolitical images emanated from several noted analysts of international affairs who saw the Soviet action as part of a larger Russian foreign policy geostrategic design. The government itself, supported by a number of analysts, took a regional view of the Soviet action, refusing to be reduced by its global implications.

While addressing a public meeting in Bombay Morarji Desai and Jagiivan Ram expressed that Mrs.Gandhi was tilting the country’s policy of non-alignment in favour of the Soviet Union and that her tacit approval of the armed inter-junction in Afghanistan would alienate the neighbouring countries including Pakistan and China.

Maulana Mohammed Asad Madni, the Amir of the Jamiat Ulema Hind said that the Indian Muslims had a very close relationship with the people of Afghanistan spread over centuries and Afghanistan had been the centre of Indian militant Muslims who fought British imperialism. The Afghan
Muslims had also supported the cause of Indian Muslims when they launched the Reshmi Roomal movement in British India. In view of such past relations, the Afghan Mujahideen should be extended every support as they are fighting for the supremacy of Islam and the sovereignty of their country.\(^{107}\)

Jeth Malani Ramchand (Ram Jethmalani) paid a visit to Pakistan and criticised Government of India's Afghan policy as "the stand of the Indian Government on the Soviet aggression of Afghanistan did not represent the feelings of the majority of people in India. In fact, the Indian Government was out of step with the Indian people on the issue". As the chairman of the Friends of Afghanistan Association and Vice-chairman of the World Peace through Law for Asia and Australia, he assured that his association would "do whatever it could to help other people of Afghanistan who might have a feeling that they had been let down by their neighbours and friends. The Soviet Union by its entry into Afghanistan and continued stay there had killed the UN charter". He also visited the Afghan refugee camps at Jalozai tentage village, about 20 miles from Peshawar and lauded the humanitarian assistance being rendered to the Afghan refugees by the people and Government of Pakistan and expressed the hope that the other countries would also come to their help at the difficult time. He also expressed that on their return to India, the members of his delegation would also impress upon the Indian Government to do what Pakistan is doing for the Afghan refugees. He also referred it to the
stance of the Indian Government on the Afghan situation and told the refugees that "they should not be misled by the stories coming from the Government. People of India fully share your suffering and have all sympathies for you." He also added that the stories of their sufferings brave resistance and heroic struggle were being appreciated by the Indian people.108

Atal Behari Vajpayee, opined that the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan was a warning to the region as a whole. He differed with Indian Government's policy on the issue, criticised Indira Gandhi for pro-Soviet tilt in India's foreign policy and said that New Delhi should clearly say that invasion and interference had taken place in Afghanistan.109 Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna, President of the Democratic Socialist Party called for an early solution of the Afghanistan crisis and said", "we are against foreign troops and foreign bases in other countries. In the light of this principle, we want withdrawal of soviet troops from Afghanistan".110

Chaudhary Charn singh also criticised Indira Gandhi for pushing India towards the Soviet Union and alleged that Russia spent Rs. 620 million to finance Mrs. Gandhi's election campaign.111 Haji Ebrehim Sulliman Sait, G.M. Banatwala and Iqbal Ahmed all of the Muslim League were included in a three member delegation to Pakistan that visited the Kach Garhi village near Peshawar on 20th
February, 1984. Sait Suleiman expressed that the Muslim refugees enjoyed the sympathy of the Muslims in India, who were exerting pressure on their Government to use its good offices for securing the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. He lauded the courage and fortitude of the Afghan refugees and wished them to return to their home, with honour and dignity. 112

K. Subrahmanyam the director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses viewed the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan with concern as the Soviet move had removed a vital buffer zone between the Indian subcontinent and the Soviet Union. "The subcontinental today feels the pressure of the three major powers of the world, the Soviet Union, US, and China". 113 "The presence of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan compels India to take necessary steps to ensure that the transformed geographical scenario in its vicinity does not have an adverse impact on its security and economic development. In this light India today has to keep the country's armed forces modernized and effective in order to deter any adventurist action against this country and to insulate its political, social, economic developments from the spill-over effects of turbulence around it. Further, to successfully attain these objectives, its relationship with the great powers will have to take into account the need to acquire the necessary defence production capabilities. In this period of regional destabilisation, the country cannot afford sentimentality or internationalist populist approach;
what is required is a level headed appraisal of the international forces and an effective strategy to optimise India's national interests. Mr. Subrahmanyam also perceived the Soviet Union as a global power by observing that in the mid-seventies the world entered the era of true strategic bipolarity, when the USSR matched its adversary in interventionist power. In a truly bipolar world, where two superpowers possessed approximately equal military capacity, interventions could not remain the monopoly of one as had been the case earlier when the US dominated the international scene. He viewed that in this light the US efforts to refuse the Soviets parity and preserve the global status quo against the Soviet Union in Africa, in Afghanistan where the US tried to wean way Daoud from the Soviet Union led to the Saur Revolution and the Soviet intervention. Pointing out the American efforts to keep the oil resources to themselves and their allies, he made it clear, that their efforts "is to ensure that this area remains under their influences to exclude the Soviet Union from it and to prevent indigenously, political change which can deny them oil". Later, after seven years he opined that "in the case of nations which have reasonable population, occupation is costly. This is because of the rise in the political consciousness all over the world. Populations do not accept in a docile manner foreign occupation as they did in the 19th century or early part of the 20th century". To substantiate this he gave the example of Vietnam, Afghanistan, Namibia even Kampuchea and the West Bank.
P.N. Haksar also confirmed that the "Soviet Union is a global power. It has global interests. The equation between them and the NATO system in particular looms very large. And if the rules of the game are thrown into doubt obviously a state acts to protect what it regards as its security interests". To him, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was the consequence of the American refusal to concede to the Soviet Union a parity of global influence reflecting parity of strategic and military power.118

