Anglo-American University
School of International Relations and Diplomacy

Cold War and Afghanistan in the 1970s: Struggle for Supremacy and Prelude to the Soviet Invasion

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Statement of Originality

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree, or qualification thereof, or for any other university or institute of learning.

I declare that this thesis is my independent work. All sources and literature are cited and included.

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Ondřej Pekáček
28th August 2015
Prague

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot.

The Earth is the only world known so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate.

To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

— Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*

Abstract

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The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was a watershed event for the Cold War, as well as for the future of the country. However, most of the scholarly literature have focused on the Soviet-Afghan War that followed the invasion, rather than examining the factors which caused it. Therefore, to understand the Soviet decision to invade, it is necessary to analyze both the internal and external Cold War dynamics in Afghanistan. Internally, the vision that the Afghan communist party, the PDPA, had for Afghanistan, clashed with the predominantly conservative population, as well as with the emerging Islamist movement. Externally, both the United States and the Soviet Union competed in the developmental assistance to Afghanistan, however, the United States disengaged in the late 1960s and allowed for the Soviet Union to be the dominant power.

Both of those factors came to play toward the end of the 1970s, when the PDPA got to power and carried out wide-reaching social and economic reforms, which alienated large segments of the Afghan society. The previously marginal Islamist movement used this sentiment to recruit resistance fighters, and the PDPA was soon on the defensive. Consequently, the ensuing Soviet invasion could be explained by the intent to protect its client regime, which was on the edge of collapse, rather than by the historical continuation of the Tsarist expansionist policy or a quest for warm sea ports.

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Abbreviations and Terms

AGSA	Afghan Secret Police
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Baghdad Pact	See "CENTO"
Basmachi	Anti-communist Muslim resistance fighters 1916-1934
CC CPSU	Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization (1955-1979)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (1949-1991)
CWIHP	Cold War International History Project
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency (U.S.)
DOD	Department of Defense (U.S.)
Farsi (Dari)	Persian dialect - one of the main languages of Afghanistan
GRU	Soviet Military Intelligence
Hazara	Ethnic minority group residing in central Afghanistan
Herat	Third largest Afghan city
Hizb-e-Islami	"Islamic Party," founded by G. Hekmatyar in 1975
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (Pakistan)
Jamiat-e-Islami	"Islamic Society," founded by B. Rabbani in 1972
Kabul	Capital city of Afghanistan
Kandahar	Second largest Afghan city
KGB	Soviet State Security Committee
Khalq	Faction within the PDPA, associated with N.M.Taraki
Khyber Pass	Important pass connecting Pakistan and Afghanistan
Loya Jirga	"Grand assembly," includes foremost Afghan leaders
Madrasa	Islamic schoolhouse or college
Meli Shura	The highest legislative body in Afghanistan

MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mullah	Religious priest on Islamic rules
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NRP	National Revolutionary Party (Afghanistan)
NSA	National Security Archive (George Washington University)
NSC	National Security Council (U.S.)
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
Parcham	Faction within the PDPA, associated with B.Karmal
Pashto	One of the two main languages spoken in Afghanistan
Pashtun	A major ethnic tribe living in eastern and southern Afghanistan
Pashtunwali	Pashtun pre-Islamic religious code of honor
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, founded in 1965
PRC	People's Republic of China
SALT II	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II
SAVAK	Iranian Secret Police
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (1954-1977)
Sharia	The body of Islamic law
Spetsnaz	Soviet Special Forces
Tajik	A major ethnic group in northeastern Afghanistan
Tudeh	Iranian communist party
UN	The United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Uzbek	One of the major ethnic groups, located in the plains
Wakhan Corridor	Narrow strip of land that connects China and Afghanistan

Chronology of Key Events

1919	Amanullah proclaims himself Emir and declares Afghanistan's independence on Britain.
1933	Zahir Shah becomes king after the unrest that ousted Amanullah, remains in power for next 40 years.
1953	Mohammed Daoud becomes Prime Minister.
1963	Mohammed Daoud is forced to resign.
1964	Constitutional monarchy is established.
1973	Mohammed Daoud seizes power in a coup and declares Afghanistan a republic.
1978	Mohammed Daoud is deposed in a pro-Soviet, communist coup.
1979	Soviet Union invades Afghanistan in December and props up the communist government.

Introduction

Growing up in the 1970s in Kabul, Nelofer Pazira had a promising future in front of her. She had been born into an affluent family of professionals, and in comparison with other Afghan children of the same age, she was well-off. Nelofer and her family would often go for trips around the country in their orange Passat. On one such journey they went to the north of Afghanistan, arriving at the shorelines of the Amu Darya. Her father explained to her that the river was the border and that on the other shore was the Soviet Union. Being then barely five years old, Nelofer now recalls: "We stood and looked across into the Soviet Union on New Year's Eve of 1978. No one could have imagined that in a just a year's time, the people on that other shore would invade our country." By the time the invasion happened, her father had already been put in prison and her home city had become embroiled in an atmosphere of violence and fear.[1]

Nelofer was one of the many children whose lives were profoundly changed by the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Being such a dramatic event in Afghan history, the protracted Soviet War that followed became an object of studies, be they popular or scholarly. However, much less attention was dedicated to the events that led to the invasion, specifically to Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan and to the motives behind the Soviet decision to invade, which are the central focus of this work.

In contrast to the contemporary state of affairs, Afghanistan was never in the pre-1979 period a strategic priority to the foreign policy of the United States. This is also reflected on levels of U.S. aid allocations to Afghanistan which were marginal in comparison with those of India, Pakistan and Iran. On the other hand, the Soviet Union had been active in Afghan affairs since the mid-1950s, providing assistance that was matched in the region only by India.

In order to understand the roots of the Soviet invasion, it is important to analyze the Cold War context in which the invasion was the culmination of the Soviet Union's involvement with the Third World in the 1970s. Also, it is necessary to examine the Afghan context in which the development of Islamist and Communist movements played

[1] Nelofer Pazira, *A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 61.

a significant role and gave rise to the conflict in the first place. Furthermore, Afghanistan's neighbors – China, Iran and Pakistan – played their respective roles by meddling in Afghan affairs as well.

The Soviet invasion was an act of aggression in violation of international law that resulted in many casualties and caused long-lasting damage to Afghanistan. However, currently available evidence shows that the Soviet invasion, contrary to the claims of scholars such as Richard Pipes, was not an *a priori* offensive move with the intention to expand the Soviet empire to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, but rather it was a defensive move aimed at protecting Soviet security, strategic position, prior investment and prestige connected to the crumbling Afghan communist regime.

1. Literature Review

As debated in the introductory part, neither popular nor scholarly interest in Afghanistan has been uniform thorough history. The first major wave of academic inquiry followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and was further encouraged by the opening of the East European archives in the 1990s, while the second wave came in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent U.S. invasion to depose of the Taliban. Consequently, these developments led to a rather fragmented understanding of Afghan history.

As a result, there is a significant body of literature on Afghan history which can be categorized into four prominent periods. The first is pre-Islamic Afghanistan spanning from the Paleolithic era to the 18th century, and was explored mostly by French and American archeologists.[2] The second category is the period of the "Great Game,"[3] covering most of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.[4] The third period

[2]In the 20th century, Afghanistan saw several foreign archeological expeditions, most notably from France and the U.S. For findings of the French expedition, see Françoise Olivier-Utard, *Politique et archéologie: histoire de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (1922-1982)* (Paris: De Boccard, 1997); for findings of the U.S. expedition see Louis Dupree et al., "Prehistoric Research in Afghanistan (1959-1966)," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, 62, no. 4 (January 1, 1972): 1–84; Richard S. Davis and Louis Dupree, "Prehistoric Survey in Central Afghanistan," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 4, no. 2 (July 1, 1977): 139–48.; for an overview of the archeological efforts in Afghanistan, see Frank Raymond Allchin and Norman Hammond, *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Times to the Timurid Period* (Waltham: Academic Press, 1978); and for the most recent scholarship on the subject, which puts Afghan archeology into international context, see Juliette van Krieken-Pieters, ed., *Art and Archaeology of Afghanistan: Its Fall and Survival: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006); for the first historical survey of Afghanistan from antiquity to pre-modern times, see Arnold Fletcher, *Afghanistan: Highway of Conquest* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965); for a criticism that these early historical works on Afghanistan suffered from the "preconceived orientalist interpretations of Kipling and other colonial storytellers," see Robert Nichols, "Afghan Historiography: Classical Study, Conventional Narrative, National Polemic," *History Compass* 3, no. 1 (2005).

[3] The "Great Game" is a term that refers to a strategic rivalry between the British and Russian Empires in the 19th century that played itself out in the area of Central Asia. Interestingly, the term itself was probably already coined in 1837 by a British officer and later popularized by Rudyard Kipling in his 1901 *Kim*. For more information on etymology see Gerald Morgan, "Myth and Reality in the Great Game," *Asian Affairs* 4, no. 1 (February 1, 1973): 55. For a scholarly criticism of the term "Great Game" see B. D. Hopkins, *The Makings of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 34–60.

[4] For a comprehensive list on all of the pre-1980 publications that dealt with some aspects of the "Great Game", see Philip Amos, "Recent Work on the Great Game in Asia," *The International History Review* 2, no. 2 (April 1, 1980): 308–20; for a seminal publication that resulted in a post-Cold War research interest in the subject, see Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); for the role of the U.S. and China in the "Great Game", see Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1999); for an historical account that makes use of the newly available documents from the Russian archives, see Martin Ewans, *The Great Game: Britain and Russia in Central Asia* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2004); for the role of British intelligence, see Robert Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South*

concerns the military history of the Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989, which witnessed substantial amounts of publications on the subject.[5] Finally, the fourth period covers U.S. involvement in Afghanistan from 2001-present.[6]

However, other periods of Afghan history have not received the same amount of scholarly treatment. For instance, the period between the end of World War II and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has been neglected and is the main topic of interest in this thesis. Consequently, two specific subsets of published scholarship pertaining to this particular era which are essential for the context of this work will be analyzed in this chapter. They are: 1) the Soviet-American policy towards Afghanistan and 2) the motives of the Soviet Union behind their decision to invade Afghanistan.

Asia, 1757-1947 (Greenhill Books/Lionel Leventhal, 2006); for the perspective of the Emirs of Afghanistan on the "Great Game," see Mohammad Hassan Kakar, *Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006); for the analysis of the role of diplomacy, see Christopher M. Wyatt, *Afghanistan and the Defence of Empire : Diplomacy and Strategy During the Great Game* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); for the most recent contribution that utilizes files from Indian, Russian, Georgian, Uzbek, and Turkmen archives, see Evgeny Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013).

[5] For an exemplary work on the subject, which reports on the war from the side of the *mujahedeen*, see Edward Girardet, *Afghanistan: The Soviet War* (London: Routledge, 1985); for a journalistic account from the Soviet point of view, see Artem Borovik, *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Grove Press, 1990); for post-Cold War narratives that use newly available archival sources, see Mark Galeotti, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Union's Last War* (Taylor & Francis, 1995); and Diego. Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); for a memoir on the war, see Phillip Corwin, *Doomed in Afghanistan: A UN Officer's Memoir of the Fall of Kabul and Najibullah's Failed Escape, 1992* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003); for the most recent and the most comprehensive contribution to the field, see Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); and for the focus on the activities of the Anglo-American intelligence services and their cooperation with China through arms deals, see Panagiotis. Dimitrakis, *The Secret War in Afghanistan: The Soviet Union, China and Anglo-American Intelligence in the Afghan War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

[6] Scholarship of post-9/11 Afghanistan is still a rapidly developing field. For a comprehensive analysis of the Taliban, see Robert D. Crews, ed., *Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); for an analysis of the U.S. aid policy, military strategy and the role of Pakistan, see Tim Bird and Alex Marshall, *Afghanistan : How the West Lost Its Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); for the role of NATO in Afghanistan, see Sten Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan: The Liberal Disconnect* (Palo Alto: Stanford Security Studies, 2012); and for the most recent contribution on the subject, see Thomas P. Cavanna, *Hubris, Self-Interest, and America's Failed War in Afghanistan: The Self-Sustaining Overreach* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

1.1. Literature and Soviet-American Involvement in Afghanistan

The first aim of this thesis is to investigate the significance of the superpowers' involvement in internal and external Afghan matters prior to the Soviet invasion in December, 1979. To exercise their influence, both superpowers extended military and civilian aid to Afghanistan, usually covering investments into military equipment, infrastructure, agriculture, industry and education. Also, both the U.S. and USSR were trying to court Afghanistan by cultivating its human capital through the provision of their own advisors and by offering free education to Afghan officers and university students. Sometimes this aid was offered without any strings attached (humanitarian aid), but more often than not, it was given with preconditions.

The question of which party was more involved in Afghanistan in 1945-1979 does not seem to be controversial, as is in the case of the motivation for the Soviet invasion. Scholarly literature offers a consensus – since the mid-1950s, and even more so by the end of the 1960s, the U.S. was playing second fiddle to the USSR in Afghanistan.[7] However, authors sometimes differ in opinion when trying to account for the causes of this significant divergence in the amounts of aid. While some scholars, such as Richard Newell and Leon B. Poullada, argue that it was simply a matter of priorities in the superpowers' respective foreign policies, others such as Fred Halliday and Antony Hyman believe that the Afghan reluctance to violate its sovereignty and join the Baghdad Pact was one of the root causes.

Pre-1970 Accounts

One of the first scholarly works acknowledging the significance of Soviet involvement is an article by Alvin Z. Rubinstein (1957), which analyzed the Soviet literary works on South Asia. In it, he posits the importance of Afghanistan for Soviet foreign policy and argues that, rather than absorbing Afghanistan, it seeks to put Afghanistan into a position analogous to Finland. He also observes a shift in Soviet priorities in the region after

[7] However, not all aid was equal – while the majority of U.S. aid came in the form of grants, USSR and other countries of the Soviet bloc offered mostly long-term loans partially covered by the Afghan fruit and gas exports. See chapter "Soviet-American Involvement in Afghanistan."

