

# Eurasian Diplomacy Under Strain Of Afghanistan Crisis

by Mary Burdman

On Oct. 9, as the U.S. and U.K. military assault on Afghanistan entered its third day, the nations of Eurasia, particularly Russia, China, and India, carried on intensive “telephone diplomacy,” in an urgent effort to keep the crisis under some kind of control, and prevent the whole region from being drawn into a general conflagration. These nations’ leaders have all supported an offensive against international terrorism, stating they oppose “terrorism of any form,” and have condoned at least a “limited” U.S.-led military operation in Afghanistan. On the other hand, they are acutely aware that in choosing this “supportive” approach, they are walking a road that is fraught with great danger. In fact, the U.S. and British war on Afghanistan is driving the strategic situation in Eurasia, which was already unstable enough, over the edge.

The Eurasian leaders want *effective* measures to be taken to end the plague of the “three forces”—terrorism, separatism, and extremism—which have threatened the security of the region for 25 years, after the operations of the U.S. Carter-Brzezinski Administration first launched what has become the vast “Afghansi” terror and weapons- and drug-running operation. This would be, as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization nations stated at their founding summit in June, in the vital security interests of every nation in Eurasia.

But as U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche points out, the political and economic system still dominating the world is breaking down completely. The leading institutions of that system are in a desperate fight for their existence, and can, if not stopped, take the rest of the world down with them. This is driving the internal U.S. coup process, by “rogue” forces inside the United States responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon; and is driving the assault, via Afghanistan, into the heart of Eurasia.

## Risks To Russia’s Policy

*EIR* reported the significance of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s diplomatic initiative toward the West, epitomized by his remarkable speech on Sept. 25 to the German Bundestag (see *EIR*, Oct. 5, 2001), which clearly reflected the strategic thinking contributed by LaRouche. But it is not enough. The agenda publicly presented so far, not only by Russia, but

also by China, India, Iran, and others, remains essentially in the context of the current, collapsing political and economic system.

Putin is maneuvering to “keep the door open,” for the case the presently irresistible power of the Anglo-American “empire,” might crumble under the effects of total financial collapse. But dealing with a United States whose leadership is lurching from one untenable operation to the next, the Eurasian nations could themselves be pulled into a quagmire. For example, an initially “strictly limited” deployment of American military forces to Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, condoned by Russia at the moment, could easily turn into a prolonged or even permanent presence. This would be unacceptable for Russia’s military and security apparatus, as well as for China. Informed sources have pointed to the fact, that Putin himself might be running a considerable political risk inside Russia.

The Central Asian republics face fragile economic, political, and security conditions, internal and external, and have had to battle the military clashes which “Afghansi” forces have provoked repeatedly in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Now, the U.S.-British war against Afghanistan threatens to set off far worse conflicts throughout the region, spilling into Russia. Being drawn into a “clash of civilizations” with the Islamic world would have fatal consequences for Russia.

China, too, has a Muslim population in its western regions—now the focus of its internal development policy—and has long dealt with separatist movements, not only in Xinjiang, but also in Tibet.

Especially explosive, is the extremely fragile situation in Pakistan, a nation of over 155 million people, and one with nuclear weapons. If the direct U.S. deployment into Pakistan results, as it so easily could, in the collapse of the current government and the disintegration of that important nation, the crisis will threaten the entire region. The danger to the security of India, a nation of 1 billion people, with its own population of well over 100 million Muslims, is extreme, as Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his External Affairs Secretary Jaswant Singh have made starkly clear to both Washington and London. Were Pakistan to fall into chaos, or

be taken over by a violently anti-India regime, a confrontation between India and Pakistan would become almost unavoidable.

