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Do Not Remove

India and Pakistan: Rising Tensions

An Intelligence Memorandum

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**India and Pakistan:
Rising Tensions** [Redacted]

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Summary

The historically turbulent relationship between India and Pakistan is more uncertain than at any time since the last Indo-Pakistani war in 1971. The deterioration in relations is a direct consequence of the Soviet move into Afghanistan. Indian Prime Minister Gandhi is strongly opposed to Pakistani President Zia's efforts to aid Afghan resistance forces, rearm Pakistan with advanced US military equipment, and acquire nuclear weapons.

Gandhi wants to keep US support for Pakistan at a minimum in order to assure Pakistan's status as a militarily weak buffer state unable to challenge India's regional preeminence. Her approach toward Pakistan combines veiled threats with conciliatory gestures. She has launched a worldwide lobbying effort to build pressure against the proposed US-Pakistani assistance package and make US Congressional approval more difficult to secure.

Prime Minister Gandhi will not shrink from punitive action if her concerns about Pakistan deepen significantly. Military measures could include a limited incursion to "teach Pakistan a lesson" or more specific efforts to damage Pakistan's nuclear facilities.

Pakistan is trying to quell India's stated fears of a Pakistani threat. Both sides are receptive to revitalizing the diplomatic dialogue, but each side continues to regard the other as a belligerent waiting for the right opportunity to attack.

Moscow is waging an intense propaganda campaign to dissuade Pakistan from supporting the Afghan resistance movement and reinforce the Indian perception that continued close ties with the USSR are vital to India's security.

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This paper was prepared by [Redacted] of the Near East-South Asia Division, Office of Political Analysis. It was coordinated with the Offices of Strategic Research, Scientific and Weapons Research, the Directorate of Operations, and the National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asia. Information available as of 27 May 1981 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, Near East-South Asia Division, OPA. [Redacted]

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**India and Pakistan:
Rising Tension**

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Troubled Relations

The deterioration of Indo-Pakistani relations is a direct consequence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The Soviet move radically altered the strategic environment in South Asia and undermined painstaking efforts of the last decade to build confidence and trust between India and Pakistan after the 1971 war over Bangladesh. 25X1

With that decisive Indian victory, Prime Minister Gandhi believed India had finally achieved regional primacy and forced Pakistan to accept second-rank status in the region. The revival of superpower interest and involvement in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf area since the invasion of Afghanistan, however, threatens India's power aspirations and has revived the high level of mutual suspicion that has characterized Indo-Pakistani relations during most of the postindependence era. 25X1

Zia's efforts to emphasize Islamic fundamentalism dismay the Hindus, who dominate India and tend to view the Muslims as impulsive and prone to violence. New Delhi believes Pakistan's refurbished Islamic credentials will give it access to Arab modern weapons inventories and generous financial aid from Saudi Arabia and others to buy sophisticated arms. 25X1

New Delhi also has traditionally distrusted military rule. General Zia's suppression of political dissent and his narrow base of public support lead the Indians to see him as more dangerous than his civilian predecessors. Indian defense planners believe they must prepare for unprovoked Pakistani military actions, including a campaign to seize parts of Indian-held Kashmir. The Indians worry that if Zia's hold over Pakistan is in jeopardy, he will try to regain domestic political support by creating trouble with India. 25X1

Pakistani Concerns

For Pakistan, the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan posed a grave new threat to its survival. The Pakistanis view Gandhi's refusal to condemn the Soviet invasion as evidence for her unequivocal commitment to the USSR as the cornerstone of Indian foreign policy. Pakistan fears that Moscow and New Delhi may eventually consider joint intervention in Pakistan aimed at dividing it up or establishing a pliable government in Islamabad. 25X1

Most Pakistanis do not believe Gandhi's categorical assurances that India has no designs on Pakistan. They are convinced that India will eventually try to conquer all of Pakistan, undoing the partition settlement that accompanied the two countries' independence in 1947. They point out that India's

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military intervention in 1971 permitted the severance of Pakistan's eastern wing containing half the population of Pakistan. [REDACTED] 25X1

The Impact of Afghanistan

Gandhi and Zia disagree in their overall assessment of Soviet policy toward the region, and although Gandhi is disturbed by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, she believes that Afghanistan falls within Moscow's sphere of influence. She contends that Soviet intervention must be accepted as a fait accompli that will be sustained on Moscow's terms, and that the sooner the Soviets consolidate their control, the sooner they will substantially reduce their military presence. Gandhi rejects allegations that the Soviet takeover is part of a drive toward the Persian Gulf and denies the existence of a Soviet security threat to Pakistan. [REDACTED] 25X1