Stalin's death and the importance of a Khrushchev-Bulganin 1955 visit to Afghanistan, where a $100 million loan was extended.[8]

Accordingly, an article by Henry G. Aubrey (1959) examined the preliminary figures of Communist and U.S. aid to Southeast Asia. It argues that while the total U.S. economic assistance to the region was almost twice as high as the combined military and civilian aid of the Communist bloc, this does not apply to Afghanistan where U.S. involvement lagged behind substantially.[9]

Accounts from the 1970s

After the initial interest in the late 1950s, the subsequent decade saw almost no publication on the issue. The resurgence of scholarly research came in the early 1970s, perhaps as a consequence of momentous changes in Afghan society, such as the collapse of the monarchy. The first book on the subject, The Politics of Afghanistan (1972) by Richard S. Newell, contains a chapter dedicated to the Afghan economy and foreign aid.[10] Newell examined post-1945 U.S.–Afghan relations and observes that the Americans were very conservative in allowing for any substantial expenditures, even for the Helmand Valley Project, which was worked on by a U.S. company. Adding to this initial U.S. reluctance to the energetic engagement of the post-Stalin Soviet policy, which offered support in the midst of the Afghanistan-Pakistan dispute, it is unsurprising that Cold War competition in Afghanistan started as early as 1954. While Newell argues that neither the U.S. nor the USSR was interested in an aid monopoly, the data he provides speak otherwise, confirming the earlier assertions of Aubrey.[11]

Halliday (1978) also observed the increasing dominance of Soviet aid in

[8] Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Selected Bibliography of Soviet Works on Southern Asia, 1954-56," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 17, no. 1 (November 1957): 50–51.
[9] Henry G. Aubrey, "Sino-Soviet Aid to South and Southeast Asia," *World Politics* 12, no. 01 (October 1959): 62–63.
[10] Richard S. Newell, *The Politics of Afghanistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).
[11] Ibid., 144; Interestingly, in a later article, he admitted that the USSR was clearly dominating Afghanistan through military aid and trade. He also argued that the superpowers' aid was regionalized (U.S. near the Pakistani border, Soviet aid near its borders). Owing to the détente, U.S. was quite comfortable in allowing Soviets to exercise their primacy. Newell also argued that the Soviets had not yet used their military and economic leverage to significantly influence internal Afghan matters. Richard Newell, "Foreign Relations," in *Afghanistan in the 1970s*, ed. Louis Dupree and Linette Albert (New York: Praeger, 1974), 76–90.

post-1955 Afghanistan, which was their third largest non-communist aid recipient after Turkey and India. In accord with Newell, Halliday noted the elegance with which the USSR used the Pashtunistan dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan to its favor. He also traced the gap between U.S. and Soviet involvement to the Afghan refusal to join the Baghdad Pact in 1956, which was set as a precondition of U.S. military aid. Furthermore, the general decline in U.S. Third World spending from the mid-1960s onwards also negatively affected its position in Afghanistan.[12]

Accounts from the 1980s

While most post-1979 scholarly literature focused on the Soviet invasion, some works also offered a reflection on the superpowers' prior role. Poullada (1981), in line with previous authors, argues that the Soviets cleverly used Afghan resentment toward U.S. indifference in combination with support for the Pashtunistan dispute (to which the U.S. ascribed only minor importance). Poullada, similarly to Halliday, argues that in 1953-1956, U.S. diplomacy was slow and inefficient and as a consequence failed to prevent Soviet penetration.[13] Stanley A. Wolpert (1982) also sees the peak of Soviet influence in the late 1960s. [14]

Hyman (1982) also concurs with Halliday in tracing the disparity in aid to the Afghan refusal to join the Baghdad Pact by pursuing a policy of *bi-tarafi*.[15] Additionally, Hyman agrees with Newell that the inefficient implementation of the Helmand Valley Project caused significant friction between the U.S. and Afghanistan early on, which in turn motivated Afghans to look for aid elsewhere.[16] Rubinstein (1982) argues that Soviet domination began already in 1950, when the Soviet Union helped during a particularly

[12] Fred Halliday, "Revolution in Afghanistan," *New Left Review* 112, no. 1996 (1978): 3–44. There are two possible explanations for the decline in U.S. foreign aid – the Vietnam War and *détente*. The substantial financial and military commitment to the Vietnam War started when Richard Nixon assumed presidency. At the same time, the process of warming up Soviet-American ties began with the signing of the SALT I treaty. See Martin McCauley, *Russia, America and the Cold War: 1949-1991*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), chap. 5.
[13] Leon B. Poullada, "Afghanistan and the United States: The Crucial Years," *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 2 (1981): 178–90.
[14] Stanley A. Wolpert, *Roots of Confrontation in South Asia: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and the Superpowers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 156–167.
[15] Persian term meaning "without sides".
[16] Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 23–50.

heated Pashtunistan dispute by allowing transit thought its territory.[17] Rubinstein also noted that the Soviet position on Pashtunistan was not consistent and that the Soviets were less supportive by the early 1960s. In addition to Wolpert and others, Rubinstein observed that when U.S. support waned in the late 1960s, the Soviet Union was so confident of its position in Afghanistan that it lowered its level of aid as well. He also argues that this *modus vivendi* was optimal for the Soviets since Afghanistan was neither a member of any hostile pact nor did they harbor any foreign bases on their territory. Also, the Soviets were the primary supplier to the Afghan military and Afghanistan could not wage any war without the implicit approval of the Kremlin.[18]

Another contribution to scholarship regarding Afghanistan is Marie Broxup (1983). In contrast to previous authors, she emphasizes the Soviet "monopoly of advice" over military and civilian aid where the USSR had a seemingly endless supply of advisors of all kinds.[19] Anthony Arnold (1985) adds to Poullada that in the early 1950s, Afghans felt betrayed by the American preference for Pakistan.[20] By the time the Soviet Union was paving Kabul's streets, the U.S. was extending arms to Pakistan. Arnold sees the Soviet aid policy in the 1970s as key to their domination. From 1973-1977, when the monarchy fell and a Republic was established, the Soviets increased their meddling in internal Afghan affairs, but were not very successful when dealing with Muhammad Daoud, the authoritarian leader of Afghanistan. Arnold contradicts several of the later scholars, especially those using archival sources, by implying direct Soviet involvement in the 1978 Saur Revolution that brought down Daoud and established a Marxist government.[21]

Henry S. Bradsher (1985) also accentuates 1956 as a turning point. When the Soviets offered arms to Afghanistan, the U.S. National Security Council realized its folly.

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[17] Done in order to alleviate the negative effects of the closure of the border by Pakistanis, since Afghans were heavily dependent on the port in Karachi.
[18] Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 121–158.
[19] Marie Broxup, "The Soviets in Afghanistan: The Anatomy of a Takeover," *Central Asian Survey* 1, no. 4 (1983): 83–108.
[20] In the beginning of the 1950s, Afghanistan was involved in a bitter territorial dispute with Pakistan over areas inhabited by Pashtun tribes. See chapter "A Brief Overview of Afghan History."
[21] Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective,* Revised edition (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 32–66. For a discussion on the Saur Revolution and the USSR, see chapter "The Development of Afghan Communism."

However, "too little, too late" is the term Bradsher has for the U.S. effort that followed. He also contradicts Arnold by dismissing the Soviet involvement in the Saur Revolution, but argues that the Soviets might have had some foreknowledge.[22] Donald M. Seekins (1986) posits another thesis of the Soviet relationship to the 1978 coup. He argues that not only did the Soviets not have any prior knowledge of the coup, but they were caught completely off guard.[23]

M. Siddieq Noorzoy (1987) argues that the Soviet desire to influence Afghanistan dates back already to the 1920s, when the two countries began trading, rather than to the post-Stalin era as argued by Rubinstein and Newell. Noorzoy also observes the intense Soviet interest in Afghan resources and the Soviet ability to profit from Afghan gas by paying substantially below world prices.[24] David N. Gibbs (1987) further reiterates Newell's view that in the 1960s, the U.S. started to respect the Soviet dominance in Afghanistan and regarded it as a "Third World Finland" – a country constrained in its foreign policy, but autonomous of the Soviet Union in its internal affairs.[25] Gunter Knabe (1988) also sees the year 1921, when the USSR concluded a treaty of friendship with Afghanistan, as pivotal.[26]

One particularly insightful account is that of Abdul Samad Ghaus (1988).[27] He argues that Afghan leaders were aware of the risks they were facing by accepting Soviet aid, but Daoud thought that economic aid itself was no cause for alarm. Also, Ghaus observes that the U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, during his 1974 visit, offered his understanding of the Afghan position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union and expressed a wish to not cause any difficulties for Afghanistan. This seems to support the view that the U.S.

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[22] Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 17–31.
[23] Donald M. Seekins, "Government and Politics," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Richard F. Nyrop and Donald M. Seekins, 5th Edition, Area Handbook Series (Washington, D.C.: The American University, 1986), 209–84. This seems to currently be the prevailing opinion among scholars.
[24] M. Siddieq Noorzoy, "Long-Term Soviet Economic Interests and Policies in Afghanistan," in *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited*, ed. Rosanne Klass, Revised Edition (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), 71–96.
[25] David N. Gibbs, "Does the USSR Have a 'Grand Strategy'? Reinterpreting the Invasion of Afghanistan," *Journal of Peace Research* 24, no. 4 (1987): 365–79.
[26] Gunter Knabe, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 7, no. 2–3 (1988): 133–44.
[27] Abdul Samad Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider's Account* (Washington, D.C: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988). Ghaus served as Deputy Foreign Minister during Daoud's second rule in 1973-1978 and was his close confidant.

respect for Soviet dominance that started in the 1960s, as argued by Newell and Gibbs, continued well into the 1970s.[28]

Post-Cold War Accounts

The post-Cold War scholarship that analyzed the superpowers' involvement in Afghanistan prior to the invasion did not bring any significant revelations. The majority of the scholarly works on Afghanistan from this period mostly cite previous works of Bradsher, Dupree, Newell and others, instead of verifying their accounts independently. Nevertheless, a couple of significant works refined the understanding of the rise of Soviet dominance in Afghanistan on the basis of newly uncovered archival evidence.

One such work is by Poullada (1995), co-authored and amended by his wife *post mortem*, which characterizes U.S.–Afghan ties as riddled with suspicion. The U.S. side believed that Afghanistan was misusing the Cold War to extract aid and, as argued previously by Arnold, the Afghan side was suspicious of the U.S. relationship with Pakistan.[29] While aid from the U.S. declined sharply in the late 1960s, Poullada points to the modest growth towards the late 1970s in order to match-up with the rapidly increasing Soviet involvement.[30]

Another significant publication using primary sources is by Ewans (2002). His book offers a comprehensive chronology of post-WWII events that climaxed with Afghan leaders asking for Soviet aid in 1955. Ewans posits that Afghans first asked the U.S. for military aid as early as 1948, but the U.S. regarded Afghanistan as strategically unimportant. Another issue was that of trust; the Helmand Valley Project turned out to be very controversial and the U.S. felt that any supplied arms would be used against Pakistan instead of in the case of a hypothetical Soviet invasion. Furthermore, Ewans argues that the Soviets had foreknowledge of the 1973 coup by Daoud, but decided not to react on it as they were dissatisfied with the regime of King Zahir. Also, in accordance with Seekins and in contradiction with Arnold and Bradsher, the USSR was taken by

[28] Ibid., 153–159.
[29] Sentiment previously echoed in Shaheen F. Dil, "The Cabal in Kabul: Great-Power Interaction in Afghanistan," *The American Political Science Review* 71, no. 2 (June 1, 1977): 468–76.
[30] Leon B. Poullada and Leila D. J. Poullada, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan & the United States, 1828-1973* (Lincoln: Dageforde Publishing, 1995).

surprise by the 1978 Saur Revolution. In fact, Soviet officials were explicitly opposed to any sort of socialist revolution in Afghanistan at that time.[31]

Jeffery Roberts (2003) studies the disparity of attention given by the U.S. to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The latter was considered, as argued by Ewans, to be strategically uninteresting in the context of Cold War containment. In accord with Hyman, Roberts also see mutual ties to be further worsened due to the Helmand Valley Project. Additionally, Roberts concludes that Daoud never truly trusted the Soviets, but he had no other alternative given the less-than-favorable relationship with the U.S.[32] Fitzgerald and Gould (2009) agree with the premise of Ewans that Afghanistan held little strategic value for the U.S. in the pre-1979 period, and therefore most U.S. involvement in the country was shouldered by USAID and the Peace Corps.[33] A further interesting contribution is that by Vasiliy Mitrokhin (2009), which analyzes the role of the KGB in Afghanistan using Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) documents. Mitrokhin argues that the KGB was involved as soon as in 1951 when Nur Muhammad Taraki, the future founder of the Marxist PDPA, became their agent.[34]

The latest addition to scholarship on Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan is Hafizullah Emadi (2010). He posits two pivotal moments in Afghan history which had a profound effect on the U.S.-Afghan relationship: 1944 – the first rejection of military aid on the part of the U.S., and 1954 – the U.S. siding with Pakistan on the Pashtunistan issue. Emadi's value also lies in his account of Soviet interest in Afghan natural resources.[35] He argues that, in the late 1960s, this interest led to the removal of several Western advisors from a number of relevant ministries. Furthermore,

[31] Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002).
[32] Jeffery Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).
[33] Paul Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Gould, *Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2009).
[34] Artemy Kalinovsky, "The Blind Leading the Blind: Soviet Advisors, Counter-Insurgency and Nation-Building in Afghanistan," Working Paper #60 (Washington, D.C: Cold War International History Project, 2010).
[35] For the most up-to-date analysis of Afghan natural resources, see John F. Shroder, *Natural Resources in Afghanistan: Geographic and Geologic Perspectives on Centuries of Conflict* (Amsterdam, 2014).

Emadi examines Daoud's later desperate attempts to persuade the U.S. to match Soviet involvement and to secretly provide intelligence on Soviet intentions in Afghanistan.[36]

Summary

Scholarship mapping post-1945 Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan began appearing already in the late 1950s, albeit still sporadically. Greater interest in the Cold War in Afghanistan seemed to appear in the 1970s in the works of Newell and others, perhaps as a consequence of the rapid societal and political developments of that era. The years that followed the Soviet invasion were conducive for literature dealing with the Soviet-Afghan war, but in addition, several authors such as Bradsher also investigated the prior history of Soviet-American involvement. Works published in the post-Cold War era on this subject, such as Emadi's publication, have significantly benefited in their analysis from accessing newly available archival documents.