Girilal Jain, the editor of the daily Times of India, voiced against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan but on global geo-strategic issue he had entertained the views of P.N. Haksar and K. Subrahmanyam. He remarked, "the Soviet Union does not tinker with things, when it decides to act, it acts, with considerable force."119 Bharat Wariawalla saw considerable danger from the Soviet troops in Afghanistan to India: "If the Soviets succeeded in snuffing out Afghan resistance and consolidating their power in Afghanistan, the prospects for India are indeed grim. In the events of the Kremlin stabilizing its hold on Afghanistan, Pakistan may well come to terms with the reality of Soviet power, particularly if the terms are attractive. The implications for India of such a radically changed Soviet-Pakistan relationship could be grave. One unchanging goal of Indian foreign policy has been to shield as much as possible the subcontinent from external influences, and in the pursuit of this objective, it has sought limited and well measured
Soviet support. But should the Soviet venture in Afghanistan succeed, this goal would be shattered. Indeed, India and the Soviet Union would become rivals for influence in the area". After five years he criticised Indian foreign policy for maintaining the same policy for 6 years even in the midst of revolutionary changes taking place in South and South-West Asia, including at the international level. Commenting on Prime Minister. Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the Soviet Union, at the conclusion of which the identical words were used in the joint communique as were used during Mrs. Gandhi's Soviet visit in 1982, he asked if nothing had changed in the past three years in South-West Asia, "a euphemism for Afghanistan, to warrant a changed formulation on it or if it should have not reflected our differences with the Soviet Union on the Afghan issue. "Hindus never clearly demarcate stages in relations between individuals or between states. States such as stagnancy, deterioration and disintegration through which a relationship passes, are never perceived by Hindus as distinct stages but as one continuum in which all stages co-exist at one and the same time". 

Air Commodore Jasjit Singh analysed the causes as well as consequences of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the light of Indian vital interests: "events in Iran following the fall of the Shah and the revolution with its sectarian Islamic fundamentalist character, increased US military presence in the region, the Saur Revolution in Kabul and the inept repressive regimes of Tarakki and
Harizullah Amin there, increasing the numbers of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Pakistan's new ruler General Zia-Ul Haq seeking to establish his legitimacy re-emphasising and establishing the Islamic character of its state and polity. Soviet paranoia about its own security especially in relation to the strategically soft underbelly and a fundamental miscalculation in overreacting besides a host of other factors led to the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. That this would seriously complicate the geopolitical and security environment against India's interests was quickly perceived by the new government in New Delhi under Indira Gandhi. She promptly took a series of steps to open dialogue with Islamabad to evolve responses which would help to de-escalate the problem. General Zia, however, turned down every overture and initiative. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan was highly detrimental to Indian security interests; but Indian options in the matter were severely limited essentially to quiet diplomacy to obtain an early withdrawal of Soviet troops. However, neither the US nor Pakistan was willing to co-operate in the matter; a high profile support to the Afghan Mujahideen served the interests at least in the short term of both, albeit with different objectives—the US pursuance of the Reagan Doctrine to roll back the evil empire in the renewed cold war, establish strategic linkage with China, Pakistan and the Arabs states in the region and Zia for building up Pakistan military and economically vis-a-vis India.122
Jagat S. Mehta, the former Foreign Secretary of India opined that, the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan was "the result of misadventures and misjudgements compounded by internal mishandling and international misperceptions". Calling the Saur Revolution of April 1978 by communist inclined parties, he pointed out that the basic problem was how to turn back the clock, how to assuage outraged Afghan nationalism and obtain the disengagement of the Soviet Union, which through mishaps and mistaken impetuosity alienated a never unfriendly neighbour. He proposed Afghanistan being neutralised against great power competition incorporating, a regional conference of countries closely affected by the then situation in Afghanistan, and agreement by which all countries reaffirm their neutrality and detachment from military blocs—the Swedenization of the region with further conference of other non-align countries, the Observer groups’s mission to diffuse the insurgency and restore internal order.

He also saw the Soviet intervention to the massive rearmament of Pakistan and, as a result of India, thereby straining both their economies and exacerbating regional tensions. It also led to the formulation of the Carter Doctrine, the constitution of the RDF, greatly increased U.S. and Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and the U.S. campaign to establish an anti-soviet strategic consensus (However the RDF was constituted much before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan). The United States erroneously
based its appraisals of its development on its own global strategic perspective instead of on the complex dynamic of local events and regional circumstances. The Soviet Union acted impetuously to tidy up a situation that had deteriorated unexpectedly, justifying its action in globalist terms of preempting imperialist ambitions. The Soviet move into Afghanistan and the militaristic reactions in the West thus made the restoration of stability in the region vastly complicated and difficult to achieve.\textsuperscript{123}

Prof. K.P. Mishra viewed events in Afghanistan to have not only plunged that country in a crisis but raised a number of questions that "call for deep study and reflection. There is a widespread fear that Afghanistan may well turn into a cockpit of the international power struggle between the two super powers and also add a new dimension to the Sino-Soviet hostility. India, Pakistan, and the other countries of South Asia and the Middle East can, therefore, hardly contemplate the Afghan crisis. The nature and background of the Soviet armed intervention of December 1979, the motivations behind it, and the significance it holds for future Soviet relations and behaviour vis-a-vis the countries of Asia have been endlessly debated both in our own country and outside from different points of view. Indeed the role of the Soviet Union seems to hold the key to the entire gamut of developments in Afghanistan".\textsuperscript{124}

Prof. M.S. Agwani doubted the Soviet contention of intervening in Afghanistan on the request of the
Drawing upon various social & economic reformative measures taken by Tarakki which caused huge losses to the feudal and orthodox elements, their rebellion encouraged and supported by Pakistan, he enumerated various causes responsible for factional strife between the kahliq and Parcham and the Soviet intervention by outside the Soviet block after the second world war for ideological responsibility towards fraternal parties. "the ascendancy of revivalist Islam in Iran, the rising curve of Afghan insurgency coinciding with the fall of the Shah of Iran, and the execution of Bhutto in Pakistan, and the growing Soviet mistrust of Amin, may well have convinced Moscow that the alternative to a pliable Marxist rule in Kabul was blatantly anti-Soviet Mullah regime. Hence intervention". The happenings in Afghanistan also seem to have come handy for the US to increase its military presence in and around the Gulf substantially without evoking any serious protest from the littoral states".