If Pakistan continues to support the Afghan insurgents, New Delhi believes the USSR, at a minimum, may try to undermine President Zia's government and replace it with a pro-Soviet regime. Gandhi also fears that the Soviets and their Afghan puppets may move against rebel sanctuaries on Pakistani soil and that the situation would then quickly deteriorate. New Delhi might be forced to accept or even participate in a Soviet takeover of Pakistan. [REDACTED] 25X1

The Military Question

India argues that Pakistan would be unable to repel a Soviet invasion even if Zia obtains the equipment he seeks. New Delhi reluctantly accepts Pakistan's desire to modernize its armed forces, but India sees no justification for large-scale acquisition of sophisticated arms, particularly F-16 combat fighters and M-60 tanks. [REDACTED] 25X1

The Indians believe they have a reasonable chance of undermining the proposed five-year US-Pakistani economic and military agreement. Their goal is to limit the \$2.5 billion package by marshaling opposition abroad and in the US Congress. Indian diplomats in Washington and Western Europe are arguing vigorously that substantial US arms would have the undesirable effect of prolonging Zia's dictatorial rule, indefinitely postponing the return to power of an elected civilian government, and heightening the risk that Pakistan will initiate hostilities with India or the Soviets in Afghanistan. [REDACTED] 25X1

The Indians charge that Washington is seeking a Third World proxy to confront the USSR. They accuse the United States of not wanting a political settlement in Afghanistan, preferring to keep Soviet troops tied down there indefinitely. For Pakistan, US weapons are the reward for sustaining a dangerous anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. [REDACTED] 25X1

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Military Reminders

New Delhi is stationing newly acquired Soviet and Western military equipment at Indian bases on the frontier facing Pakistan. The Indians are also improving their airfields in the area. In a conflict with Pakistan, India will be able to support its Air Force more effectively than in previous wars [redacted]

This redeployment and strengthening of Indian forces along the frontier is a forceful reminder to Pakistan of its military inferiority vis-a-vis India. The Pakistani Army is less than half the size of India's. Pakistan is also handicapped because its border poses few impediments to an Indian invasion. Pakistan's lines of communication and its industrial and population centers are within easy striking range from India. If not diverted by other military challenges, India could defeat Pakistan in a conventional war regardless of any new aircraft the Pakistanis might acquire. [redacted] 25X1

Indian military planners believe they must be alert to the possibility of the Chinese engaging Indian troops in the Himalayas, giving India a war on two fronts. The Pakistanis might grab territory in Kashmir, and an early international call for a cease-fire might leave Pakistani soldiers on Indian soil. [redacted] 25X1

The Nuclear Race

Efforts to develop nuclear weapons have added a dangerous new factor to Indo-Pakistani tension. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] We believe a test is unlikely before 1982. [redacted] 25X1

Gandhi states publicly that India will respond in an "appropriate manner" to a Pakistani nuclear test. The ominous implications of her repeated warnings have not been overlooked by the Pakistanis. They suspect India may publicly adopt a nuclear weapons program, dropping its longstanding commitment to use nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes.¹ Prominent Indians are advocating a weapons program if Pakistan explodes a nuclear device. [redacted] 25X1