Overall, the question of which superpower held primacy over Afghan affairs does not seem to divide scholars. However, authors disagree with each other on the origins of the rift between the superpowers' involvement. Some scholars, such as Knabe, see the origins of Soviet domination already in the 1920s, while others such as Newell, see the death of Stalin and accession of Daoud in 1953 as a key moment. Scholars also debate the dates and events that determined U.S.-Afghan relations for the upcoming decades. For example, Emadi points to the disappointment with U.S. rejections of Afghan pledges for military aid as soon as 1944 while Roberts sees the ineffective Helmand Valley Project as a decisive issue. For Arnold, the explicit American support for Pakistan sowed the most distrust. Finally, some scholars such as Poullada see the problem in slow and inefficient U.S. diplomacy in the mid-1950s, when Washington failed to see the strategic value of Afghanistan and match Soviets in their involvement.

Also, scholars generally agree that the late 1960s was a low-point of U.S. engagement. Additionally, they also agree that the 1973 coup happened with the foreknowledge of the Soviets, but without their involvement. Finally, most scholars,

[36] Hafizullah Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan: The British, Russian, and American Invasions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

except for Bradsher and Arnold (who did not have archival documents at their disposal), see the 1978 Revolution as unanticipated for the Soviets.

1.2. Literature and the Soviet Motivation for the 1979 Invasion

Whilst the previous section on scholarship regarding the 1945-1979 Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan was ordered chronologically, I believe that this section would benefit from thematic arrangement. Generally speaking, there are two groups of scholars with significantly divergent views on the motivation for the Soviet invasion.[37] The first group sees the invasion as a part of a larger pattern of Soviet expansionist behavior, the so-called "Grand Strategy School".[38] This view was also, to a large degree, adopted by the U.S. administration as an official position.[39] The second group argues that the circumstances of the Afghan case were distinct from other Soviet Third World involvement and that the invasion was of a more defensive character without, in any respect, marginalizing the following savage war that claimed millions of Afghan victims. Also, the latter group criticizes attempts at forming meta-narratives of Soviet foreign policy and holds that a combination of security and economic concerns, reputational considerations, and the pressure of events influenced the decision to invade.[40]

The case of the Soviet invasion is a particularly interesting one. While the USSR had increased its presence in other developing countries during the 1970s, nowhere was its presence as prominent as in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Afghanistan is the only country outside of the Warsaw Pact that was directly invaded by the Soviets during the Cold War, with the greatest show of force since World War II. Most importantly, as Gibbs (1987)

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[37] For a rare post-structuralist account that fits into neither category see Richards J. Heuer Jr., "Analyzing the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Hypotheses from Causal Attribution Theory," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 13, no. 4 (1980): 347–55.

[38] Another alternative term for this view is the "Bear on the Move" thesis, which is described by Rais A. Khan as perceiving the Soviet invasion as a step on the path to regional domination, perhaps even toward world hegemony. See Rais Ahmad Khan, "US Policy towards Afghanistan," *Pakistan Horizon* 40, no. 1 (1987): 69.

[39] For a more detailed example of the official U.S. perception see William E. Odom, "The Strategic Significance of Afghanistan's Struggle for Freedom," Occasional Paper Series (Miami: Institute for Soviet and East European Studies, University of Miami, 1988).

[40] David N. Gibbs, "Reassessing Soviet Motives for Invading Afghanistan: A Declassified History," *Critical Asian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006): 239–63.

argues, the case of the Soviet invasion is the most frequently cited one in support of the Grand Strategy School.[41]

The Grand Strategy and the Soviet Invasion

In his influential *We Now Know* (1997), John Lewis Gaddis offers a master narrative of the Cold War where Tsarist imperialism combined with Communist ideology played a crucial role in the Soviet expansionist policy.[42] In his *Strategies of Containment* (2005), Gaddis essentially outlines the Soviet pattern in the 1970s: "they would…exploit Marxist coups in South Yemen and Afghanistan; and…when their clients in that latter country seemed to be losing control late in 1979, simply invade it".[43] In several aspects, his perspective on Soviet conduct is a continuation of the so-called Long Telegram written by George F. Kennan in 1946. In it, Kennan argues that Soviet expansionism has roots in historic Russian nationalism and in a perspective that rules out peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries.[44] Aside from Gaddis, other influential work in this school of thought is Edward Luttwak's *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union* (1984). Luttwak saw the Soviet invasion to be a tremendous success for the USSR and predicted further expansion in a similar manner.[45] This interpretation of Soviet behavior by Kennan, Luttwak and Gaddis has been adopted by several notable scholars dealing with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

For instance, Poullada (1981) argues that the Soviet invasion was a continuation of Tsarist moves toward the Indian Ocean combined with a Soviet desire for the oil riches of the Middle East. These ambitions were initially suppressed by British presence in the region, but following their withdrawal and the failure of U.S. diplomacy in the 1950s, the

[41] Gibbs, "Does the USSR Have a 'Grand Strategy'?," 366.
[42] John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[43] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 309.
[44] Perhaps more importantly, Kennan's view would later change – for example, he stated that the objective of Soviet invasion was primarily defensive. See Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 160.
[45] Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1984). Incidentally, he later also analyzed the "Grand Strategies" of other civilizations. See Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999); Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy Of The Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Soviets were able to resume working to achieve them in full power.[46] Also, the anticipated end of Soviet petroleum self-sufficiency in the mid-1980s could have been, according to Newell (1982), the influence behind the decision to invade.[47]

Minton F. Goldman (1984) sees the Afghan invasion as an attractive option for the Soviets to assert their superpower status and, concurring with Poullada and Newell, to use this opportunity to gain proximity to the Gulf. Goldman also argues that the Soviets felt free to invade Afghanistan because they did not expect any serious repercussions from the weak U.S. leadership.[48] The allure of the Gulf is echoed by Girardet (1985), who examines the southwards Tsarist ambitions of Peter the Great, continued in the annexation of Central Asian republics by the Bolsheviks in 1920s. Furthermore, Girardet's analysis focuses on the importance of warm-water ports for the Soviet Union and the potential of Afghan natural sources. He also sees Soviet conduct as "pure opportunism" in times when the U.S.-Pakistani ties were at their lowest.[49] Elie Krakowski (1987) argues that the invasion should be seen in the context of increasingly aggressive and expansionist Soviet behavior. [50] Her analysis focuses on a pattern of acquisition of strategic chokepoints thorough the Third World, such as the Horn of Africa (the proximity of the Suez Canal) and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia with Afghanistan being part of this scheme.[51] Finally, Rosanne Klass (1988), similarly to Poullada, Goldman and Girardet, also argues that the latest Soviet military intervention was a logical continuation of a century-long conquest of Central Asia.[52]

Magnus and Naby (2002) already belong to post-Cold war scholarship and also agree with the other Grand Strategy authors on the assumptions regarding Soviet southward adventurism. In addition, Magnus and Naby observe that, between the 1930s

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[46] Poullada, "Afghanistan and the United States."
[47] Nancy Peabody; Newell Richard S. Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).
[48] Minton F. Goldman, "Soviet Military Intervention in Afghanistan: Roots and Causes," *Polity* 16, no. 3 (1984): 384.
[49] Girardet, *Afghanistan*, 26–29.
[50] Elie Krakowski, "Afghanistan and Soviet Global Interests," in *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited*, ed. Rosanne Klass, Revised Edition (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), 161–86.
[51] For an exhaustive account of Soviet engagement in the 1970s in regard to the Third World see Steven R. David, "Soviet Involvement in Third World Coups," *International Security* 11, no. 1 (1986): 3–36; Rajan Menon, *Soviet Power and the Third World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
[52] Rosanne Klass, "Afghanistan: The Accords," *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 5 (1988): 922–45.

and 1953, the Soviet policy toward Afghanistan was largely defensive, but with the ascension of Khrushchev to power it turned offensive and even more so with Brezhnev in the 1970s where their drive to establish presence in the Third World was at its highest. Also, the authors put Soviet conduct into the context of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and its effect on the oil-producing Gulf States which eventually resulted in a steep rise in oil prices, making the Gulf region even more desirable to Soviet policy makers.[53] Finally, the most recent contribution to the Grand Strategy School is Tom Lansford (2003), who essentially reaffirms the assumptions of Poullada and others by placing emphasis on the desire for regional domination and the importance of oil.[54]

The post-Grand Strategy scholarship and the Soviet Invasion

Nevertheless, a firm majority of scholars analyzing the motivation for the Soviet invasion would fit into the second group which strongly rejects any master narrative of Soviet conduct. It is also more technically challenging to examine the scholarship of this other group as their assumptions are more complex. It is therefore not in the scope of this chapter to be a comprehensive overview of all of the literature of this group, but I will address several crucial works.

Hyman, as early as 1982, posits a number of key considerations for Soviet strategists. Firstly, the 1978 Saur Revolution was crumbling under the unpopular steps of Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammed Taraki and the Soviets had already invested heavily to keep it afloat. This was linked to the fear that if Kabul was conquered by Islamic insurgents, the USSR would find itself encircled by hostile states. [55] This perception was also formed by prior events, such as the U.S.-PRC rapprochement, the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Friendship, and the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Prestige was also an important consideration, particularly due to the recent setbacks in Cambodia, Somalia and Egypt. Broxup (1983) focuses on the effect of the rumors in

[53] Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, And Mujahid*, Revised edition (Boulder: Westview press, 2002).
[54] Tom Lansford, *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003).
[55] Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81*.

Kabul regarding the planned U.S. intervention in Iran in the context of the hostage crisis. Also, Broxup sees the intention to punish Amin for Taraki's assassination and the splitting of the PDPA as important factors.[56] Arnold (1985) writes that many analysts (including himself) overestimated the role of ideology in the decision to invade. He argues that the decision was not based on the Brezhnev Doctrine.[57]

Directly disputing the assumptions held by the Grand Strategy School, Joseph Collins (1987) asserts that the invasion was unlike in Angola and Ethiopia, where opportunity presented itself and the aim was not the acquisition of a warm water port. Also, similarly to Hyman, Collins focuses on the Soviet fear of further losses to the counterrevolution, such as the one in Chile in 1973.[58] In addition to Collins and contrary to Arnold, Knabe (1988) puts the emphasis on the fear of breaking the "iron rule" of Soviet ideology – that a socialist revolution cannot be reversed. Also, Knabe agrees with Hyman regarding the Soviet fear of encirclement and adds that the invasion might have been stimulated by internal power struggles in Moscow due to the ailing Brezhnev.[59]

Another important contribution is by Odd Arne Westad (1994), which focuses on the rapidly developing situation of 1978-1979. He argues that the pressure of events, such as the Iranian Revolution, prompted Soviets to put primacy of regional foreign policy considerations above that of socialist ideology.[60] Also, a crucial addition to this scholarship is Garthoff (1994), which examines, in a manner similar to Westad, the decision-making of Politburo members on the eve of the invasion. The Politburo was afraid that Amin might turn to the U.S. as Somalia's Barre and Egypt's Sadat had already done in the past. Also, Garthoff argues that, as the situation deteriorated further, Soviet leaders could not see any viable alternative short of intervention.[61]

Ewans (2002) argues on the basis of primary documents that the Soviets were essentially concerned with the short-term issue of the Afghan revolution failing rather

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[56] Broxup, "The Soviets in Afghanistan."
[57] Arnold, *Afghanistan*.
[58] Joseph Collins, "Soviet Policy toward Afghanistan," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 36, no. 4 (1987): 198–210.
[59] Knabe, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan."
[60] Odd Arne Westad, "Prelude to Invasion: The Soviet Union and the Afghan Communists, 1978–1979," *The International History Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): 49–69.
[61] Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Revised edition (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1994), chap. 26.

than with the long-term strategy of southwards expansion as posited by the Grand Strategists. Furthermore, contrary to what Girardet argues, Ewans posits that it is highly unlikely that the USSR would have acted differently even if it was able to foresee the international upheaval that the act of invasion caused.[62] Melvyn P. Leffler (2007) examines the reluctance of Soviets to invade, which persisted almost to the 12th hour. Leffler observes that Brezhnev, Kosygin and Andropov were aware that military entanglement in Afghanistan would make them look like aggressors and alienate the Afghan population.[63] Olav Njølstad (2010) agrees with Garthoff on the Soviet perception of Amin "doing Sadat", while also reiterating the defensive nature of the invasion. Also, he notes that the most pressing concern for Soviets was that Afghanistan would not become another fundamentalist Islamic state on its border, as this could pose potential security risk in regards to the Muslim population within the USSR itself.[64]

Following Leffler, Kalinovsky (2010) argues that the decision to invade was made, reluctantly, only by a couple of key foreign-policy figures within the Politburo while dissenting voices in the Soviet bureaucracy were regularly silenced.[65] In addition to Hyman, Kalinovsky sees the concerns regarding the potential loss of Soviet prestige among the most influential ones.[66] Braithwaite (2011) also argues that Soviet leadership was paranoid and their perception was exaggerated by the U.S. threat. However, he believes that the correlation between a concurrent decision to deploy Pershing II missiles in Europe by NATO and the decision to invade Afghanistan is unlikely to imply causation.[67] Charles J. Sullivan (2011) also agrees with Garthoff and Njølstad regarding the concern of the Islamic Revolution spreading northwards and adds that Taraki had infected the Kremlin with concerns of outside actors (Iran, Pakistan and the U.S.) meddling in Afghan affairs. This paranoia, in line with Braithwaite's argument, resulted in numerous misperceptions. For instance, the deployment of U.S. forces in the Persian

[62] Ewans, *Afghanistan*.
[63] Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill & Wang Publishing, 2007).
[64] Olav Njølstad, "The Collapse of Superpower Détente, 1975–1980," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 3: Endings*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 135–55.
[65] The so-called "Troika", comprised of Gromyko, Ustinov and Andropov with ailing Brezhnev sidelined.
[66] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, chap. 1.
[67] Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, chap. 3.