To A.K. Damodaran ideology was an important factor, with geographical economic and sociological roots of Soviets in Afghanistan and expected fairly lengthy and indeterminate period during which, in the absence of another totally unrelated crisis between the super-pavers in some other part of the world, a stalemate situation might be permitted to drag on, to which the world outside might become increasingly indifferent, while the people of Afghanistan would be the only ones to suffer both directly and indirectly (Geneva
Agreements of 1988 and the recent US-Soviet agreement on 13.9.89 to stop supply to both Afghan Government as well as to the rebels testify it. "It a fact that there are some relevant geopolitical considerations which control Moscow's policy towards Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. But they are on the whole marginal when compared with the great global issue which divide the super powers". There had been an indigenous change, acquiesced in and not created by the Soviet Union and tolerated happily enough by the world community with a few powerful exceptions, and that it had a fairly, lengthy, troubled and increasingly fragile existence till it became an unacceptable risk for the Kremlin leadership to permit it to be extinguished by external attack and internal faction'.

Calling it a shared challenge to the region, he saw Pakistan's more intimate involvement in the Afghan crisis-at every stage of post-War history relations between the two countries had immediate domestic relevance: "what is new today is the unorthodox response of both the ruling group in Pakistan and the people of Pakistan to this crisis while many Pakistani people see in the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan not a cause for alarm but vindication of peoples aspirations in a medieval society, based on injustice and feudal exploitation. We in India have refused to accept US, Chinese or Western assumptions on the Afghan crisis or to link this crisis as they and the ASEAN have done with other developments. At the same time it is difficult for us in India to accept the rather easy manner in which the Soviet
Government and its friends accept rather easy manner in which the Soviet Government and its friends anywhere are rationalizing what appears to have begun as a stumbling and to the steadily developing into a middle despite India's special understanding of the Soviet Union's Asian personality in the light of Soviet appreciation and support to Indian interest. Given the many historical reasons we do recognise the extreme difficulty of solving this problem in which not only the external image but the national interest of a superpower are at stake by insisting upon a capitulationist solution. Some model in between has to be constructed. This could be similar to Finland or Austria in Europe.\textsuperscript{127}

Prof. (Mrs.) Gargi Dutt, analysed Chinese concern a challenge as well as an opportunity. The challenge was not only to Beijing's perceived security needs but also to the Sino-Pakistan combination. The opportunity was there for cementing this combination, moving the United States away from détente with the Soviet Union and trying for a Soviet reverse in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{128} Similarly, Sujit Dutt observed that the Afghan policy of China helped secure a close relationship with the West, raised China's leverage with the Soviet Union, expanded its role in South-West Asia and the Middle East while historically Afghanistan had never been a vital area of concern for the Chinese.\textsuperscript{129}

To B.K. Shrivastava, the Afghan coup of 1978 was a complete surprise to Washington, where the general public
opinion was also impressed that the Soviet Union was as surprised by the coup as anyone else. However, to the foreign police elite, as well as mass opinion, in the United States the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was nothing less than an invasion. It rather saw it in the context of US relations with the Soviet Union as long before the Soviet action opinion polls in the US showed a hardening of foreign policy attitudes towards the Soviet Union. The US Government made efforts to provide military and economic assistance to Pakistan bring, China in to play a crucial role against the Soviets in Afghanistan, which caused alarms in India.130

Bimal Prasad pointed out India's undue lack of forthrightness in some of the early pronouncements, appreciated in general Indian response to the Afghan crisis as quite mature and sophisticated based on a sound assessment of her own interest and the political and strategic realities and on the other, well calculated to serve the interest of world peace as well as peace in India's immediate neighbourhood. Calling the attack by some sections of opinion on Indian Government's response to the Soviet action in Afghanistan as being partial to the Soviet union he pointed out that India neither supported or justified the Soviet military intervention, but called for its termination in the light of past Soviet appreciations of Indian interest as well as close Indo-Soviet relations.131

Kalim Bahadur analysed Pakistan-Afghanistan relations from historic and geographic point of view and called the
Saur revolution challenge to the right wing regime of Zia-ul-Haq in fanning the nationalist movements in Baluchistan and the NWFP. That explained why Pakistan opened camps for the Afghan rebels-those feudal orthodox elements who lost their land and position in the Afghan society. The Zia Government strongly condemned the Soviet Union and used it to get the aid from US and oil Arab countries. However, "an important section of public opinion was against General Zia's policy in Afghanistan nonetheless Pakistan sought to internationalise the Afghan issue instead of finding a regional solution and wanted India to give up its close friendship with the Soviet Union and adopt an anti-Soviet posture".132

To Prof. K.P. Saksena the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan posed a more serious challenge to the theoretical framework of the United Nations security system than any other event in the history of the United Nations with resulting international repercussions as more grave and likely to have far reaching ramifications than any other events of the post War world. He ridiculed Indian permanent representative at UN for his speech stating that the Soviet troops went to Afghanistan at the request of the Afghan Government a request that was made by President Amin on December 26, 1979 - the statement which lost its credibility when the Afghan representative accused Amin of long playing into the hands of American imperialism and anti-people reactionary elements.133
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While Prof. B. Vivekanandam saw the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as Soviet efforts "to grab the Middle East and its oil at some stage throttle the West into submission. In achieving this aim the next Soviet victim would probably be Baluchistan, to gain direct access by land to the Indian Ocean, upset all the present Western naval strategies against the Soviet Union and pose a formidable threat to the supply of vital resources—oil, raw material, and minerals—from the region to the West ... the West would not allow Moscow to establish a direct opening to the Indian Ocean through Baluchistan and would do everything to fortify Pakistan heavily against any further Soviet drive towards the South ... indeed this strategy may strengthen India's security also in as much it will ensure that the Soviet connection with India would remain a safe oceanic connection rather than a more dangerous continental tie. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has tremendous implications for the security of the Indian ocean region. It has shown above all that the Soviet scheme to expand its frontiers by the use of force is still in operation. In the history of the Modern world, Russia/Soviet Union is the only country with an unbroken record of continuous territorial expansion over three and a half centuries. With the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan the Soviet Union was deeply interested in destabilising Pakistan and in opening a land corridor to the Indian ocean through Baluchistan". 

