

by

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The implementation of the Pakistan-dominated Islamic agenda in Afghanistan necessitates the overthrow of the Kabul regime by force. But it is almost three years now that the Soviet army has departed from Afghanistan, and still the regime has not been overthrown.

This is because although the Kabul regime is, for the crimes its numerous members have committed, unpopular with the Afghans despite many of its reforming measures, it is militarily strong enough to defend its entrenched position in cities with the superior weapons in its hands, particularly the unmatched air force and the long-range SCUD rockets against its guerrilla opponents who are yet to master the technique of conventional war.

With the disappearance of the Soviet factor it is now more than ever a matter of life and death for the men of the regime, and, if pushed hard to the corner they will fight to the end. In such a case all the cities of the country will also be destroyed, an incalculable number of their inhabitants perish, and their property looted. In the second place, it is more than doubtful whether the theocratic state of the hard-liners, if and when victorious, will be accepted by the Afghans who are actually more secular in outlook than is generally believed.

It is to be borne in mind that since the coup in 1978 the process of secularization, repugnant to the Islamic hard-liners, has been pushed still further, in the urban areas by the communists. When, as is feared, the victorious hard-liners embark on the imposition of their rigid state, as well as on the witch-hunt of the communists and their associates it is likely to produce a backlash of the worst kind reminiscent of that against the communists

Foreign factors will also accentuate the backlash. It is a foregone conclusion that Pakistan's military circles will become still more involved in Afghan affairs by supporting the hard-liners against their adversaries, though the extent of ~~their~~ involvement is any body's guess. In Afghanistan Pakistan will then find itself in a quagmire as the Soviet Union had found itself. The Afghans are, of course, grateful to Pakistan for its assistance when they were engaged in their liberation struggle against the Soviets, but it will be a mistake to expect the Afghans to bargain away their independence for the assistance they have received from Pakistan.

The Afghan resentment against Pakistan's interference is already a matter of fact, as is evidenced by their doing away recently of a number of its military officers who, inside Afghanistan, were stubbornly pushing Afghan commanders to destroy the Sarobi hydroelectric dam as a measure of weakening the Kabul regime. Among the Afghans including the Islamic hard-liners it is now strongly felt that under the cloak of Islam Pakistan intends to pursue its national interest in Afghanistan as the Soviets did the same in the name of the toiling people.

This is now a matter of serious concern for all those Afghans who are for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan as well as of stability in Pakistan, and for a new era of active cooperation between the two countries. But for this to happen Pakistan has to sincerely cooperate with the United Nations for the implementation of its peace plan as well as disengaging militarily from Afghanistan, a program for which a hopeful step, as a supplementary measure to the UN plan, has already been taken.

Last September the United States and the former Soviet Union undertook for the first time to discontinue after January 1, 1992 the delivery of weapons to their respective Afghan sides. This is a most important step in the right direction, but by no means a decisive one unless others also follow suit. Although in their joint statement State Secretary James Baker and his Soviet counterpart stated that "they also agree that a cease-fire and a cut off of weapons deliveries from all other sources should follow this step", this moral advice can hardly become effective unless others also make similar pledges. An Afghan analyst, Maiwand Olumi, has rightly stated "We are certain that these two countries [Iran and Pakistan] will continue to supply arms for prolonging fratricide in Afghanistan on the pattern of what they are already doing."

The cut-off of the supply of weapons can best be achieved through a resolution of the Security Council of the United Nations, calling on all countries to stop sending weapons to any Afghan party. Such a resolution is a necessary prerequisite to the stoppage of the war. With the cut-off of the supply of arms to the Kabul regime, and with no more of Soviet interference the war in Afghanistan has become nothing else but a civil war among contending parties for attaining state power. In such a situation the supply of weapons from any quarter to any party in the war is contrary to international laws, and an interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Since there is no nationally accepted government in Afghanistan capable of stopping the flow of weapons inside the country it is the

responsibility of the United Nations to do so. This is not too much to ask of the world community and especially of the United States, both of which actually owe the Afghans a moral debt for the contribution they have made in the the end of the cold war. Only in this way will the UN plan have a far better chance of success. Only so will a sounder ground be prepared for a settlement through an intra-Afghan dialogue and eventual general election, as is elaborated in the UN plan, as well as the joint Soviet-American statement.

There is now in a way a good chance of success for the UN plan since there is a vast amount of support for it among the moderate Afghans who are in the clear majority. A movement is underway inside Afghanistan by which community elders in conjunction with local commanders are realigning themselves for the purpose of settling the Afghan problem through negotiations. Already a number of regional and tribal unions have been formed. The disappearance of the danger of international communism, the sharp awareness of these war weary Afghans of the designs of their Muslim neighbors on their country, and, the incalculable misery which the Afghan nation has suffered have made them disenchanted with international radicalism, and nostalgic for a peaceful pursuit of life.

But in the absence of an effective plan to assure the cut-off of the supply of weapons and the disengagement of neighbors the hard-liners will continue to go ahead with their violent course no matter at what cost.

This is, however, an inadvisable course of action. Since it is a foregone conclusion that the communists can not win in the elections, it is far better to beat them in the polls than by poles. It will then be up to the legally instituted government to lawfully deal with criminals and traitors of the communist period. But in the absence of such a course of action by the United Nations there will be further bloodshed and destruction of the country as well as the unwillingness of the over five million Afghan refugees now living in Pakistan and Iran to return to their homeland. It may also keep the region unstable, since the predominance of any neighboring government in the potentially extremely rich Afghanistan is likely to create disequilibrium of a new kind that will create new problems for the United Nations in the years to come..

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