Gulf as a reaction to the Iranian hostage crisis was perceived to be a prelude to U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, even though Afghanistan was certainly not high on the list of U.S. priorities.[68]

Summary

The post-Grand Strategy scholarship offers a more balanced account of factors that led to the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan. While acknowledging the conscious Soviet support for socialist revolutions in the Third World, this school of thought sees the Soviet invasion to be a reluctant move. On the other hand, the Grand Strategy scholarship offers perhaps a more simplistic analysis of Soviet foreign policy, given its emphasis on ideology. Nevertheless, it is not useful to completely dismiss the role of ideology in foreign policy-making based on the case of Afghanistan. While this line of argumentation is controversial among scholars,[69] ideology (not limited to Communism) could play its role in the ethical dimension of foreign policy-making. As Richard Cottam (1977) argues, ideology offers a prism through which the morality of individual decisions is judged. For instance, the Vietnam War was viewed by Washington as ethically defensible because it fought the perceived communist menace, even at the cost of a substantial harm to a Third World country. However, even in cases such as this, it is important to realize that no ideology is a monolith.[70]

For the purpose of this chapter, it is particularly useful to illustrate the schism between the two camps by Gibbs and Leffler on a backdrop of the critique of John Lewis Gaddis and other Great Strategy authors. For example, when reviewing Magnus and Naby (1998), Gibbs argues that the authors' conclusion suffers from confirmation bias by

[68] Charles J. Sullivan, "The Kremlin and Kabul: The 1979 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in Retrospect," *The Washington Review of Turkish & Eurasian Affairs*, 2011, http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/the-kremlin-and-kabul-the-1979-soviet-invasion-of-afghanistan-in-retrospect.html. Although Sullivan also notes the irrationality of these concerns, as the Sunni Muslims of Central Asia had little in common with the Shia Muslims of Iran.
[69] R.N. Carew Hunt, S.L. Sharp, and R. Lowenthal, "Ideology and Power Politics: A Symposium," in *Classic Issues in Soviet Foreign Policy: From Lenin to Brezhnev*, ed. Erik P. Hoffmann, Robbin F. Laird, and Jr Frederic J. Fleron (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 217–50.
[70] Richard W. Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation: A General Theory and a Case Study* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 6.

neglecting post-Cold War archival documents.[71] Addressing Gaddis, Leffler (1999) writes:

> We now do know a lot more about the making of foreign policy in the communist world. We now do know that ideas, beliefs, culture, and ideology count. But the question is how much they matter...We have seen, for example, that the focus on ideology does not necessarily translate into an emphasis on a revolutionary foreign policy…Historians, like political scientists, must abandon their customary binary categories…Master narratives will soon be outdated if they are too influenced by contemporary fashions. Gaddis's *We Now Know* resonates with the triumphalism that runs through our contemporary culture…Some of this triumphalism is justified…But if we are not careful, the recent collapse of Communism throughout much of the globe and the current popularity of market capitalism may distort historical vision as much as did the Vietnam War.[72]

While it would be reasonable to anticipate the loss of popularity of the Grand Strategy School in the post-Cold War era in favor of more complex analytical approaches, the works of Gaddis, Lansford and Magnus and Naby suggest otherwise. Gibbs (2006) offers a concise summary of this trend:

> Gaddis argues that archival disclosures have largely confirmed Kennan's original ideas with respect to the innately expansionist qualities of Soviet foreign policy… For the Afghanistan case, at least, the Gaddis view of the cold war is not confirmed. The CWIHP and NSA documents show that the Soviets were content to live with a neutralized Afghanistan and had little interest in turning the country communist…the Soviet Union was reluctant to invade. Its aim was to restrain what Soviet leaders regarded as an irresponsible PDPA leadership, which risked destabilizing the USSR's southern frontier...the invasion was a heavy-handed act of aggression against the people of Afghanistan, but the documentary record is clear that it was not a threat to western security or a more generalized act of regional aggression.[73]

1.3. Afghanistan and the Archival Record

To be sure, the end of the Soviet Union and the subsequent opening of the archives have been invaluable to Cold War historiography. Where in the past scholars had had to rely

[71] David N. Gibbs, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect," *International Politics* 37, no. 2 (2000): 241.
[72] Melvyn P. Leffler, "The Cold War: What Do 'We Now Know'?," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 532–533.
[73] Gibbs, "Reassessing Soviet Motives for Invading Afghanistan," 259.

on public announcements and journalistic accounts to analyze Cold War dynamics, now they can make use of U.S. and Russian archives as well as those from East Europe and China and even of some in developing countries. Nevertheless, there are still several hindrances to be contended with. Firstly, some of the documentary records are lost or, in some cases, have even been purposefully destroyed. Secondly, limited access to some archives – mostly Russian and Chinese – is still an issue and, presently, there is no indication of future improvements. Thirdly, in the case of the U.S. archives, slow declassification and digitalization processes render most materials from the 1980s still unavailable.

Jonathan Haslam (2004) compares Cold War research in the archives to assembling pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. He also notes that some U.S. institutions, such as the CIA, were notoriously selective in the provided materials. For instance, all of their materials omitted any references to CIA involvement in the Congo Crisis of 1961-1963. The state of the Russian archives is even worse, where access[74] varies from individual to individual.[75]

Westad (1997) also writes on the specifics of the Russian archives and the revelations they have provided. Perhaps ending on a more positive note than Haslam, he argues that the Russian archives have already contributed to a substantial correction of prior conceptions of the Cold War.[76] Also, a very important contribution in this field is the article by Natalia I. Yegorova (2006), which provides a comprehensive guideline on how to most effectively access each Russian archive.[77]

For the purpose of my study of the Cold War in Afghanistan, I have conducted original research in the relatively newly opened Czech archives. There are, in fact, three

[74] Interestingly, both Braithwaite (2011) and Kalinovsky (2011) independently from each other, make an observation regarding the limited access to Russian primary materials. See Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 276–277; Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 382–384.
[75] Jonathan Haslam, "Archival Review: Collecting and Assembling Pieces of the Jigsaw: Coping with Cold War Archives," *Cold War History* 4, no. 3 (2004): 140–52. While it is already possible to write a historical account of the Cold War using only available archival files, we still do not know what is hidden from us. Therefore, Haslam argues that scholars should avoid the temptation of writing a purely inductive history without conducting cross-research.
[76] Odd Arne Westad, "Secrets of the Second World: The Russian Archives and the Reinterpretation of Cold War History," *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 2 (1997): 259–71.
[77] Natalia Yegorova, "Russian Archives: Prospects for Cold War Studies," *Cold War History* 6, no. 4 (November 2006): 543–48.

major archives in the Czech Republic relevant to this project: the National Archive, the Archive of The Foreign Ministry, and the Security Services Archive. The latter provides interesting documents on Babrak Karmal compiled by Czechoslovak intelligence services during his stay as an ambassador in Prague. It also contains an intelligence analysis on U.S. foreign policy in Asia. The National Archive primarily contains documents relevant to Afghanistan in its Politburo collections. However, most of the documents prior to the Soviet invasion are rather mundane in nature where issues such as organizational considerations of Daoud's visit are discussed. This could be either due to missing files, or more probably, due to the fact that the pre-invasion of Afghanistan was not on the list of Politburo priorities.

The situation in the MFA archive is significantly better, as there are large volumes of documents from the Czechoslovak embassy in Kabul.[78] While most of the documents are also quite banal, some of them offer valuable perspectives on internal Afghan affairs and on the Soviet-American policy towards Afghanistan. Soviets and Czechoslovaks cooperated on several projects, such as the arming of the Afghan military and reacting to natural catastrophes.

While taking into consideration the possibility of yet still missing evidence for a researcher interested in the Cold War in Afghanistan, a wealth of documents are available. Except for the Czechoslovak archives, I made use of digitally published materials from several sources. One of the major ones was CWIHP (Wilson Center Digital Archive), which provides English translations of high-level Soviet (and to a smaller degree Chinese) documents. Additionally, three substantial sources were essential for researching U.S. foreign policy: Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) from the Office of the Historian, the Digital National Archive of George Washington University, and the Electronic Telegram collection from the U.S. National Archives (NARA). Additionally, pre-invasion Afghanistan also appears in the files from other minor sources such as the Jimmy Carter Library, the USAID archive, the Department of State archive, and the FOIA Electronic Reading Room of the CIA. Finally, I also found several relevant files in the digital collection of The National Archives (UK).

[78] Regrettably, I was informed by the staff of the MFA archive that during the 1970s, significant volumes of valuable documents were deliberately destroyed.

2. A Brief Overview of Afghan History, 1945-1979

Modern Afghan history is a complex area of inquiry; therefore it is not in the scope of this chapter to serve as an exhaustive account. Also, this chapter only marginally covers the historical developments of Afghan communism, Islamism and Soviet-American involvement, since these matters are investigated in greater detail in later chapters. Nevertheless, I believe that a brief introduction to the key events of Afghan history might be beneficial by providing the reader with a historical context.

Afghan history of the 1945-1979 period can be split into four distinct phases. The immediate post-war era of 1945-1953 was followed by the era of the premiership of Mohammed Daoud in 1953-1963, after which a period of modest democratization ensued in 1963-1973. The Afghan monarchy ended in 1973 through Daoud's coup against Zahir Shah and was replaced by a republic. However, already in 1978, Daoud was overthrown by Marxists, who ruled relatively autonomously until the 1979 Soviet invasion.

Also, in addition to the chronological narrative of Afghan history, this chapter commences with an overview of key issues that pervaded Afghanistan during the entire 20th century. The first of them is the matter of the complexity of Afghan society, characterized by the intermingling of the influences of religion, ethnicity, tribal identity, and social classes. The second is the issue of modernization and the resistance to it stemming primarily from rural areas. Finally, there is the issue of Pashtunistan, which caused many grievances in Afghan-Pakistan relations, but did not ultimately result in any changes to the *status quo ante*.

Map 2.1 Afghanistan and its neighbors, 1947-91[79]

[79] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*.

2.1. Afghanistan in the 20th Century

Social Structure

To an outside observer, it may appear that the majority of the visible tensions in Afghan history were external. However, internal tensions shaped Afghan history to a profound degree as well. These tensions ran not only along ideological lines, but mainly along ethnic, tribal and kinship lines. Ghani Khan, a Pashto poet, echoed these realities in 1947:

> Every Pashtun imagines he is Alexander the Great and wants the world to admit it. The result is a constant struggle between cousin and cousin, brother and brother and quite often between father and son. This has proved his sole undoing through the ages. They have not succeeded in being a great nation because . . . [he] would rather burn his own house than see his brother rule it.[80]

The Afghan people have always been far from a homogenous society. The landlocked country about the size of Texas with a diverse landscape was, in the 1970s, home to about 16 million people[81] and 50 different ethnic groups.[82] Pashtuns, being the majority group, form about half of the Afghan population and mostly inhabit the south and the east of the country (around the border with Pakistan).[83] Other major ethnicities are: Tajik, Hazarah, Uzbek, Turkmen, Aimak and Baloch (Map 2.2). However, as Rubin (2002) argues, research on the Afghan ethnic groups is challenging as no single region is ethnically uniform.[84] Also, for many foreign commentators, "Pashtuns" were oftentimes synonymous to "Afghans", most likely due to their dominant influence on Afghan affairs throughout history.[85]

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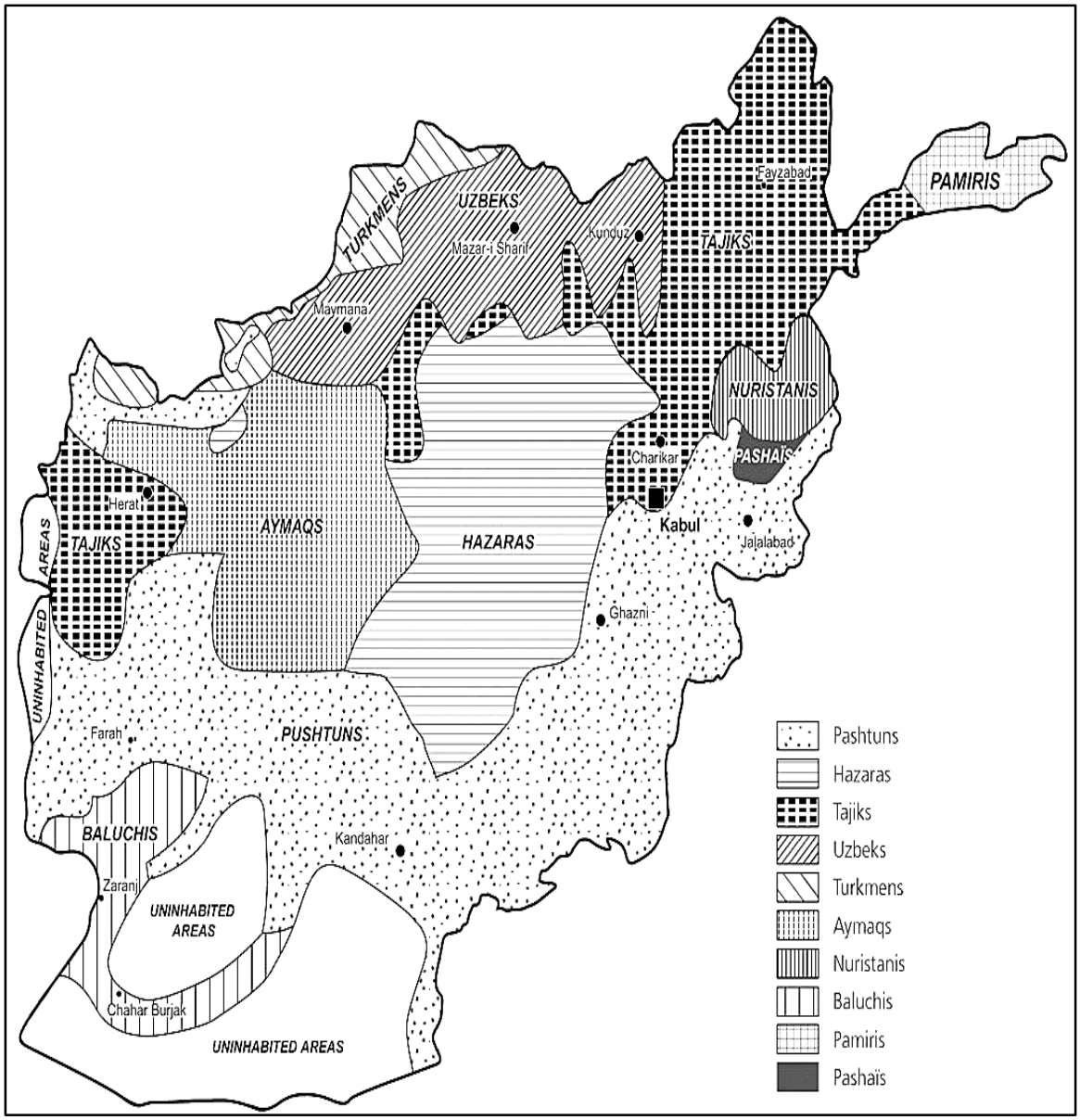
[80] Nabi Misdaq, *Afghanistan Political Frailty and External Interference* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 52.
[81] 16 million is a reported figure from the 1970s in Afghanistan. Astonishingly, there was never a consensus on population size – in the early 1970s, the Afghan government reported 20 million people. However, a non-governmental census reported 12 million people, and, as a response, the UN threatened to cut its aid substantially. In the end, a compromise was agreed by splitting the difference and the official figure of 16 million was created. See Thomas J. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 23.
[82] For empirical data of pre-1979 Afghan demography, see James Trussell and Eleanor Brown, "A Close Look at the Demography of Afghanistan," *Demography* 16, no. 1 (February 1, 1979): 137–56.
[83] However, Pashtuns should not be considered as one unified group. They are organized into several autonomous tribes, with Durrani and the Ghilzhai being the most prominent. See Lansford, *A Bitter Harvest*, 16.
[84] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 25.
[85] Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 1–13.