Prof. Devendra Kaushik discussed the Soviet-Afghan
relations and observed that "a request to the Soviet government for the military assistance under the treaty obligations was made on 26th December 1979 technically by Amin at the instance of the Afghan revolutionary council wherein a majority of the members favoured such a course. It was repeated by his successor Karmal on 28th December when Amin was killed during in fighting following the entry of Soviet troops on 27th December 1979". Recalling that Pakistan's interest in holding a dialogue with India was aimed at driving a wedge between India and the Soviet Union he concluded that the "present Soviet debate on Afghanistan is likely to continue, unfolding new dimensions and throwing up new facts and even sensational revelations making up for the deficit of truth which got accumulated during the war years".135

India's policy vis-à-vis the Soviet move in Afghanistan issued strong criticism. Pradip Bose described Indian Government's policy of neutrality abstention on the Afghan issue in the actual practice "to be support for the Soviet misadventure in the country. On the other hand, the Indian government leaders have, in private, been constantly urging the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces. This obviously had no effect at all. This dual track policy has not only proved to be utterly sterile but also disastrous for India's long term interest in the region".136

Similarly, Nirmal Joshi highlighted the role played by the Communist Party of India which helped by arranging a
conciliatory meeting between Parcham and Kaliq leaders in New Delhi and gleaned the Soviet aim to occupy Afghanistan from the Soviet-Afghan treaty of friendship and co-operation: "The haste with which the treaty with Afghanistan was signed indicates that the Soviet Union was perhaps anxious for an institutional framework that would enable it to do with its own immediate and long-term objectives, and also serves as a basis for a possible military action on its part". 137

A.G. Noorani also sharply questioned the legality of the Soviet move in Afghanistan: "It is a grim situation. Afghanistan’s independence has been violated. It is under the virtual occupation of the Soviet army. The basic human right of its citizens have been taken away". The Soviet-Afghan treaty concluded in December 1978 does not confer any right of intervention. 138 He saw a Soviet installed regime in Afghanistan hardly inimical to Indian interest than the presence of Soviet troops. "Indira Gandhi’s Afghan policy has been total failure on all counts. It has damaged the country's image as a non-aligned country, isolated her from the vast majority in the movement, irretrievably harmed our reputation with the people of Afghanistan and failed to protect the national interest. And paying an unduly high price for any friendship is not the best means of preserving it". 139

S.K. Bain drew a vivid picture of 27th day of December, 1979: "Some call it the Boxing Day of the year. The men in
Kremlin say it is the day of liberation for Afghanistan. For the 3.5 million refugees living in the camps on Pakistan and Iran border it is a day of the bear -- the bear that mauled their beloved country and drove them away from their homes. For the 3 hundred thousand Afghans who have died a violent death since then it is the day when a curse fell on their fair land from the north. For some great third world countries, the day denotes the onset of American interference an Asian neutral country whose government merely requested a trusted friend to come for help with their peace loving army. The only silver lining in the latter aspect was the stout hearted support by the Indian friends...The bizarre utterances and the grotesque happenings have been forced on the Soviet masters by none other than the indomitable people of Afghanistan”.

To Mr. Bain strategic considerations and tactical moves were the two fundamental grounds of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan: Soviet Union's bid to develop a global policy to correspond with the US global capabilities: on tactical grounds, if one could control Afghanistan one could dominate the whole of the subcontinent and also Iran, Indian ocean and over all the littoral states, control over two vital choke-points in the Indian Ocean Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Malacca. To Ashok Mehta, Russia's moves across the Asian chess board had been shrewd, expertly executed, and effective. It commands influence in regions-West, South and South East Asia that the Czars had never dared to dream.
The totally dreammetrical opinions were expressed by Sadhan Mukherjee, D.R. Goiyl and Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer who hailed the Saur revolution in Afghanistan. Sadhan Mukherjee expressed that the reality of the Afghan situation "is clouded with a lot of misinformations, and some deliberate disinformation, emanating in the main from western sources...The fault is of course not only of the journalists themselves but also of the newspaper policy makers. The Saur revolution was something else, opening as it did a whole new vista, heralding a fundamental transformation...The ruthlessness of Amin and his conscious disruption of the revolutionary process caused a set back to Afghanistan's advance. But the second phase of the revolution that began on December 27, 1979 brought the engine of progress back on the rails. It also created a world uproar initiated by the American". Mr. Mukherjee also criticised Janata Party Government and its leaders and views and policies towards Afghanistan and appreciated Indira Gandhi's stand in the light of Indo-Soviet friendship.142

D.R. Goiyl called the Saur revolution as glorious sunrise and regretted the lack of true information on the Soviet Afghan relations on the part of Indian sources and called Afghanistan's position highly relevant for India. "A disturbed and unsettled Afghanistan or a potentially explosive Afghanistan can crucially affect our security environment".143 Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer and Vinod Sethi declared: "We are under no illusion that a long march is
withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and demanded condemnation of the Soviet action. But Mrs. Gandhi reacted, "we do not believe in condemnation" and told the house that "even Amin had asked for military help". She persisted this view even while interacting with the foreign dignitaries like Zia-ul-Haq, Hua Geofeng, Chinese Prime Minister, Leonid Brezhnev, Gromyko etc., and while initiating diplomatic efforts to find out a solution of the Afghan crisis.

On the visit of the Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, she pressed very hard for one or more of the following: (1) an immediate token withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; (2) a public pledge that the bulk of the troops would be withdrawn within specific period of time; (3) a statement affirming Soviet adherence to non-intervention in internal affairs of other countries and inviolability of the territory of sovereign nations; and (4) Soviet contribution to the creation of a regional security system without both super powers in the form of pulling out of troops from Afghanistan and a declaration of approval, in principal, of a regional system autonomous of the great powers. Gromyko refused to make any of these gestures and told, "Please don't ask us to do something we can't do."42 So, on the visit of the Soviet President, Leonid Brezhnev in December 1981, she argued for withdrawal but the 2,500 word communique issued on the Brezhnev-Gandhi talks did not even mention Afghanistan.

At the conference of Foreign Ministers in Delhi in February 1981, the ministers at the instance of Indira Gandhi
called for a political settlement that would ensure the return of refugees in safety and honour and guarantee the independence and non-aligned status of Afghanistan. In July 1962, she visited the Soviet Union and the Joint statement expressed "concern over the hotbeds of tension in South West Asia and reaffirm their conviction that the problems of the region demand peaceful political solutions paying full respect to the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-aligned status of the countries of the region". At the NAM Summit in New Delhi in 1963, the NAM participants viewed the situation in Afghanistan with particular concern. Thus, at all platforms Indira Gandhi maintained her position with a tilt towards Moscow.

