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## Bearish Dilemma

## COMMENT

MUSLIMS have become accustomed to talking about the eclipse of superpower influence in the Persian Gulf region with the advent of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Indeed, the panic response of the west to the Islamic revolution gives some hint of the magnitude of the shock administered to the global geo-political status quo.

After many years of talking about Islam as a once great religion, the fact of facing Islam as a vibrant and living reality has evoked a mentality very reminiscent of the Crusades. Thus Muslims from being 'backward and underdeveloped' in need of 'aid and technology' suddenly became 'fanatics', 'barbarians' and 'fundamentalists'. This transformation in perception clearly underlines the fear of having to accommodate a new reality, with unpredictable consequences.

After initial forays to abort the Islamic Revolution, the strategy adopted has been one of containment. For it is argued that if the Islamic Revolution in Iran is castigated, maligned and contained, then the Muslim world-wide Islamic revival can be channeled into safe avenues like Islamisation.

On this the superpowers concur fully. Indeed, the two have regularly exchanged ideas about ways to confine and if possible destroy the Islamic revolution.

While the Americans are smarting from their debacle in Lebanon, and are resorting to bizarre tactics to get a foothold in Iran, the Russians also have much to worry about. The costly involvement of over a hundred thousand Russian troops in Afghanistan, the increasing US encroachment in Iraq, and the distinct possibility of the collapse of Saddam Hussain's regime is threatening to undo over three decades of Soviet diplomacy in the region.

If the Russians are not able to extricate themselves from Afghanistan with a pro-Soviet regime securely in place, and Iran succeeds in toppling Saddam, then the spectre of a Muslim block seeking to implement a policy of 'no East no West' would come into being. It is this fear that explains the bold gamble the Russians have announced in Afghanistan. And it is their shared common perception of this possibility, that allows both the Soviet and US envoys to return 'satisfied' from discussing the issue in Pakistan.

In their bid for the containment of the Islamic revolution in Iran, the superpowers have not paid sufficient attention to the fact that the spectacle of their discomfiture in the path of the establishment of Islamic ideals, is a phenomena that excites the Muslim to his very core. His faith in it is unlikely to be shaken by malicious propaganda especially when he sees the incoherent response of the adversary.

In a like manner to the initiation of gaining control of Muslims' oil resources during the Mossadegh era, the Islamic revolution has set into motion forces which are gradually but surely leading to the emergence of the Muslim world as an independent reality on the global scene.

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