### The Telephone Diplomacy

Awareness of these dangers precipitated the intense telephone diplomacy on Oct. 9, among Russia, China, India, Egypt, the Arab League, Qatar—the current president of the Organization of Islamic Conference—and other nations. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov emphasized to his Chinese counterpart Tang Jiaxuan that day, that it is impossible for military action to end terrorism. Russia and China have consistently emphasized the importance of the United Nations, and stated that “military strikes should have clear targets and avoid action spreading to other countries.” This was a direct response to the letter delivered to the UN by U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte on Oct. 7, which claimed that for alleged “self-defense,” the Bush Administration might find it necessary to take “further actions with respect to other organizations and other states” than just Afghanistan. Iraq is considered a most likely target.

The international community should support the establishment of “a coalition government with a wide-ranging basis” in Afghanistan, said Ivanov. Russia wants to expand cooperation with China, to jointly safeguard international security and stability. Tang confirmed this cooperation; the Chinese Foreign Minister also called for an Afghan coalition government which would be “able to cooperate with neighboring countries in a friendly manner” for the sake of the Afghan people and regional peace and stability. “China and Russia have the same stance and interests on the issue of anti-terrorism,” Tang said. He compared the “severe harm” that Russia has suffered from the separatist operations in Chechnya, to the “East Turkestan” separatist groups in China’s westernmost region of Xinjiang.

Tang also spoke by telephone with Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad of Qatar, who was about to head an extraordinary Oct. 10 meeting of foreign ministers of the 56-member Organization of Islamic Conference. Tang told Sheikh Hamad, that Islamic countries, as well as China, were also victims of terrorism, and that China was “clearly opposed to associating terrorism with any religion, nationality, or region.”

### China And India

The massive U.S. involvement in Pakistan is very problematic for China, a long-time ally of Pakistan. Beijing has taken strict security measures. On Oct. 9, it closed its narrow border with Afghanistan’s Wakhan corridor, and closed the neighboring area in Xinjiang to foreigners. China also closed the Karakoram Highway, which extends from Kashi in Xinjiang, to Islamabad, for an indefinite period.

Amidst the Oct. 9 diplomacy, Tang also spoke with Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh. It had been made known two



*Russian President Putin’s support for the United States’ proclaimed international anti-terror crusade, carries considerable risks for Russia strategically, and for Putin himself politically.*

days earlier, that Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, who was to pay an important visit to India on Nov. 9-11, would postpone the visit, in view of the international situation. Singh, scheduled to visit Beijing beginning on Oct. 11, also delayed his visit, because of the “evolving” situation. But during an hour-long telephone discussion on the regional situation and China-India bilateral relations, Tang told Singh that the Chinese Foreign Ministry is re-scheduled Zhu Rongji’s visit for early next year, and hopes that Singh would be able to come to Beijing at the earliest possible date.

India is in a particularly critical situation. Despite the diplomatic campaign mounted by U.S. Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill, a member of the Bush Administration inner circle, India’s leaders are well aware of the implications of the massive U.S. deployment into Pakistan. India knows, better than anyone, Pakistan’s political and economic instability, and the vulnerability of Islamabad to political manipulation because of heavy financial injections from Washington. The terrorist operations based out of Pakistan, have aimed at destabilizing India, Russia, China, and the nations of Central Asia. For this reason, in contrast to its views on the Middle East, Washington does not—at this time, at least—consider these terrorists as opposing its strategic interests. Furthermore, the end to sanctions would mean a restored flow of military aid from the United States to Pakistan—and this has India greatly concerned.

The Indian Prime Minister already on Sept. 20, was pub-

licly warning that the United States must look to the Pakistani-based terrorist operation, if it genuinely wanted to resolve the problem in Eurasia. In an interview with the *Times of India* published on Sept. 20, Vajpayee said that the United States must look at “whether terrorism is a global phenomenon, or whether it is restricted to just one individual. . . . Afghanistan is a symptom. America will have to look well beyond it . . . if it wants to get rid of terrorism root and branch.” Washington might appreciate India’s offers of support, but there was no indication of any reciprocal understanding of “India’s bitter experience of terrorist activities on its soil.”