India's envoy at the UN Brijesh Mishra made speech that (1) the Soviets sent troops to Afghanistan on December 26, at the request of the Afghan Government; (2) while India was against the presence of 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; (3) 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; and (4) India was gravely concerned over the response of the United States, China, Pakistan and others to the Soviet action; the arming and training of Afghan rebels and encouragement given to subversive activities in Afghanistan amounted to external
interference in Afghan affairs: building bases, pumping arms to small and medium countries, and expanding naval activities in the Indian ocean might lead to intensification of the cold war and threaten the peace and security of the region and also pose threat to our own nation. 43

In his address to the Parliament session on January 23, 1980 the President referred to the Afghan crisis and expressed the Government's opposition to all foreign intervention in Afghanistan: "The intervention of outside forces and induction of armaments in the region as well as in our neighbourhood have created a dangerous situation not only for ourselves but for the entire area. Recent developments in Afghanistan highlight the re-emergence the cold war. This is a matter of grave concern. The countries of the region should be allowed to devote their energies to the promotion of regional stability and co-operation with one another. The resources of the region are enormous and should be utilized for the welfare of the people there. To subject these countries to big power rivalries is total unacceptable to us." 44

India's then Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in response to a calling attention motion in the Lok Sabha on January 23, 1980 explained India's policy to have close and friendly relations with the Government and people of Afghanistan. "We are deeply concerned and vitally interested in the security, independence, sovereignty, and territorial
integrity of this traditionally friendly neighbour of ours, and we believe that they have every right to safeguard them. It is our hope that the people of Afghanistan will be able to resolve their internal problems without any outside interference. As the Prime Minister has clearly indicated, we are against the presence of foreign troops and bases in any country. We have expressed our hope that Soviet forces will withdrawn from Afghanistan."\(^45\) He also stressed that India's stand did not mean support for the Soviet intervention; that in India's perception, the rearming of Pakistan by the US and China, and the extension of great power confrontation to South Asia were more destabilising for the whole area and for each of its members than what had happened in the Hindukush and that the main thrust of India's diplomacy was to defuse the crisis and dam the confrontation.\(^46\)

Mr. Narasimha Rao paid a visit to the Soviet Union in June 1980 to work out the framework of a negotiating process as for India the crucial matter was the situation created by prolonged Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. However the Soviets were in no mood to accept the Islamic Conference framework for talks among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and there was no meeting ground between India and the Soviet Union. As a result, the joint communique released on the talks should the total absence of Afghanistan and omission of Rao's references to Afghanistan.\(^47\) On June 17, 1980 he stated in the Lok Sabha that the Soviets had left India in no
doubt about their readiness to pull out of Afghanistan once a political settlement was reached, but any talk about the withdrawal of forces without furnishing of complete and reliable guarantee of an end to interference in Afghanistan and without an actual end of such interference would merely hinder the achievement of a solution. Pointing out India's stand that "we are opposed to the presence of foreign troops in any country" he commented upon the Soviet Union's earlier announcement of Soviet assistance to Afghanistan as limited in time, purpose and scale and not presenting a threat to security and stability in the region and said that "however, reports coming out of Afghanistan during the past few months, even after they are discounted for the inevitable interested propaganda elements, do seem to suggest that in view of the situation there the hope that Soviet assistance to Afghanistan could indeed remain limited in time, as originally intended, is not very strong. This is naturally a matter of concern to India as indeed to the others who seek a reduction of tension and a peaceful solution to the problems of the region. It is time for us to ask ourselves the question whether the Soviet troops meant for assistance in Afghanistan have not become, or are not likely to become, a pretext for those who wish to create further instability in that country. Our fear is that beyond a reasonable time-frame this could well come to pass and this is why we urge that a stage has come when ways and means, other than military, should be devised to bring about a solution to the problem while this is still within the range of possibility. The
emergence of a political solution in Afghanistan has, there, acquired an urgency greater than ever before." Thus, Indira Gandhi Government, as a result of the force of public opinion, tried to pursue an independent line on the Afghanistan crisis without jeopardizing India's close ties with the Soviet Union. The successive Government of Rajiv Gandhi continued to maintain such stand. Rajiv Gandhi paid visit to the Soviet Union in May 1986 and the first Indo-Soviet statement on Afghanistan almost reiterated verbatim the words used in the joint statement issued at the time of Mrs. Gandhi's Soviet visit in July 1982 as if nothing had changed in the three years. Calling later in 1988 the Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan and its implementation as topical and of great importance for our region, he opined that "the people of Afghanistan need to be left alone to determine their future and build a national consensus we look forward to the emergence of a united and non-aligned Afghanistan, free from foreign interference." Similarly K.C.Pant, the then Union Minister of Defence viewed that the given strategic location of Afghanistan, the Soviet troops were invited by the Government of Afghanistan be drawn into the vortex of larger international rivalries. However, millions of Afghan people went into exile, Afghanistan became the arena for a grand battle between the super-powers and their respective allies. The net result has been large scale violence, bloodshed and disruption of the
normal life of the people of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has witnessed the inflow of massive arms, facilitated by Pakistan with Western generosity as well as the illegal trade in drugs. Pointing out that many forces at work to subvert a transition to normalcy in Afghanistan and to impose a government in Kabul in the name of Islam or other slogan, he repeated India's stand for an independent and truly non-aligned Afghanistan which would live in peace with its neighbour.50

**INDIAN PRESS:**

It was the reaction of the press in India that compelled the Government of India to take at least a balanced view of the developments in Afghanistan. The major daily *The Hindu* editorially called the Soviet intervention clearly military aggression on the part of the Soviet Union against the small nation of Afghanistan and reprehensible on two counts: first, for its blatant violation national sovereignty supposed to be guaranteed in international law and by the UN Charter; secondly, as a manifestation of superpower bullying that threatens peace triggering new tensions and offering fresh precedents for violating the peace as well as regional security.51 while *Indian Express* called the objective of the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan to defend the gains of the April revolution and to prevent the imperialist power from converting a neighbouring country with a border of great length into a bridgehead for preparation of imperialist aggression against the Soviet State.52 Later, the daily
argued "no need to credit Moscow with all kinds of malevolent intentions. It is enough that they have placed themselves in a better position to intervene in a region where disaffected minorities like the Baluchis and the Kurds could yield rich opportunities. These are possibilities which must cause at least as much concern in India as the possible threat from Pakistan's newly acquired weaponry". The daily Times of India doubted if the Russians had "master-minded the present coup. At the sometime, it however conceded that it could not have taken place without their help". It mirrored splintered Indian images by making it clear that "the Russians are determined to tighten their hold on Afghanistan in order to bring it firmly within the Soviet orbit of influence. Hafizullah Amin had started plotting with Pakistan to jeopardize Soviet gains in Afghanistan thereby giving a certain credence to the Soviet justification for intervention", concluded that "Afghanistan is still some way from becoming a captive Soviet satellite".