Furthermore, Afghani society is not only divided horizontally, but vertically as well. Social stratification determines the roles and the appropriate respect of people in the society. For example, landowners, village headmen, and religious priests are usually at the top of the hierarchy while various groups of artisans are considered to have lower status. Allan (1974) argues that this practice comes all the way from the pre-Islamic era when most Afghans were Hindu.[86]

Religion has been a profound social force in Afghanistan as nearly all Afghans are Muslims, with the majority (80-90%) of them following the Hanafi School of Sunni Islam.[87] However, the effect of religion is interwoven with tribalism, as was previously noted by Ghani Khan. For instance, in the case of Pashtuns, each tribe consists of a local community with its distinctive leaders, independent of other tribes, with whom it shares a common ancestry and language.[88] Another uniting factor is *Pashtunwali*, a code of honor embedded in the Pashtun patrilineal culture.[89] *Pashtunwali* governs the relationship of individual Pashtuns toward *koranay* (family), *kahole* (household) and *qawm* (tribe). It also sets out the institutions of Pashtun life - *melmastia* (hospitality), *badal* (revenge), *badragah* (escort) and *nanawatai* (asylum).[90]

[86] Nigel Allan, "The Modernization of Rural Afghanistan: A Case Study," in *Afghanistan in the 1970s*, ed. Louis Dupree and Linette Albert (New York: Praeger, 1974), 115.
[87] Unlike other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, Hazaras mostly follow Twelver Shia Islam, which they adopted relatively recently. See: Yahia Baiza, "The Hazaras of Afghanistan and Their Shi'a Orientation: An Analytical Historical Survey," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2014): 151–71.
[88] Interestingly, the social position of Islamic priests, *mullahs*, has been significantly lower among the Pashtun tribes than among other ethnic groups.
[89] For a more detailed analysis of *Pashtunwali* see Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946* (Stanford University Press, 1969), 41.
[90] Misdaq, *Afghanistan Political Frailty and External Interference*, 10–11.



Map 2.2 Simplified distribution of ethnicities in Afghanistan[91]

Higher religious authority is exercised by *ulama* (singular *alim*): scholars responsible for the interpretation and transmission of Islamic law. On several occasions, charismatic *ulama* were responsible for the mobilization of people in regards to political

[91] "Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection," *The University of Texas in Austin*, 2009, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_ethnicities_map_4Dec2009.jpg.

issues. Their role also lies in Islamic jurisprudence, where they are known as *qazis.*[92] Consequently, throughout the entire 20th century, the Afghan state and *ulama* were engaged in a fierce competition in the areas of education and law.[93]

Modernization and Issues in Ruling Afghanistan

Given the fragmentary and agricultural nature of Afghan society, ruling Afghanistan from Kabul has proved to be an extremely challenging task. This can be observed on the process of centralized modernization. When Afghan Marxists came to power in 1978, they initiated far-reaching reforms to modernize the country, which resulted in a sharp backslash from the conservative parts of the society. Enthusiastic men from the cities came to the countryside to promulgate land, educational and other radical reforms, thus starkly challenging the traditional authority of *ulama*, *mullahs* and tribal leaders who were strongly opposed to the rapid transformation of the societal fabric. However, these events were not without a precedent in Afghan history.[94]

In the 1920s, Amir Amanullah, inspired by the Young Turks movement, attempted to change rigid Afghanistan into a modern, secular state. He initiated a series of ambitious reforms focused on abolishing slavery, expanding education (including women), reforming *madrasas* (Islamic schools) and increasing the rights of women. These initial reforms led to the nine month long Khost Rebellion of 1924 which was started by Pashtun tribes who feared that their way of life was threatened. Through intricate political machinations, Amanullah's regime was able to withstand this crisis.[95]

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk warned Amanullah that in order to proceed with modernization, he needed a well-trained army and a loyal and disciplined bureaucracy. Amanullah had neither and he was additionally running out of finances to support his reforms and also his army, which ultimately led to his downfall as many soldiers deserted and started to join the rebellion.[96]

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[92] Significant inner tension in Afghan Muslim tribes has its roots in the decision whether legal matter should be settled by a *qazi* or a tribal leader.
[93] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 38–41.
[94] Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81*, 85–91.
[95] Misdaq, *Afghanistan Political Frailty and External Interference*, 62–66.
[96] Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 17–22.

The underlying tensions resurfaced again in 1929 and a civil war erupted. This spelled the final end to Amanullah's reform efforts. He was forced to flee to Europe and cede power to the Musahiban Dynasty, which significantly scaled down any efforts at modernization in order to preserve internal stability.[97] In the end, Musahiban rulers succeeded in modernizing Kabul, owing to strong economic growth in the late 1950s, but this progress was seldom observed outside Kabul.[98]

Social and economic differences between large Afghan cities and rural areas have always been noticeable. Barfield (2010) argues that the capital "held little significance for the vast majority of the country's population. For rural folks, a change in government policies or even regimes was the exclusive business of the *kalan nafar* (big guys) in Kabul that had nothing to do with them."[99] While Kabul enjoyed electricity, more liberal social norms and access to education, rural Afghanistan was often described as a "backward place full of backward people" by the urban officials. Conversely, the rural population felt alienated from administration which was bolstered by the lack of participation in it. Urban officials were also often viewed as corrupt, gluttonous and not religious enough. As a result, both of these Afghan groups viewed their differences as irreconcilable.[100]

2.2. Post-War Afghanistan, 1945-1953

During World War II, Afghanistan remained formally neutral even though the ruling circles were sympathetic to Nazi Germany.[101] This position was economically beneficial to the Kingdom as it was not able to spend much while still exporting its agricultural products.[102] To illustrate the dramatic difference – while the pre-war GNP in 1939 had

[97] Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 181–198.
[98] Ibid., 217–218.
[99] Ibid., 217.
[100] Ibid., 223–224.
[101] The relationship between the Third Reich and Afghanistan were more complex. Before 1939, Afghanistan had accepted hundreds of German advisors, been provided a loan of DM 27 million for arms purchases, and had been promised upcoming investment. In 1941, Afghan leaders received an ultimatum to expel all German personnel. Aware of the prior Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, Afghanistan reluctantly accepted. Also, as Germans feared that Afghanistan would eventually become hostile in the war, they planned a coup to replace Musahibans with Amanullah. See Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 207–208; Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan*, 25. Also see Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 385.
[102] Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 145.

been 3 billion Afghanis, it effectively quadrupled to 12 billion in 1946.[103]

At that time, Afghanistan was experiencing a second decade of Musahiban rule. The Musahibans were a Pashtun family which consolidated power after Amir Amanullah fled Afghanistan in 1929.[104] From 1929 to 1978, the Musahiban family split its roles in governing Afghanistan and effectively ran the state by themselves. Compared to Amanullah, their approach to the modernization of Afghanistan was a very cautious one. The primary goal of the Musahibans was to preserve internal stability by adopting reforms in a gradual manner and stressing the importance of Islamic traditions – all in order to prevent rebellions by the tribes and clergy that had led to Amanullah's downfall.[105]

Teenage Zahir Shah became ruler of Afghanistan in 1933 following the assassination of his father Nadir. However, until 1953, Afghanistan was *de facto* run by his uncles who served as Prime Ministers. Hashim Khan ruled autocratically until 1946, ruthlessly imprisoning any opposition. When he became ill, he ceded power to his brother Shah Mahmud. His reign was marked by a certain relaxation and political liberalization. He released political prisoners, allowed for some of the independent newspapers to exist, and, in 1949, some of the reformists were allowed to participate in the parliament. However, when the dissenting voices became too loud, the government cracked down on them in 1952 and arrested them.[106]

Pashtunistan

The process of a slow political change during Hashim Khan's era was quickly overshadowed by the dispute regarding Pashtunistan ("a land of Pashtuns"), which became the most visible issue in Afghan affairs until the mid-1970s. The core of the problem dates to 1893 when British India, which had previously annexed the eastern

[103] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 63–64; For other studies regarding the Afghan economy, see Peter G. Franck, "Problems of Economic Development in Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal* 3, no. 3 (July 1, 1949): 293–314; and Zabioullah A. Eltezam, "Afghanistan's Foreign Trade," *Middle East Journal* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 1966): 95–103; and Maxwell J. Fry, "A Purchasing-Power-Parity Application to Demand for Money in Afghanistan," *Journal of Political Economy* 84, no. 5 (October 1, 1976): 1133–38.
[104] To distinguish themselves from Amanullah, Musahiban rulers used the title of Shah, instead of Amir.
[105] Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 198–200.
[106] Willem Vogelsang, *The Afghans* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 288.

Pashtun tribes, created the Durand line, a *de facto* border between the two countries. In 1947, the former British India was split into India and Pakistan, with the latter acquiring the Pashtun areas. Two years later, the Afghan Parliament (*Shura-e-Milli)* declared the Durand line void, and claimed all of the Pashtun areas (Map 2.3). On the Pakistani side of the border, a local tribal council named Fakir of Ipi became the President of Independent Pashtunistan.[107] This act was followed by border clashes caused by tribal incursions from the Afghan side of the border. Pakistan perceived these developments as a grave violation of its sovereignty and followed it with aerial bombardment of Afghan villages and the severance of diplomatic relations.[108]

Map 2.3 Pashtun majority areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan[109]

[107] Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 168.
[108] Ahmad Shayeq Qassem, *Afghanistan's Political Stability a Dream Unrealised* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 46.
[109] "Revitalizing U.S. Efforts in Afghanistan," *The Heritage Foundation*, 2007, http://www.heritage.org/static/reportimages/0F3F7F2CDF5E88D351EF61EB45193E1B.jpg.

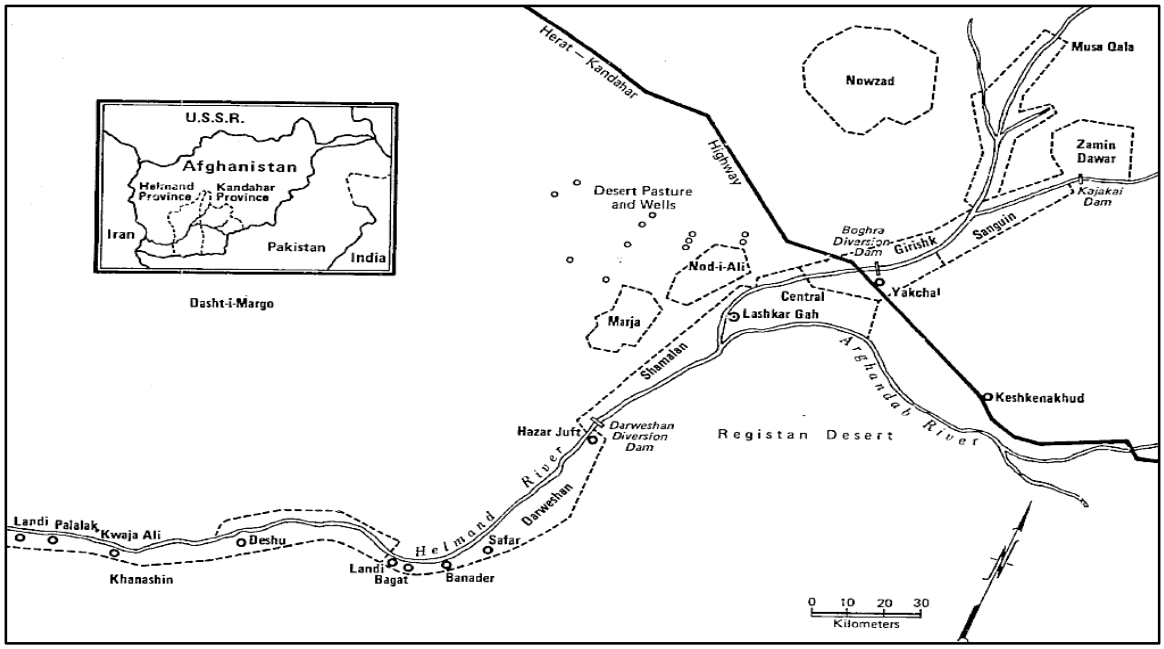
When Pakistan stopped transiting petroleum products to Afghanistan, this was the first opportunity for the Soviet Union to step in and offer help.[110] As soon as the early 1950s, both the Americans and Czechoslovaks independently of each other noted the gravity of the Pashtunistan issue. The U.S. Department of State put it on par with the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir and consequently tried to persuade both parties to negotiate and settle their dispute peacefully.[111] This and all of the other following phases of the conflict over Pashtunistan had a significant effect on the internal workings of the country until the late 1970s.[112] For instance, the transit of goods destined for Afghanistan was purposely delayed by Pakistan since 1947 onwards, and this significantly damaged the Afghan economy. The situation was further worsened by the Pakistani transit embargo on petroleum products in 1950.[113] These tensions also manifested in the UN – Afghanistan was the only state to vote against Pakistan's membership.[114]