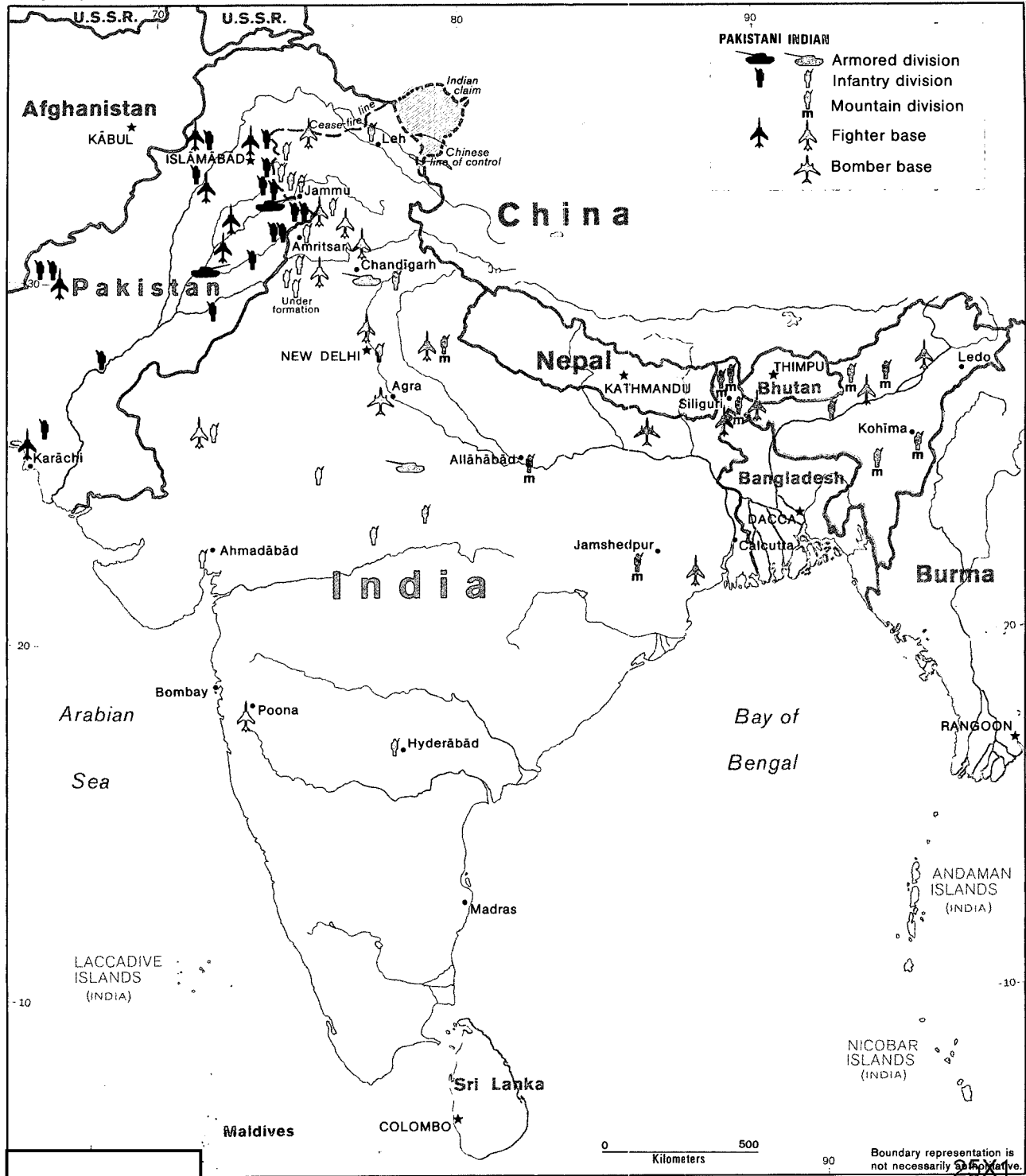


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Deployment of Pakistani and Indian Forces



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The Soviet Role

The USSR, since its invasion of Afghanistan, has been seeking to fan tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad. Soviet media and Soviet-subsidized newspapers in India have accused Pakistan of meddling in India's domestic affairs by fomenting Hindu-Muslim strife among other things. Moscow exaggerates the extent of Chinese military support for Pakistan and the potential for US-Pakistani military relations. Moscow alleges a Pakistani nuclear test is imminent [REDACTED] 25X1

The Soviet propaganda effort is partly aimed at curbing Pakistani support for the Afghan resistance. Moscow probably assumes Zia will not transfer significant military resources from the border with India to the Afghanistan front if his worries about India remain strong. At the same time, by keeping India's attention focused on Pakistan and on US and Chinese support for Islamabad, the Soviets reinforce their importance to the Indians as a reliable source of economic and military assistance. [REDACTED] 25X1

We do not know whether the Indians and the Soviets have discussed contingency plans toward Pakistan, but we assume such consultations could take place at any time. [REDACTED] 25X1

Prospects

India is not optimistic about its relations with Pakistan under President Zia or any other Pakistani military leader. New Delhi bases its policy planning on the expectation that Pakistan will be internally unstable, nuclear armed, and essentially hostile toward India over the next few years. [REDACTED] 25X1

Nonetheless, both sides will continue to express interest in keeping diplomatic channels open. Later this summer the Pakistanis probably will reciprocate Indian Foreign Minister Rao's visit to Islamabad in June. [REDACTED] 25X1

New Delhi will continue to urge Pakistani accommodation with the USSR, but probably is not counting on a softer line toward Afghanistan so long as Pakistan believes it can acquire sophisticated arms. India's aim will continue to be to convince President Zia that without unequivocal security guarantees from the United States or China, Pakistan has no choice but to accept strategic inferiority and avoid provoking its two Soviet-armed neighbors, India and Afghanistan. India will continue to consider a full range of options toward Pakistan, including a conventional military offensive that it is likely to win. India considers war a last resort because it probably does not want to absorb or dominate Pakistan, at least at this time. If Gandhi is convinced that Pakistan is being overwhelmed by internal disorders or run by generals who are perceived as irresponsible and reckless, however, she could initiate hostilities. [REDACTED] 25X1

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