An editorial article by Girilal Jain, editor, Times of India sought to analyse both offensive as well as defensive version of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. "The Soviet take over in Kabul is as unprincipled and brutal as its invasion of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the American bombing of North Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos. The Kremlin has wilfully overthrown the Amin regime and it has used its own troops for the purpose...on the contrary, it is possible that Kremlin has got sucked into
Afghanistan for defensive considerations—the case is not convincing but it can be made and that it will be only too glad to find a modus vivendi Pakistan if only the latter stops active assistance to the Afghan insurgents while Islamabad's behaviour has been quite provocative.\textsuperscript{56}

The daily Tribune saw the USSR taking control of Afghanistan's Marxist revolution, strengthening its position in Afghanistan vis-à-vis Iran and Pakistan and setting in motion a political and military earth-quake of which the end result cannot be for seen just yet.\textsuperscript{57} while the daily, Hindustan Times editorially argued that both the superpowers were equally responsible for the Afghanistan crisis "If Soviet intervention is to be condemned, so must also be the American. What is more, any strengthening of the Pakistan army as a part of the power game will only revive the tensions on the subcontinent. Of course, the danger to Pakistan from the West is now real. This danger is not so much of invasion as of sap and mine, erosion of its authority in the Pathan and Baluchi areas. So, there is every reason to feel nervous. But perhaps all such consequences can be limited and the tension on the subcontinent avoided if Afghanistan is viewed as a victim of foreign intervention rather than as an extension of the 19th century diplomacy and if, therefore, effort is directed towards a Soviet pull out at the earliest".\textsuperscript{58} The dailies, Patriot.\textsuperscript{59} and National Herald\textsuperscript{60} accepted in toto the justification given by the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, as the US imperialism in and
around Afghanistan did not want a revolutionary change in the 
socio-economic structure and political system. The dailies 
also drew a parallel between the support and encouragement 
given by Pakistan to the Indian Sikh militants and Afghan 
Mujahideen in her territory. These dailies, which criticised 
the stand of the government of Charan Singh, fully supported 
Indira's policy on the crisis created by the Soviet 
intervention in Afghanistan.

In the period of two months after the Soviet action in 
Afghanistan two Indian journalists, namely, Kuldip Nayar of 
the Indian Express and J.D. Singh of the Times of India, 
visited Afghanistan to have a close view of the situation 
inside Afghanistan. Kuldip Nayar found Babrak Karmal stock 
with the people to be very low—his Government taken as 
Moscow's instrument and himself called a Watan Farosh. He 
also found every Afghan airport under Russian control and 
every ministry having a set of Soviet advisers. On such basis 
he reported that the Government of Karmal would fall within a 
few minutes if it were not for the presence of Russian 
soldiers. Later Kuldip Nayar published a book incorporating 
a detailed study on Afghanistan which stated certain events 
and aspects that would not change: Russia's strategic and 
tactical aims in taking Afghanistan, its need for keeping its 
in its grip; the outside assistance to the rebels; the 
insurgents' determination to fight to the finish. To him the 
story of Afghanistan was "the story of a pawn in a game of 
chess between the two superpowers. Russia, as usual, had
thought out the move much ahead it could have even been in its grand master consciousness from the time of Czars. Communist Russia's involvement in its neighbour's affairs began only three decades ago. The communist coup in April 1978 put the pawn securely in Russia's hands and now it has made its move. The countries of the region are part of the game. So, he made an assessment of the shifts in policies and alignments that the Russian advance may force on countries all the way from Turkey to India to China". J.D. Singh also noticed a decline in the popular base of Babrak Karmal, who used to be more popular with the Communist rank and file than Amin. Karmal had restored the old coalition giving his own Parcham group 60 percent and the Khalq group 40 percent of the ministerial offices. He also made efforts to broaden the popular base of the PDPA and might have done better if he were not looked upon by his people as a Soviet puppet. The Soviets kept a low profile in Kabul and the soldiers one met face to face later were never rude. In the light of stories of looting, arson and rape one had heard about occupation forces in other parts of the world, the Soviets were a well-behaved lot—perhaps for the fear of summary execution or a life spell in Siberia."62 But the Afghans have been reduced to the status of second class citizens. The Soviet advisors have taken over and they take all decisions".63

In its later reports, Times of India analysed the Marxist nature of the Karmal regime and opined that Communist influence in Afghanistan was "confined to small group of
educated persons, particularly university students, while the bulk of the population remain deeply religious. Conscious of the fears of the Muslims about the revolution, the Government has launched a campaign to win them over to its side by issuing a lengthy message condemning the atrocities committed by the overthrown Amin regime against the notable learned clergy. By seeking the cooperation of the Muslim leaders in building a society based on real justice by stressing the profound national and democratic character of the revolution as a powerful manifestation of the will of Muslim masses to achieve their long cherished aspirations and by reminding the people that the Soviet Union had supported the Muslims of the world, including the Arabs in their struggle against imperialism and Zionism.64

The daily pointing out that Karmal, though a Marxist, was also a devout Muslim having given repeated assurance about his profound respect for the sacred religion of Islam, national customs and traditions. Noor Mohammed Tarakki had shown deep respect for the sentiments of the Muslim masses avoiding using terms like Marxism and communism so as to inflame orthodox religious sentiment. However, the programme of socio-economic reforms announced by mid 1978, coupled with the change of colour of the national flag from green to red and the use of the prefix 'comrade' before the name of Afghan leaders, led to the alienation of the majority of Muslims. The Mullahs were upset by many of the reforms, such as the ban on usury and on the sale of women for marriage (Hoqmohr)
and distribution of land to the tiller. They feared that these reforms would reduce their hold on the masses. Big landlords and money lenders used the Mullahs to incite their followers against their government. The Mullah’s were also helped in their propaganda from across the Afghan border from Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The government’s over reaction in adopting strong arm methods to deal with its opponents further exacerbated Muslim sentiments. Amin purged the government, the party, the army and the administration in general of his rivals and sought to cow down the people into submission through a reign of terror. There is not a single household in Afghanistan that escaped the brutal repression by the regime.