Helmand Valley

All in all, the immediate post war era was filled with disappointments. In addition to the growing political opposition and the dispute over Pashtunistan, there were unfulfilled expectations regarding economic development. For instance, the Musahibans saw large potential in "greening the desert" of Helmand Valley. Thus, with the contribution of the Americans, the construction of the Helmand Valley Project began (Map 2.4). When it was completed in 1952, after serious delays and drawbacks, it was more than clear that it

[110] Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 148.
[111] There is a difference between the perceptions of the Czechoslovak side and the U.S. side. The Americans saw the Afghan-Pakistan dispute to be detrimental to their interests in the region, as they feared increasing Afghan dependence on the USSR. On the other hand, the Czechoslovak side had a more neutral position to the dispute, but it strongly criticized U.S. attempts at reconciliation. Moreover, it perceived that the U.S. wanted to consolidate Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to launch a "new offensive war against the USSR and its allies." "United States Policy with Respect to Afghanistan," February 21, 1951, Foreign relations of the United States, 1951, Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI, Part 2, United States Department of State, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=article&did=FRUS.FRUS1951v06p2.i0009&id=FRUS.FRUS1951v06p2&isize=M; "Czechoslovak Embassy in Kabul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," January 10, 1950, Territorial Division - regular files, 1945-1959, BOX 3, Archive of the Foreign Ministry, Prague; "Political Report," January 15, 1951, Territorial Division - regular files, 1945-1959, BOX 3, Archive of the Foreign Ministry, Prague.
[112] Jan Marek, *Dějiny Afghánistánu* (Praha: Lidové noviny, 2006), 254–255.
[113] Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 144–151.
[114] Joseph J. Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: NDU Press, 2014), 19.

had not met its ambitions. This most likely constituted a final straw in the reign of Hashim Khan, and when the royal family convened, they decided that he would be replaced by Mohammed Daoud as Prime Minister.[115]



Map 2.4 U.S. projects in Helmand Valley[116]

2.3. Daoud's First Reign, 1953-1963

The change from Hashim Khan to Mohammed Daoud was significant for two reasons. First of all, it marked a final transition of power from the older generation of Nadir Shah and his brothers to the younger generation of Zahir Shah. Secondly, Daoud and Zahir were cousins. This meant that Daoud's ascension to the premiership marked a beginning of a bitter struggle for power which culminated in 1973 when Daoud deposed Zahir in a coup. If there was an external impression that Musahiban family members were always cooperating with each other, 1953 brought an end to it.[117]

[115] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 49–58.
[116] U. S. Agency for International Development (AID), "The Helmand Valley Project in Afghanistan," A.I.D. Evaluation Special Study (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Agency for International Development (AID), December 1983), http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA518306.
[117] Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan*, 46.

Daoud's rule can be characterized as a dictatorship as he had little sympathy for any of the liberal reforms that Hashim Khan had initiated. He would imprison even his ministers in the event that they did not share his views. Also, Daoud was very much influenced by Soviet economic policies and the rapid pace of industrialization under Stalin. While a more cautious social reformer than Amanullah, Daoud pursued substantial economic changes which were to be sponsored by foreign aid and technical assistance provided by Soviets and, to a smaller degree, Americans. Consequently, he initiated the first five-year plan from 1956-1961.[118]

To some degree, Daoud succeeded in modernizing Afghanistan.[119] In 1953-1963, the GNP had virtually doubled from 20 billion to 40 billion Afghanis.[120] The projects initiated under Daoud targeted mainly the areas of transportation, agriculture and education. While suppressing civil liberties, Daoud's policies also resulted in roads being paved, air connections established, schools founded, and an expansion of agricultural expanded.[121] By using mostly foreign aid to sponsor these development efforts, Daoud did not have to rely on taxes as much. This gave him the upper hand in dealings with the tribes.[122]

Daoud was also a fierce Muslim nationalist, akin to Mosaddegh of Iran and Nasser of Egypt. This translated into his taking personal interest in the issue of Pashtunistan. When the Pakistani government decided to merge several of the western provinces in 1954 (that included the Pashtun, but also the Baloch and Punjab people) into one large unit, Daoud condemned this as an attempt to liquidate Pashtun autonomy within Pakistan. He started fierce propaganda against Pakistan which inspired a mob to loot the Pakistani embassy and consulates. Pakistanis responded in kind and diplomatic and trade relations were severed for the next five months.[123]

Attempts by Daoud to improve the Afghan army had paid off by the end of the 1950s. When intertribal fighting erupted in the Paktya province in 1959, Daoud was able

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[118] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 58–59.
[119] However, this development was mostly contained to major cities, see Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 217–218.
[120] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 63.
[121] Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, 42.
[122] The domestic revenue from land and livestock taxes fell from 14% in 1953 to 5% in 1963. See Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 60–65.
[123] Qassem, *Afghanistan's Political Stability a Dream Unrealised*, 46–47.

to suppress it promptly, owing to modernized equipment and educated officers. On the other hand, this also resulted in several thousand tribesmen crossing to the Pakistani side. Pakistan, with a new leader in power, Marshal Ayub Khan (himself a Pashtun), was able to portray this as an oppression of Pashtun people on the part of the Afghans. This angered Daoud, who decided to pursue the matter further. Mutual relations started to deteriorate quickly – tribal incursions became common and, in 1961, Pakistanis severed their diplomatic relations and also completely closed off their borders.[124]

Even with Soviet help, it did not take long for the adverse effects of the blockade to manifest themselves. Since the Afghan economy became less dependent on taxes, it grew more dependent on customs duties, which were significantly lowered in the aftermath of the blockade. His autocratic policies combined with increasing dependence on Soviet aid and the inability to improve Afghan-Pakistan relations contributed to Daoud's downfall. He was forced by the Musahiban family, and most importantly by his cousin Zahir, to resign in March 1963.[125] The U.S. seemed to take this change at its face value, although it observed that there were rumors that circulated in Afghanistan that Daoud's resignation was work of "adroit U.S. engineering." As a result, the Department of State suggested that forthcoming U.S. actions should not fuel these speculations.[126]

2.4.Experiment with Democracy, 1963-1973

The replacement of Daoud with Muhammad Yousuf, a physicist educated in Europe, brought noticeable reduction in tensions and ended the Pakistani blockade.[127] A significant role was played also by the newly emerging educated urban middle-class, which was pushing for a more liberal environment in which they would be able to share power with the royal family. Thus began the Afghan decade-long experiment with constitutional monarchy. It was also this new state of affairs that gave birth to a breeding ground for new ideologies. Among them were two ideologies that influenced the course

[124] Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 152–163.
[125] Ibid.
[126] "Editorial Note" n.d., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963 Volume Xix, South Asia, Document 265, Office of the Historian, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v19/d265.
[127] Qassem, *Afghanistan's Political Stability a Dream Unrealised*, 50.

of Afghan history for the upcoming decades – Islamism and Communism.[128]

In October 1964, King Zahir signed a new constitution proposed by *Loya Jirgah*, an assembly of tribal leaders and other prominent Afghans. The constitution stated that Afghanistan was represented by the King, but the parliament manifested the will of the people.[129] Members of the royal family were barred from key governmental positions and, most importantly, the constitution guaranteed education, freedom of religion, and freedom of property and assembly. Furthermore, the constitution promised free press and the ability to form political parties. In 1965, the first parliamentary elections were held under the new constitution.[130]

However, the implementation of the 1964 constitution was hindered by several factors. First of all, it did not contain all of the values that were shared by segments of the society that were politically active. The constitution was mainly a product of three groups – the royal family, seasoned politicians that served under Daoud, and a small group of Western-educated intelligentsia which wanted to assume a more active role in the implementation of democratic reforms. However, the general public was not ready to accept the new legal rules that affected their traditional way of life. Therefore, the first parliamentary elections had only about a 15% turnout and most of the Afghans voted alongside ethnic and tribal lines. This resulted in a parliament that contained various strongmen such as tribal leaders and rural mullahs.[131]

Additionally, King Zahir did not sign the promised law that would allow the free formation of political parties out of fear of opposition to his government.[132] As a result of such unfulfilled hopes and promises, dissatisfaction with the ruling elite increased. This stimulated young people to adopt various extreme ideologies on both sides of the political spectrum. Kabul University was one of the places where Communists and Islamists, both opposed to the regime, found refuge.[133]

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[128] Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, 43–45.
[129] For a more detailed analysis of the constitution, see Donald N. Wilber, "Constitution of Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal* 19, no. 2 (April 1, 1965): 215–29.
[130] Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 294–295.
[131] Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 148–149.
[132] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 70.
[133] Hasan Kakar, "The Fall of the Afghan Monarchy in 1973," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 2 (1978): 195–214.

The growing discontent was further reinforced by the problematic economic situation. First of all, both of the superpowers slashed their contributions significantly during the third five-year plan in 1968-1972 as a result of *détente* and increasing U.S. engagement in Vietnam.[134] This resulted in the underfinancing of many of the already running projects, contributing to the rise of youth unemployment.[135] The final nail in the coffin of the Afghan monarchy was the onset of a severe drought beginning in 1969 and lasting for three years. The drought was further accompanied by a famine which claimed between 50,000-500,000 lives and was exacerbated through the ineffective distribution of humanitarian aid by corrupt officials. U.S. Country Desk Officer Robert Flaten observed a "creeping political crisis" unfolding. He saw the probable outcome to be "a return to direct royal family rule under a strong man, probably either prince Daoud or Sardar Abdul Wali."[136] As Saikal (2004) argues, the combination of the abovementioned factors and the fact that the democratic reforms were mostly limited to large cities meant that Zahir's experiment with a constitutional monarchy was simply not sustainable.[137]

2.5. Daoud's Republic, 1973-1978

As the political and economic situation took a sharp turn for the worse in the early 1970s, Daoud began contemplating his return to power. In July 1973, when Zahir Shah was in Italy for medical treatment,[138] Daoud seized power in a bloodless coup[139] with the support of the army and the *Parcham* faction of the Afghan communist party (PDPA).[140]

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[134] For a discussion on the superpower politics of aid, see chapter "Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan"
[135] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 79–86.
[136] General Abdul Wali was King Zahir's son-in-law, a strongman responsible for crackdowns on the opposition during the King's rule. He was also a fierce opponent of Daoud "Memorandum from Robert A. Flaten, NEA/PAB, to Bruce Laingen, Office Director, NEA/PAB" May 21, 1972, Record Group 59, SN 70-73, POL 15 AFG, National Archives, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB59/zahir11.pdf.
[137] Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 169–171.
[138] Reportedly, the King's eye was injured by a volleyball. See "U.S. Embassy Kabul to Department of State, Cable 4728" June 26, 1973, Record Group 59, SN 70-73, POL 15-1 AFG, National Archives, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB59/zahir14.pdf.
[139] However, Daoud did not, as Robert Flaten predicted, restore a "royal family rule". See "Memorandum, Harold H. Saunders and Henry A. Appelbaum, National Security Council Staff, to Dr. Kissinger" July 17, 1973, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, National Security Council Files, box 591, Afghanistan Vol I., National Archives, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB59/zahir15.pdf.
[140] The PDPA was created in 1965 by Nur Mohammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal. The party quickly split into *Parcham* under Karmal and *Khalq* under Taraki, with support from Hafizullah Amin. *Parchamis* were

He abolished the monarchy and proclaimed the Republic of Afghanistan. Initially, both the *Parcham* and *Khalq* factions of the PDPA vociferously promoted Daoud as the leader of the revolution, but most of the Afghans viewed Daoud's ascension to power as a simple transfer of rule from one family member to another.[141]

With Daoud back in power, relations with Pakistan over Pashtunistan worsened once more.[142] Both parties started sending letters of complaint to the UN Secretary General, accusing each other of various provocations. However, the dispute never got back to the magnitude of the early 1960s. Furthermore, from 1975 onwards, for strategic reasons, Daoud managed to normalize mutual relations, peaking in several cordial meetings with Pakistani Zia-ul-Haq.[143]

During Daoud's second rule, Pashtunistan was no longer Daoud's primary concern. He perceived the rising popularity of the Islamist movement as a threat to his power.[144] In 1974, he cracked down on the Islamists and arrested 200 of them. Some of them, such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Din Mohammad, managed to escape to Pakistan and later became important *mujahedeen* commanders in the Afghan-Soviet war.[145] While Daoud managed to suppress initial Islamist revolts, as Vogelsgang (2008) argues, these developments marked the start of an internal war in Afghanistan which has continued until the present time.[146]

After dealing with the Islamists, Daoud turned his focus on the issue of the PDPA and his overt reliance on Soviet aid. This was encouraged by his 1974 visit to Moscow, where all he obtained, as Rasanayagam (2005) argues, were: "a moratorium on debt repayments, a further $428 million in development aid, and a lot of advice which he

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moderate communists of mixed ethnic origin, which mostly came from urban areas. On the other hand, *Khalqists* were more radical and their members were predominantly rural Pashtuns. For most of the PDPA's history, both factions were involved in bitter infighting. See chapter "The Development of Afghan Communism."

[141] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 87–90.

[142] Daoud was simultaneously President, Prime Minister and Foreign and Defense Minister.

[143] Qassem, *Afghanistan's Political Stability a Dream Unrealised*, 50–52.

[144] Importantly, Kabul University was one of the hotbeds of anti-governmental activism which included the Islamist movement. While the majority of approximately 8,500 students and 450 teachers were non-aligned, the Islamist and Marxist groups caused great turmoil on the campus. The relationship between the Afghan government and the University was never good. Throughout Afghan history, several of the students made attempts on the lives of kings. One of them was successful, resulting in the death of Nadir Shah in 1933. Kakar, "The Fall of the Afghan Monarchy in 1973," 207–209.

[145] Misdaq, *Afghanistan Political Frailty and External Interference*, 90.

