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## Behind the Soviets' Afghanistan Coup

The grand Soviet strategy in lower Asia calls for the dismemberment of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran into separate ethnic states. Then the Soviets will pick up the pieces and absorb them, one by one, into the Soviet Union.

This is the sobering, secret assessment of intelligence analysts who have watched the Soviet sweep into Afghanistan with deepening alarm. The Central Intelligence Agency saw the strategy developing long before Soviet troops roared into Afghanistan.

It would give the Russians frontage on both the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean — warm-water ports that the czars merely dreamed about in past years. But far more is at stake than mere seaports; the Russian Bear would like to get its paws on Iran's fabulous oil fields.

The Persian Gulf not only is the main source of Western Oil; it is also the artery which carries this lifeblood to the industrial world. The Russians have already moved into Afghan air bases, which are less than 500 miles from Hormuz Strait as the jet flies.

The narrow exit from the Persian Gulf is the choke point where the Soviets could block the western lifeline. Thus, they already have a powerful bargaining position in any future negotiations over Persian Gulf Oil.

The Soviets, meanwhile, are expected to maneuver dangerously closer to the edge of world war, taking precautions all the while to avoid it. A secret CIA strategic review, analyzing the prospect of a future Soviet move against Iran, suggests:

It is entirely possible that the Soviets would use Afghans and the Pathians/Baluchis as proxy forces to form a surrogate army, thus avoiding the use of Soviet troops and a major confrontation with the United States.

"As such events escalate," the CIA scenario continues, "the United States as well as other [allies] would be called on to support both Pakistan and Iran... which would cause a further spread of the war."

"The United States, catering to Muslim interests in order to regain access to Mideast oil, to preclude Russian expansionism and to attempt to return stability to South Asia, would be required to commit resources of some nature..."

Already the Soviets have risked destroying détente and antagonizing the Moslem world. They have driven their two powerful adversaries, the United States and China, closer together. The sparks from a Russian-American confrontation over the Persian Gulf could also set off a nuclear powder keg.

In the opinion of the analysts, the Soviets would never have taken such enormous risks for the sake of Afghanistan — a bleak, arid landlocked country abused by man and nature. It is a land of steep, jagged, snow-swirling mountains, of barren, brown blazing deserts, of primitive, mud-walled villages.

With perverse pride, the Afghans call their country "the land of the fur and the fan" because it is bedeviled by extreme temperature variations. It is harsh country, poor in resources, and

hardy people live there.

No, the Russian Bear did not bite off this indigestible piece of earth, with any idea that it would be a juicy plum. The plum lies beyond the towering mountains, beyond the dry deserts, beyond the dusty steppes of Afghanistan.

Intelligent specialists believe the Kremlin has already started to implement its grand strategy. As early as 1978, the Soviets sought to split off an independent Pushtunistan from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Presumably, Soviet troops will now expedite the process that their puppet Nur Mohammad Taraki, the late Afghan president, tried to initiate.

This will be followed, it is anticipated, by attempts to carve up Afghanistan into other ethnic states, including an autonomous Baluchistan and Uzbekistan. The ethnic populations, of course, are spread across the borders into Iran, Pakistan and Russia itself.

Thus, the pressure will build up to include the ethnic minorities of Iran and Pakistan in the new autonomous states. Already, the Soviets are stirring up the ethnic minorities in Iran with clandestine radio broadcasts across the border.

The minorities, eager for autonomy, can be expected to play the Soviet game. But the Soviets have a different scenario than the minorities probably have in mind. Soviet cadres are waiting to guide and ultimately to control the ethnic movements. In the end, the Russians hope to absorb the autonomous states into the Soviet system.