

# Diplomacy by Any Other Name

**M. Iqbal Asaria** reviews a book that delves into the foreign policy implications of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet imbroglio in Afghanistan.

## **Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan**

Edited by Hafeez Malik, Macmillan Press, London, 1987, 432pp, £29.50

THE study edited by Hafeez Malik is up to date and brings together an impressive range of personalities, from diplomatic, academic and journalistic circles.

In his introduction Hafeez Malik states the nature of the work as, "This is essentially a three-dimensional analysis of interaction between the United States and the Soviet Union regarding their relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan; and the manner and style of relations of these three states with the superpowers; and finally, as neighbors of the USSR, the conduct of their relations with the Soviet Union, with each other, and the exogenous power, the United States."

Then he expounds the primary thesis of the collection. "Despite the obvious dissimilarities in their political systems, both superpowers have developed remarkable similarities in the conduct of their foreign policies. Among the similarities or instrumentalities of foreign policy may be included economic and military aid, the *right* to articulate the strategic interests in other continents, and above all, the *right* to exercise intervention in the affairs of neighbouring, as well as distant, states." (emphasis added).

"Intervention is an old technique used in the conduct of international relations. .... *correctness* of intervention was admitted by the theorists of the system, including Lord Brougham, who stated: Whenever a sudden and great change takes place in the internal structure of a state, dangerous in a high degree to all neighbours, they have a right to attempt, by hostile interference, the restoration of an order of things safe to themselves; or at least, to counterbalance by active aggression, the new force suddenly acquired." To those who may think

this is outmoded doctrine Malik quotes President Reagan's defense of his covert military activity in Central America. He said, "I do believe in the right of a country, when it believes that its interests are best served, to practice covert activity." As to the other superpower, "... the Soviet Union has come forth with a doctrine of intervention which legitimizes Soviet intervention on a global scale."

Hafeez sets the scene for the following articles thus: "In disregard of international law, the superpowers have imposed upon the present state system varieties of intervention, including: (1) collective intervention; (2) intervention by invitation; (3) intervention for access to natural resources of other states; (4) humanitarian intervention; (5) intervention to support or suppress movements of national liberation; (and intervention to remove ideologically noxious neighbouring, as well as distant, states."

Articles dealing with the three countries and the two superpowers then expand on this theme. Indeed Professor McCain of Harvard University assigns ideology a subordinate position to Soviet political goals. Very much like the United States, the Soviet Union often has supported right-wing dictatorships if they served Soviet strategic interests. Essentially, according to him, 'security from attack and the extension of Soviet influence over other governments' is the name of the Soviet game. The Soviet incursion into Afghanistan and the implications for Pakistan is also treated at length. It is suggested that Pakistan's role in opening the Chinese door for the US was the cause of Soviet wrath. On the other hand US-Pakistan relations are soured by the issue of nuclear weapons.

On Iran, however, the dilemma of

both the superpowers is identical. In an interesting analysis Richard W Cottam, a former American Diplomat indicated that "since World War II American foreign policy had doggedly pursued three objectives in the Middle East: (a) contain and deter Soviet expansion; (b) maintain the flow of oil and petrodollars to the United States and its allies and (c) and maintain Israeli security." Since all the recipients of this policy happen to be Muslims, the inherent contradictions can only be squared by the US having a "*de facto* alliance with Middle East leaders who are conservative, anti-communist and willing to cooperate with multinational corporations, American banks and to limit their opposition to Israel to a rhetorical level." The emergence of Iran has not seriously eroded the first two objectives, but has potentially fatal consequences for the third objective.

Cottam, makes a telling point when he says, "What this picture of gross foreign policy contradictions reflects is (that) : American policy has lost control of regional dynamics. The same point can be made of Soviet policy. Of regional factors, the PLO and Iraq have suffered serious losses of influence. Far more surprising, Israeli policy, for many years one of the major determinants has begun to lose that determining force. (The invasion of Lebanon) has led to a diminution of the Israeli capability image." Thus, "the only growing force behind regional dynamics is Islamic political activism." The full force of this can be realised when Iran is able to strike a working relation with an organisation like the Muslim Brotherhood. Syrian/Iranian tension in Lebanon could be a likely spark for such a fusion.

Cottam sums his paper by saying, "In spite of (Imam) Khomeini's efforts to alter capability images in the Middle East, there remains an exaggerated view of American capability in the area and an underestimation of Iranian capability. Another set of events comparable in importance to the overthrow of the Shah, the invasion of Afghanistan and the Israeli incursion into and then retreat from Lebanon, however, would be likely to produce an altered perspective - one closer to power realities. The result would be fewer options available to the United States in the area and more available to the Islamic Republic of Iran." Without actually saying so, Cottam has unveiled the nexus of superpower perplexity over the increasingly likely probability of an Iraqi defeat in the Gulf war. ■