Mr. B.K. Joshi, London correspondent of Times of India opined that the level of deployment of forces had achieved the Russia’s main objective of ensuring that “there was no further deterioration in the political situation in Afghanistan. But the assessments say that the Soviet Union would require double the force if it attempts to subjugate the insurgents operating from Pakistan. They assert that the Soviet presence in the country-side is still tenuous, though their troops are in control of the main towns and lines of communications”. The report came after the daily editorial had expressed that the limited contingent of Soviet forces would be withdrawn as soon as the cause which necessitated the request for such military assistance ceased to exist under a credible guarantee. And in July a correspondent
found Kabul free from troubles and worries, contrary to notions abroad; but tensions did exist in the provinces. An editorial article by Inder Malhotra dismissed as absurd the charge the Karmal was a Soviet puppet and affirmed that Afghan leader" is no less a patriot than any other Afghan though circumstances have placed him in an unenviable position".69

The daily Indian Express reported sporadic fighting between Afghan government troops and rebels, while the Soviet troops kept to their barracks, leaving the Afghan soldiers and police to persuade shop owners not to close their shops in view of thousands of Afghans'demonstration against the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. However, Kuldip Navar believed that the uprising had been blown out of proportions by the Western and Pakistani media. It was doomed to be a short-lived because there was no way the protesters could get outside help. The city was surrounded by Soviet troops who also controlled the Kabul airport. The protest was an act of desperations by Kabul citizens who had been mocked by Afghans of several provinces for their cowardly submission to the Soviet military presence. About 300 civilians and an unknown number of Soviet and Afghan troops were killed in street battles.70

The daily Hindu reported that the CIA had started a covert operation to supply weapons to Afghan rebels. The operations were approved by special co-ordination committee
chaired by Brezezinski and by Carter himself. It was the largest CIA operation since what it did in Angola in 1975. The rebels were being supplied Soviet designed light infantry weapons obtained from Egypt, China and the underground army market in Eastern Europe. The weapons were being supplied through Pakistan. Iran, too, was said to have offered limited quantities of arms to the rebels. Egypt was also training the Afghan rebels and sending them back with weapons. The daily also reported that the Soviet stand on Afghanistan seemed to have hardened as a result of the Kabul disturbances and that Mr. Watanjer the minister of Communications, an important member of both government and party, did not agree to legalisation of Soviet military presence.\footnote{71}

The daily Hindustan Times saw external cleavages with the internal happening of Afghanistan. It observed that Iran and Afghanistan crises were the outcome of the non-recognition by the US and its supporters of the new realities "which have emerged in the world. Their attempts to stop the world liberation process are the true causes of the current tense situation inside Afghanistan, along with other international situations. The creation of numerous military bases close to the Soviet border and socialist countries and an unrestricted arms race forced the basis of American policy of brinkmanship".\footnote{72}

**THE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE PRESS:**

All the news papers in India showed concern on the Government of India's policy towards Soviets in Afghanistan

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in the light of regional repercussions and super-power rivalry. The main theme running through them all has been the global geo-strategic and regional geo-political clusters of opinion. Geo-strategically most of the analyses contained that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was a threat to the independence and sovereignty of small and weak nations, as an outflanking movement to grab the oil-wealth of the Persian Gulf and to extend Soviet influence in Asia. The daily Indian Express denounced Mrs. Gandhi’s stand on Afghanistan and described it as a betrayal of the policy of non-alignment and a departure from the principles laid down in the Bandung declaration of 1955. The daily Pratap depreciated New Delhi’s stance and interpreted the statement made in the UN by India’s spokesman, Mr. Brijesh Mishra justifying Russian aggression in Afghanistan as a blatant endorsement of Soviet militancy against a weak and innocent people. Similarly the Hindu criticised Government for supporting the Soviet view on Afghan crisis as the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was a cynical violation of international morality. The daily wished if India as the leader of the non-aligned movement were to condemn the Soviet action so as to reduce tension in the region as well as to have confidence building with Pakistan, USA and China. The daily was the only national paper to have demanded the abrogation of the Indo-Soviet Treaty owing to the Soviet action in Afghanistan on the moral grounds. The daily reported later that the Afghan crisis had helped to hasten
the process of Indian thinking on its defense strategy for the next two decades. This strategy had to be based on the assumption that a major threat to India's security or regional interest could come from any of the three powers - the United States, the Soviet Union or China either independently or in conjunction with others hostile to India. The new Soviet doctrine of protective intervention had caused considerable concern even among friendly countries like India because of the uneasy feeling that what has happened in Afghanistan could happen to others with similar treaty relationships in certain circumstances. Some other sections of the press also reported their concern over this threat image of the Soviet Union and wanted India to join with other powers to contain this threat both ideological and moral, to India's regional primacy as well as to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The other opinions occurred in the regional political analysis of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. They saw, with a little difference, the Soviet global interests, as opposed to the US interests, in South West Asia and India regional interests as complementary towards each other and it was this perception on which Mrs. Gandhi and her government based India's policy towards Soviets in Afghanistan. The reports, news analyses and letters to editors in all the news papers liked India's image as the region's predominant power, which could happen due to the decades old congruence of strategic interests between USSR, India and Afghanistan; and
also because all the three having bad relations with the USA, China and Pakistan. The press mostly agreed that the Afghan crisis had something to do with the super-power tensions stemming from the designs of USA of not allowing the Soviet Union a strategic parity with itself and thus craving for regional supremacy to keep the oil and other resources of the region to herself and her allies. Even Hindu observed that if past experience "is any indication the US has never fully stood by even its client states, let alone countries like India that are not prepared to sub-serve its global interest". Similarly wishing the United States to accept the power realities in Afghanistan as it did in Europe, an editorial article by Girilal Jain in Times of India pointed out that it was in these circumstances that Indian Government refused to join any anti-Soviet chorus. However he also expressed that "if the Indian attitude meant in effect acquiescence in the reality of Soviet power in Afghanistan, it just cannot be helped". In order to testify its notion of Indian people trusting more the Soviet Union than the United States as global power, the fortnightly India Today conducted a public opinion poll among the masses in eleven cities and it was found that a big majority of Indians saw the USSR as the country they could trust most. This perception was higher in the non-metropolitan cities than in the four metropolitan cities Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras.
INDIAN DIPLOMATIC MOVES TO DIFFUSE THE AFGHAN CRISIS