[146] Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 300.

strongly resented."[147] Consequently, Daoud started purging *Parchamis* from his government – even though many of them had helped him to acquire power in the first place. Also, following the improvement in relations with Pakistan, he started to seek foreign aid from Iran and the Gulf states in order to counterweight Soviet dominance.[148]

Daoud, with his back against the wall, had the *Loya Jirga* proclaim a new constitution in 1977, as Zahir had done in 1964. It clearly marked an end to PDPA participation in the government, as Communists were banned from the drafting of the constitution. However, the text of the constitution, which established a one man, one party state, was clearly inspired by the Marxists while also attempting to appease modernists. Daoud promised large social and economic reforms, but they were never fully implemented as the previously hostile *Khalq* and *Parcham* factions united to overthrow him.[149]

2.6. The Saur Revolution and the Soviet Invasion, 1978-1979

Already in September of 1977, Daoud became increasingly aware that his strategy of accepting large amounts of Soviet aid while remaining neutral had failed. He confided to Ghaus: "You know the gamble is lost. We played our hand but lost. Sooner or later a small minority will seize power…Of course Communism will never be accepted willingly by the Muslim people…But, I see rivers of blood flowing."[150]

On 17th April, 1978, in yet unexplained circumstances, Mir Akbar Khyber was murdered. In the preceding months, there had been other high-profile assassinations, but Khyber's murder was the most significant as he was the chief ideologist and strategist of the *Parcham* faction as well as a close friend of the leader Babrak Karmal. In death, Khyber became a convenient martyr for the communist coup d'état as his funeral would turn into a massive protest march. After that, a confusing chain of events proceeded to unfold. First, police arrested Nur Mohammed Taraki, the leader of *Khalq* faction, and took him to prison.[151] Following that, the police came after Hafizullah Amin, the right

[147] Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan*, 63.
[148] Ibid., 64.
[149] Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 301–302.
[150] Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*, 194.
[151] Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 74.

hand of Taraki, and placed him under house arrest. Strangely, Amin was still allegedly able to orchestrate the ensuing coup from his house, as Bradsher (1985) describes:

> Amin sent his teenage son…to find out what had happened to Taraki…the youth reported Taraki's imprisonment. So…Amin sent his son to an air force officer…with instructions to tell other PDPA members at the air force headquarters at Kabul to attack the government at 9:00 A.M. the following day, 27 April. Amin also used a brother and a cousin to summon party leaders who had not been arrested. When the first comrade arrived at 7:30, Amin wrote out for him a plan for the coup…At 8:00 A.M. another leader…arrived but was blocked by the police from going into the house…so Amin wrote out another set of instructions and sent them out to him. By 10:30 Amin's work was finished…So the coup was organized while Amin was under house arrest![152]

As planned, on 27th April, a small regiment of Army and Air Force officers (who had been keeping their PDPA allegiance hidden from Daoud) attacked the presidential palace where Daoud was hiding. Since he and his Republican Guard[153] refused to surrender, Daoud and his family were mercilessly executed by the evening. Kabul Radio subsequently announced that a "Revolutionary Council" led by Taraki had taken charge.[154] While the Soviets were initially suspected of having had foreknowledge of the coup and even of having planned the coup themselves, there is substantial evidence that they were, in fact, startled by the events.[155]

The new regime began to crack down on perceived opposition and on former allies of Daoud. They also nullified the 1977 constitution, changed name of the state to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and decreed Taraki as both the President and the Prime Minister. Soon after, the factionalism between *Khalq* and *Parcham* factions of the PDPA resurfaced again. On Amin's initiative, the government was purged of *Parchamis*.[156]

Taraki then swiftly started with the implementation of radical socialist reforms.[157]

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[152] Ibid., 74–75.
[153] The Guard was comprised of Daoud's most elite and trusted soldiers.
[154] A. Z. Hilali, "The Soviet Penetration into Afghanistan and the Marxist Coup," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 18, no. 4 (2005): 710–711.
[155] For a detailed discussion of this issue, see chapter "The Development of Afghan Communism."
[156] Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan*, 71–73. This included sending several prominent Parchamis abroad as Ambassadors, most notably Babrak Karmal to Prague.
[157] Jirí Georgiev, "Historické Souvislosti Sovetské Invaze Do Afghánistánu," *Mezinárodní Vztahy*, no. 01 (2002): 61–63.

PDPA decrees elevated minority languages to the same status as Dari and Pashto and deprived members of the royal family of citizenship. Furthermore, they cancelled land mortgages, gave equal rights to women, and ordered large-scale land reforms.[158] Arguably, the last three decrees proved to be the most controversial ones and were met with fierce opposition.

Decree no. 7 forbade the exchange of a woman in marriage for cash and set the minimum age for marriage to 16 for women and 18 for men. It also promulgated that no one could be forced to marry against his or her will. As an addition to the decree, the PDPA embarked on a sweeping literacy campaign with adult classes which were also organized in order to persuade women to come out of the shadows of their male guardians and participate actively in society.[159]

Decree no. 8 redistributed parcels of land larger than 13 hectares. The PDPA thought that this reform would be popular with the rural Afghans. However, due to the feeble implementation (for example, water supplies were not changed accordingly), many of the poorest farmers rejected the allotments. The "middle-class" peasants, on the other hand, were damaged by decree no.6, which cancelled land mortgages and prevented them from accessing capital. Finally, large landowners received no compensation for their loss in the land reform and were thus the most dissatisfied.[160]

Consequently, unrest began to manifest itself only a couple of months into Taraki's rule. This was also aided by his symbolic policies, which gradually marginalized the role of Islam. First, references to Islam started being omitted in speeches, and, in October 1978, the traditional green-black-red flag was replaced by a communist red one, void of any Islamic symbols.[161] Furthermore, *Khalq* consisted mostly of Pashtuns and the increased use of Pashto as a main language at the cost of Dari alienated non-Pashtun groups.[162] This was also reflected in the ethnic composition of the army the PDPA had at its disposal (Figure 2.1).

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[158] Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan*, 74.
[159] Valentine M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 101–104.
[160] Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 188–189.
[161] "Afghan Regime Displays New Red Flag" October 26, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=265262&dt=2694&dl=2009.
[162] Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 305.

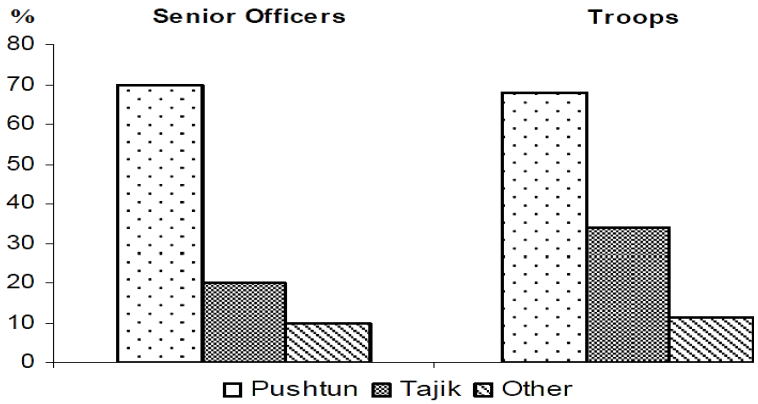

Figure 2.1 Ethnic composition of the Afghan armed forces in 1978[163]

The wave of popular revolts intensified significantly by the summer of 1978. Nuristan revolted in May and Afghan army desertions began to take their toll. In November, the U.S. Embassy already observed that the unrest was quickly spreading across Afghan provinces.[164] This was further exemplified in the March 1979 Herat uprising, when the whole city garrison decided to join the revolt, killing many Soviet advisers and government officials. As a response, the whole city was bombed and several thousand Heratis died. In the weeks that followed, unrest spread to most parts of Afghanistan. In August, a large demonstration in Kabul was quashed violently. The situation seemed untenable both to the PDPA and to the Soviets. Consequently, the KGB recommended the removal of Amin.[165]

In September, during his visit to Moscow, Taraki was instructed by Brezhnev on the necessity of Amin's removal. Upon Taraki's return, Amin already knew about the plot and eventually eliminated Taraki first. Desperate, Amin tried to appease the disaffected population. He denounced Taraki's rule and published a list with 12,000 people that had been murdered by his regime. In addition, Amin started to reintroduce

[163] Based on data from Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2000), 276.
[164] "Serious Unrest Continues To Spread in Afghanistan" November 2, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=299222&dt=2694&dl=2009.
[165] Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 198–199.

Islamic references into his speeches and released political prisoners. Nevertheless, the resistance to his regime did not decrease and army desertions continued alongside PDPA infighting.[166]

Given the fact that the Soviet plot to assassinate Amin had failed, Amin became overly distrustful of the Soviets. He officially requested the recall of Alexander Mikhailovich Puzanov, the Soviet ambassador in Kabul. Perhaps the last overture that sealed Amin's fate were his attempts to open relations with the United States. At the same time, the resistance was already on the offensive and the PDPA was quickly crumbling, causing the Soviets to become increasingly impatient.[167] When the fateful decision to invade was made, the Soviet 40th Army started moving into Afghanistan on 25th December. At the same time, the KGB tried to poison Amin, but he was only rendered unconscious for a brief time.[168] Finally, two days later, the *Spetsnaz* commando, an elite unit of the KGB, stormed Amin's palace and assassinated him.[169]

[166] Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 306–307.
[167] Westad, "Prelude to Invasion."
[168] Martin Ewans, *Conflict in Afghanistan: Studies in Asymetric Warfare* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 102.
[169] Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 82–102.

3. The Development of Afghan Islamism

The Islamist movement in Afghanistan has its roots in the "experiment with democracy" period of 1963-1973, which allowed for a more liberal climate. Afghan Islamists were able to operate clandestinely under Daoud's Republic, and eventually became even more powerful following the Saur Revolution in 1978. However, similarly to the heterogeneity of Afghan Communism (which included *Khalq* and *Parcham*, but also Maoists), the Islamist movement was far from uniform and was divided alongside ethnic, linguistic and religious lines.

For the sake of brevity, this chapter focuses on the history of Afghan Islamism instead of on the history of Afghan Islam in general. The latter is an enormously complex historical matter with very few reliable sources, most likely due to the pervasive illiteracy in the rural areas. The former is a rather recent phenomenon, connected to the scholarly environment of Kabul University. However, most importantly, people involved in this movement, such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Burhannuddin Rabbani, played a key role in the mobilization of the *mujahedeen* against the Soviets.

3.1. Islam and Islamism

First of all, in the context of this chapter, it is crucial to make a distinction between Islam and political Islam, also termed Islamism. On the one hand, Islam is a religion that concerns itself with the practices of Muslims and their interpretations of what Islam has to say about a range of practical issues. On the other hand, an Islamist is somebody who believes that Islam should be a guide on how politics and society are to be governed, and seeks to implement this idea through various means.[170]

The link between Islam and Islamism is mostly disputed by scholars, and the prevailing opinion is that the original Islamic sources such as the Quran and the Hadith contain little advice on how to govern a state. For this reason, as Ayubi (1991) argues, "Muslims had…to innovate and to improvise with regard to the form and nature of

[170] Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), XI–XII; see also a similar definition by Sheri Berman, "Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 02 (2003): 257–72; and a more narrow definition by Mehdi Mozaffari, "What Is Islamism? History and Definition of a Concept," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (2007): 17–33.

government."[171] Islamism is therefore a relatively modern phenomenon, coinciding with the emergence of the idea of a nation state. Its growing popularity could be explained as the reaction to secular modernity, the "return of the sacred," and to the failed development in post-colonial Muslim countries.[172]

In the context of Afghanistan, it useful to make a further distinction between Islamism and the so-called "traditional fundamentalism."[173] However important in the context of modern Afghan history, Islamism first came to Afghanistan as late as in the mid-20th century. During its struggle against Communist ideology, it was supplemented by "traditional fundamentalism", which is more historical and responsible for revolts against reformist rulers such as Amanullah. As Maley (2002) argues, this traditionalism has its roots in the early Muslim communities, which perceived unbelievers to be a serious threat to the teachings of Mohammed.[174] While such traditionalism is more defensive in nature – fighting against modernity and the abolishment of sharia law – Islamism is more proactive, as was discussed previously. [175]

3.2. The Origins of Afghan Islamism

The pioneers of Afghan Islamism, Ataullah Faizani and Ismael Balkhi, were first active in the relatively liberal period of the late 1940s. During this time, the followers of various political movements participated in *Kalab-I Jawanan*, which served as a meeting place for intellectuals. However, their activities did not last very long, as both Faizani and

[171] Nazih N. M Ayubi, *Political Islam Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 1–2.
[172] Tibi (2012) further summarizes the distinction between Islam and Islamism, which is "not mere politics but religionized politics… the promotion of a political order that is believed to emanate from the will of Allah…Islam itself does not do this. As a faith…it implies certain political values but does not presuppose a particular order of government." See Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 1–3. For other possible causes of the growing popularity of Afghan Islamism, such as the "Westoxication" of the elites, see Nazif M. Shahrani, "Afghanistan from 1919," in *The Islamic World in the Age of Western Dominance*, ed. Francis. Robinson, vol. 5, The New Cambridge History of Islam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 555–557. For a complete thesis of the "return of the sacred" see Daniel Bell, "The Return of the Sacred: The Argument about the Future of Religion," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 31, no. 6 (March 1, 1978): 29–55.
[173] Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. Introduction.
[174] William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 58–59.
[175] Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan*, 50–53.

Balkhi were arrested in 1949 for planning the assassination of Prime Minister Shah Mahmud.[176]

Thus, arguably, the major influence on the development of Afghan Islamism, albeit indirectly, was Hassan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. Consequently, when Ghulam Muhammad Niazi, a theology professor at Kabul University, studied at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, he was influenced by al-Banna's ideas and started his own movement in Afghanistan in the late 1950s.[177] The heart of the movement was concentrated around the Faculty of Theology at Kabul University[178] and quickly found supporters as about half of the theology professors also had degrees from Al-Azhar and many of the students had studied in Cairo.[179]

The initial activities of the *ustads* (faculty and students) were focused on countering the arguments of Marxists students. These beginnings were indirectly sponsored by the CIA, which funded the faculty through the Asian Foundation in order to counter the rising acclaim of Marxism.[180] Also, similarly to Roy (1990), Rasanayagam (2005) argues that the newly founded Islamist movement had no formal ties with the traditionally rural religious establishment, represented by *ulema* and *mullahs*, since people such as Niazy were mostly graduates of state-funded schools (Table 3.1).[181]

Owing to a disagreement between Daoud and key Islamists in 1958 which led to several arrests, the movement had to start meeting in secret. One of the first organizations in the movement was *Jamiat-e Islami* (Islamic Society), which was inspired by the organization of the same name founded by Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, a prominent Pakistani Islamist.[182] In addition to serving as a rallying point against Marxism, it was devoted to the translations of works written by foreign Islamists, such as Sayyid Qutb.[183]

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[176] Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995), 229–230.
[177] Vogelsang, *The Afghans*, 298.
[178] Niazi would later become its Dean.
[179] Barnett R. Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), chap. 3.
[180] Jerome Klassen and Greg Albo, *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 51–52.
[181] Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan*, 50.
[182] There were no formal ties between the Pakistani and Afghan *Jamiat-e Islami*. Later, it was renamed to *Jamiat-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan (*Islamic Society of Afghanistan) as Rabbani replaced Niazi.
[183] Olivier Roy, "The Origins of the Islamist Movement in Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 3, no. 2 (January 1, 1984): 117–118.