Then, on Oct. 1, a brutal attack was launched directly on the *government* of India’s Jammu and Kashmir state. Militants bombed and assaulted the State Assembly building, when many government leaders were inside, killing at least 38 persons and destroying the building. The Delhi External Affairs Ministry immediately called on Pakistan to “rein in” such terror groups as the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)—which first claimed and later denied responsibility for the assault—and the Lashkar-e-Toiba, which operate in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. “The terror attack . . . once again shows that notwithstanding the cosmetic steps Pakistan may take against a few organizations under international pressure, it continues to be a country that aids, abets, and sponsors terrorism and terrorist networks,” the External Affairs Ministry stated.

Singh, then on a trip to Washington, delivered a letter to Bush, which was “so grave” that Bush held an unscheduled 40-minute meeting with Singh during the latter’s conference with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. Singh did get assurances from the Bush Administration that India’s concerns would be considered, but senior officials adhered obsessively to the mantra that “aAl-Qaeda” and “bin Laden” are the U.S. targets, with no mention of the broader menace of the international Afghansi operation and its infrastructure in Pakistan. The U.S. State Department did agree to take a “very close look” at Jaish-e-Mohammad but that was it. While Pakistan’s President Gen. Pervez Musharraf did call Vajpayee on Oct. 8, and a visit of Singh to Islamabad, at Pakistan’s invitation, was even mooted, India remains extremely cautious, and determined to make its basic conditions for any dialogue with Pakistan, a matter for discussion with other world leaders.

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## **India’s Dialogue With Russia**

While both U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder are awaited in New Delhi the week of Oct. 8, India’s main dialogue has been with Russia. Vajpayee’s upcoming November trip to Moscow for a summit meeting to sign a Declaration of Strategic Partnership, is still scheduled as of this writing, despite the volatile international situation. Immediately after Sept. 11, Indian National Security Adviser Brahesh Mishra went to Moscow, with Afghanistan a leading issue—as it will be during Vajpayee’s visit. At the same time, Russia is expanding its dialogue with China and Iran on this critical problem.

India’s Ambassador to Moscow K. Raghunath is being kept abreast of Russia’s post-Sept. 11 security dialogue with the United States, while the two nations’ Home Ministries are engaged in “fruitful cooperation,” Russian Ambassador to Delhi Kadak announced on Oct. 10.

On Oct. 8, right after Negroponte’s letter was delivered to the UN, President Putin telephoned Vajpayee to discuss the effects of the U.S. military strikes. Putin’s press service reported that they “stressed the need for consolidation of international action against terrorism” and opposed “the policy of double standards which can hamper unity in the anti-terrorist coalition.”

This broad diplomacy includes the leaders of Central Asia. On Oct. 10, there was an extraordinary meeting of experts of the Bishkek Anti-Terror group of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, to discuss the “large-scale retribution actions” of the United States against Afghanistan. Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Muratbek Imanaliev stated that Moscow and the Central Asian capitals are in almost daily discussion, on how to prevent escalation of terrorism in the region.

President Putin, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, and other Asian-Pacific leaders, will have the opportunity to meet President Bush on Oct. 20-21 in Shanghai, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) summit. The Japanese press reports that APEC will issue a joint statement against international terrorism. Were Putin, with Jiang’s support, to demand that that statement address the worldwide financial breakdown collapse, and the profound threat to the security of every nation this collapse poses, there could be the opportunity to “judo” the ongoing crisis. Friedrich Schiller’s great tragedy, *Don Carlos*, features a series of characters, King Philip II, the Marquis Posa, the Infante Don Carlos, all “dealing” with each other on vital matters of state—all from totally different viewpoints and purposes, all of which were far too limited to have any effect on the critical situation inside Spain and with the Netherlands. In many meetings among these characters, each thinks he has bent the other to his own purpose. In the end, all are, in one way or another, destroyed. The nations of Eurasia must not repeat the mistakes of *Don Carlos*!