AND THE PRESS

The Government of India initiated moves to defuse the Afghan crisis - holding diplomatic dialogue with the USA, USSR, China, Pakistan and other countries. At the same time various foreign dignitaries paid their visits to India for such objective. In the third week of January 1980 both the US and Soviet ambassadors called at the Foreign office. The US ambassador assured the Indian Government that the proposed arms transfers to Pakistan were designed to improve the security environment in the region and expressed the US readiness to meet India's defence requirements in specific spheres, including the nuclear fuel for the Tarapore plant, without imposing any preconditions. However, the Government of India did not accept it and viewed it with the escalation of local tensions and conflicts. Simultaneously, the Government also made it clear to the Soviet ambassador that the Soviet troops be withdrawn earlier to improve the situation in the region. Carter sent his Secretary of State's special envoy Mr. Clark Clifford to India to discuss the situation created by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. But he was taken aback by the sharp criticism of the US policies and action in this respect and when he met with Mrs. Gandhi he was told that Indian focus was on the danger of the US arms to Pakistan. He left India without any fruitful discussion.
The press termed this diplomacy of India as new form of competitive diplomacy. The daily Indian Express had however, predicted Clifford's talks with Mrs. Gandhi and Narasimha Rao to be barren because of Carter's policy tended to ignore Indian sensibility by sending two unequal missions to two neighbouring countries - India and Pakistan. They showed how totally different were US and Indian perceptions of the mounting problem of South Asia and their cure. The dailies Hindustan Times, Indian Express and Hindu opined that Clifford did not embellish Indian images of the US by affirming at a news conference that any further move by the Soviet Union to reach out to the Persian Gulf will mean war. The dialogue, was more in the nature of a monologue, with Mrs. Gandhi talking at a stretch for more than half an hour after Mr. Clifford had repeated his set speech, was not intended to bridge the gap and bring the countries together to embark on any joint action. What the US had already planned to do was to bolster Pakistan's military strength at higher priority.

In order to discuss the Afghan crisis, many foreign dignitaries from all continents visited India including the UN General Secretary, the President of France and Austria, the foreign ministers of the USSR, Britain, Italy, Rumania, Cuba, and Algeria, Prime minister of Vietnam and the leader of PLO. Simultaneously, Indian diplomats went to the capitals of all neighbouring countries to Washington, Moscow, London, Paris, Bonn, Tokyo and Peking. Even at Salisbury and
Belgrade. Mrs. Gandhi met with Zia. Chinese Prime minister Hua Geofeng and Brezhnev. With all such moves, the government, as Narsimha Rao pointed out, kept its "diplomatic initiative intact, "to make full and effective use of it". 

Commenting on the Indian initiative, the Hindu reported that the government intended to do all that was possible to mobilise opinion against the growing dangers of great power involvement in the region. Therefore, "it is thinking of an Indian initiative to bring the neighbouring countries and the interested powers together to defuse the deepening crisis and foster better understanding amongst them. The proposed diplomatic move will take sometime to take shape but preliminary consultations with the concerned countries will be initiated soon". Later, the daily pointed out the government's consideration whether to confine its current exchanges to bilateral talks with other countries in the region or to take the initiative in convening a conference of the foreign members of these countries to discuss what could be done to avert the danger of big power rivalries in the region i.e. "India should invite Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and even Burma to such a conference if these countries were willing to take part". However, such a move could never take place and Mrs. Gandhi satisfied the UN General Secretary Kurt Waldhiem that India was trying privately to persuade Moscow at least to thin out its military presence in Afghanistan and this led to Indo-Pak dialogue which will be discussed in the next chapter.
The press gave much importance to the visit of Andre Gromyko. The daily Times of India, expressed editorially that the visit would provide the most vital link in India's process of consultations about the diffusion of the Afghanistan crisis. But the visit had no regional plan of its own resolve the crisis. The another daily Indian Express also voiced that the foreign office discounted the theory that "India is trying to evolve a regional initiative on the Afghan question". Taking into account Indian Foreign secretary Mr. S.K. Singh's visit to Kabul other daily the Hindu expressed the possibility of a reasonable settlement that could lead to the withdrawal of the Soviet forces. "The Indian policy is to encourage a direct dialogue between the two neighbouring countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan) with or without its own participation. The talks with Gromyko would take place against this general background with India neither supporting or condemning the Soviet action but calling for an early withdrawal of at least the bulk of Russian troops to remove the justification for US attempts to arm Pakistan. The U.S. too is not enlisting on an immediate rollback of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan but only on ensuring that Moscow would not try to do elsewhere what it did in this buffer state. The focus therefore is not on the Soviet presence in Afghanistan but on the danger of a similar thing happening in Iran or Pakistan".

However, the outcome of the visit disillusioned press. The Hindu clearly wrote that unless a way could be found for
ahead for the Afghan people. But it is significant that they are marching forward. Geneva is proof of that. That trek of refugees in testimony that national reconciliation is meeting with success. The withdrawal of Soviet troops is a healthy and happy development in the offing.\textsuperscript{144}

To this list may be added many scholars who expressed the historical unsettledness of the Afghan borders, India's strategic concern therewith and Pakistan's as well as the US role in reelling the Afghan resistance. So, to conclude this chapter, the public opinion in India showed three tendencies: one, represented by the extreme rightests who saw the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as an invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in pursuit of grand geopolitical designs, a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and International law; and, its various global and regional strategic repercussion and criticised Indian Government's stand on it; second, represented by the leftists and pro-government who saw the interference of the US imperialism, using the surrogates like Pakistan and China in the region and supported Indian Government's stand on the Afghan question in the historic light of Indo-Soviet relations serving mutuality of interest, as well as India's diplomatic efforts to diffuse the crisis; third, by those who took the balanced view by seeking the Soviet intervention unwarranted but given the geopolitical division of Indian subcontinent between India and Pakistan showed concern with the massive rearmament of the latter by the US in connivance with China. However, the point on
which all sections had similar opinions was the repercussions of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan on the security and development of India vis-a-vis Pakistan in the changed geo-strategic and geo-political scenario of the region. This had an obvious implications for Indo-Pak relations.
NOTES


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