Table 3.1 Secondary education of Islamist and PDPA leaders[184]

Elite	Military Schools	State School	Other State Secular	Private/ Madrasa	None	Total	N
Parcham							
Central Committee	48.6	5.7	34.3	0.0	8.6	100.0	35
Politburo	85.7	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	7
Khalq							
Central Committee	3.7	14.8	77.8	0.0	3.7	100.0	27
Politburo	0.0	11.1	77.8	0.0	11.1	100.0	9
Islamists							
Early leaders	5.8	3.9	42.3	42.3	5.8	100.0	52
Shūrā	0.0	6.3	25.0	68.8	0.0	100.0	16
Jamiat	10.0	0.0	45.0	45.0	0.0	100.0	20
Ḥizb	8.3	8.3	58.3	25.0	0.0	100.0	12

The movement expanded significantly during Zahir's rule, due to the less repressive environment and also as a reaction to the founding of the PDPA in 1965. In the same year, *Sazman-e-Jawanan-e-Musalman* (Organization of Islamic Youth) was founded by Niazi and other prominent professors such as Burhannuddin Rabbani, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, Ahmad Shah Massoud, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Mohammad Musa Tawana.[185] It functioned as a student branch of the Islamic Society and it was the most militant one.[186] As were the "professors", young men were educated in the state system and, interestingly, shared similar backgrounds to the *Khalq* of the PDPA – mostly small-town men that got the opportunity to study at Kabul University.[187] They were neither related to the ruling circles, nor were they dependent on the state. This factor could, according to Kakar (1997), explain their militancy.[188] Also, most of the early Islamist leaders of the insurgency were graduates of Kabul University (Table 3.2) and of technological and theological faculties (Table 3.3).

[184] Barnett R. Rubin, "Political Elites in Afghanistan: Rentier State Building, Rentier State Wrecking," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 01 (1992): 89.
[185] Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, 233.
[186] Roy, "The Origins of the Islamist Movement in Afghanistan," 118–119.
[187] Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan*, 145.
[188] M. Hasan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 85–86.

Table 3.2 Higher education of Islamist and PDPA leaders by location[189]

Elite	Percent with Higher Education	N	Afghanistan	West	Soviet Bloc	Foreign Islamic Institution	Other Asia/ Muslim Country	N
Parcham								
Central Committee	87.5	40	77.1	11.4	40.0	0.0	0.0	35
Politburo	100.0	7	100.0	14.3	14.3	0.0	0.0	7
Khalq								
Central Committee	83.3	36	83.3	23.3	46.7	3.3	6.7	30
Politburo	84.6	13	81.8	36.4	36.4	9.1	18.2	11
Islamists								
Early leaders	74.6	63	93.6	2.1	0.0	19.2	0.0	47
Shūrā	100.0	16	93.8	0.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	16
Jamiat	75.0	24	100.0	5.6	0.0	16.7	0.0	18
Ḥizb	92.3	13	100.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	0.0	12

Consequently, in 1965-1972, Kabul University became a hotbed of Islamist activism. Students participated in protests against Israel during the Six Day War, against the U.S. in the Vietnam War, and also against the ruling Afghan royalty. They were sharply critical towards secular education and the emancipation of women. These activities led to violent clashes with Marxists and Maoist students and also resulted in acid attacks on women participating in protest rallies.[190] U.S. Ambassador Robert G. Neumann observed this activism in his cable, and traced one of the major waves of the Islamist unrests in 1970 to the Mujaddidi family who had founded their own organization called *Khuddam al-Qur'an* (Servants of the Koran). He argued that the protests demonstrated "that the field of political action was not the exclusive province of the left."[191] As a consequence, while the Marxists had the more vocal group at Kabul

[189] Rubin, "Political Elites in Afghanistan," 91.
[190] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 132. For more information on the relationship between Afghan Islamists and female activists see Valentine M. Moghadam, "Revolution, Religion, and Gender Politics: Iran and Afghanistan Compared," *Journal of Women's History* 10, no. 4 (1999): 172–95.
[191] "Telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul to the Department of State," June 24, 1970, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 59, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB59/zahir02.pdf.

University in 1960s, Islamists secured the majority of seats in the student senate elections in 1970.[192]

Table 3.3 Higher education of Islamist and PDPA leaders by faculty[193]

Elite	Law and Political Science	Medicine	Economics	Science/ Technology[a]	Humanities/ Education	Shari[c]a	Military Academy	Total	N
Parcham									
Central Committee	11.5	15.4	15.4	15.4	11.5	3.9	26.9	100.0	26
Politburo	28.6	28.6	14.3	0.0	14.3	0.0	14.3	100.0	7
Khalq									
Central Committee	4.2	8.3	0.0	41.7	16.7	4.2	25.0	100.0	24
Politburo	11.1	22.2	0.0	33.3	11.1	11.1	11.1	100.0	9
Islamists									
Early leaders	0.0	11.4	0.0	34.1	11.4	40.1	2.3	100.0	44
Shūrā	0.0	6.7	0.0	20.0	6.7	66.7	0.0	100.0	15
Jamiat	0.0	16.7	0.0	38.9	0.0	44.4	0.0	100.0	18
Ḥizb	0.0	8.3	0.0	50.0	16.7	25.0	0.0	100.0	12

Thereupon, the Afghan Islamist movement was garnering a significant momentum. In January 1972, as a sign of growing confidence, a representative of the Muslim Youth approached U.S. Ambassador Neumann at his home and asked for a printing press in exchange for supporting U.S foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. At this point, the ambassador expressed sympathy for their struggle against the leftists, but said that the U.S. cannot involve itself directly with the Muslim Youth and that its activities are limited to the sponsoring economic development of Afghanistan.[194] This refusal is significant when put into the larger context of the U.S. Cold War policy. In its strategy to contain Communism, the U.S. oftentimes backed the conservative Islamic regimes of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Lebanon in response to Soviet support for Arab nationalist dictators of Egypt, Syria and Iraq.[195] In addition, after the Soviet invasion, the U.S. cooperated closely in Pakistan with an ardent Pakistani Islamist leader, General Zia ul-Haq, in support of the Islamist resistance against Soviets in Afghanistan.[196]

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[192] Roy, "The Origins of the Islamist Movement in Afghanistan," 119.
[193] Rubin, "Political Elites in Afghanistan," 92.
[194] "U.S. Embassy Kabul to Department of State, Airgram A-60" May 29, 1972, Record Group 59, SN 70-73, POL 13-2 AFG, National Archives, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB59/zahir10.pdf.
[195] F. Gregory Gause, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[196] Amin Saikal, "Islam and the West," *Islamic Perspectives*, 2003, 19.

3.3. The Mobilization of Afghan Islamists

In 1972, Islamists succeeded in the infiltration of the army by establishing clandestine cells. However, after Daoud came to power in 1973, he soon followed with violent repressions of Islamist "reactionaries" and was assisted by the *Parcham* faction. Most of the leaders fled to Pakistan, which provided them with the means to rebel against Kabul. However, Niazi stayed behind in Afghanistan and got arrested.[197]

Daoud's steps were only successful in the short term. As a reaction, the movement formed a clandestine leadership council called *shura*. This eventually led to the first organized uprising against the regime in July, 1975. Armed Islamists, sponsored by Pakistan,[198] launched a series of attacks on government headquarters around the country. Nevertheless, this endeavor ended in disaster. They were unable to hold their positions for long, except for in the Panjshir Province. The uprising counted with the support of the army and the locals, but this did not ultimately happen. As a consequence, the Islamist movement experienced further repercussions from Daoud's government.[199]

The failed uprising also caused a division among Islamist leadership. In 1976-1977, the ensuing power struggle resulted in the creation of the *Hizb-e-Islam- e-Afghanistani* (Islamic Party of Afghanistan) led by Hekmatyar, which split from *Jamiat-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan*, led by Rabbani. The split occurred not only for doctrinal reasons, but also for ethnic ones. Rabbani was a moderate Tajik, who mostly attracted Persian-speaking followers (Table 3.4). On the other hand, Hekmatyar was a Pashtun who drew his support from more radical ranks.[200]

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[197] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 132–133.
[198] While Pakistani leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was not as ardent an Islamist as his successor Zia ul-Haq, Bhutto provided sanctuary and arms to the opponents of Daoud's regime, which happened to comprise Islamists such as Massoud, Rabbani and Hekmatyar. This was done as a response to Daoud's support to the Pashtun and Balochi separatists and continued until the improvement of relations between both countries at the end of 1975. See Ibid., 95; and also Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*, 189–190.
[199] Kakar, *Afghanistan*, 86–90.
[200] Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17–18.

Table 3.4 Tribal and ethnic origin of Islamist and PDPA leaders[201]

Elite	Muhammadzai	Other Durrani	Other Pashtun	(All Pashtun)	Tajik/ Farsiwan	Sayyid	Other Sunni	Shi'a	Total	N	Percent Kabuli
Parcham											
Central Committee	0.0	15.4	43.6	(59.0)	28.2	0.0	5.1	7.7	100.0	39	43.6
Politburo	0.0	28.6	57.1	(85.7)	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	100.0	7	57.1
Khalq											
Central Committee	2.9	8.6	68.6	(80.1)	11.4	0.0	2.9	5.7	100.0	35	5.6
Politburo	0.0	0.0	75.0	(75.0)	8.3	0.0	8.3	8.3	100.0	12	7.7
Islamists											
Early leaders	0.0	0.0	44.8	(44.8)	46.6	3.5	5.2	—	100.0	58	0.0
Shūrā	0.0	0.0	37.5	(37.5)	56.3	0.0	6.3	—	100.0	16	0.0
Jamiat	0.0	0.0	22.7	(22.7)	72.7	0.0	4.6	—	100.0	22	0.0
Ḥizb	0.0	0.0	66.7	(66.7)	16.7	8.3	8.3	—	100.0	12	0.0

Despite the significant setbacks, other Islamist groups kept trying to fight Daoud's regime. In December 1976, General Mir Ahmad Shah Rizwani organized a coup, which was preempted by the state and all of the conspirators were arrested. However, the opportunity presented itself again after the Saur Revolution and the drastic reforms which alienated a wide spectrum of the society. Under these circumstances, Islamists started using religion to instill hostility against the PDPA.[202]

Already in June, the U.S. Embassy reported that opposition groups had begun to form in Pakistan under the leadership of Rabbani. At that moment, the cable did not yet perceive the new opposition as unmanageable by Taraki.[203] However, when the regime arrested and executed several religious leaders in Herat Province in March 1979, Islamists launched a major uprising that lasted four days and left scores dead on both sides.[204] At that moment, both the PDPA and the Soviets started to realize the gravity of the threat posed by the Islamists.[205]

[201] Rubin, "Political Elites in Afghanistan," 87.
[202] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 134.
[203] "Afghan Opposition Coalition Reportedly Formed In Pakistan" June 7, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=141941&dt=2694&dl=2009.
[204] This time the Afghan *mujahedeen* received even more financial and military support from Pakistan, since moderate Bhutto was deposed by a fervent Islamist Zia ul-Haq in 1977.
[205] Westad, "Prelude to Invasion," 56–57.

The Herat uprising was arguably a watershed moment for the Islamist movement. It succeeded in spreading unrest to the whole country, which was further boosted by the arrests of the Mujaddidi family in the summer of 1979.[206] While the Sunni Islamist parties such as *Jamiat* and *Hizb* spearheaded the movement, there were also Shia Islamists that became active during 1979. Inspired by the Herat uprising and the calls to insurrection by Iranian Ayatollah Saydi Tabhatabai, Hazara Shiites[207] launched large protests in Kabul in June, 1979.[208]

Consequently, by the end of 1979, the PDPA was facing an opposition of an estimated 40,000 *mujahedeen*, which almost matched the size of the Afghan army. Hence, this was a considerable success in the mobilization of the population on the part of the Islamist movement. While Daoud managed to suppress the movement quickly and efficiently, the PDPA would likely have been overrun by it had it not been for the Soviet invasion. This conclusion was echoed by Fikrat Tabeev, newly appointed Soviet ambassador in Kabul on the eve of the invasion, who argued that the insurgents were capable of capturing Kabul within 24 hours.[209]

3.4. Summary

The introduction of Islamist ideology into Afghanistan occurred relatively late – in the middle of the 20th century. Afghan Islamism was not unique, rather it was an offshoot of an Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistani *Jamiat-e-Islami*. The growth began in the constitutional period of King Zahir, 1963-1973, but was mainly limited to the Afghan academic environment which had its base at Kabul University. At that time, Islamist students and teachers failed to garner a broader base of popular support, even among the conservative rural population. This continued well into Daoud's rule and the first country-wide uprising that occurred in 1975 was deemed a failure to the movement because the population did not participate as planned. However, this all changed in 1978,

[206] Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan*, 146.
[207] Hazaras are a Dari speaking minority which mostly follows the Twelver branch of Shia Islam. They predominantly live in central Afghanistan, west of Kabul.
[208] Hafizullah Emadi, "Exporting Iran's Revolution: The Radicalization of the Shiite Movement in Afghanistan," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 1 (January 1, 1995): 5.
[209] Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 194–196.

when the PDPA deposed Daoud and started to implement radical reforms which had a severe impact on the traditional way of life of most Afghans. As a consequence, Islamists used this sentiment to amass wide support and channeled it toward the regime, which went on a defensive until the Soviet invasion in December, 1979.

4. The Development of Afghan Communism

Notably, the history of Afghan Communism has been better mapped than the history of Islamism, perhaps also due to the PDPA's emphasis on publications and literacy as an instrument to spread their ideology throughout the Afghan population. However, the history of the Afghan left prior to the founding of the PDPA is rather ambiguous.[210] In every practical sense, the inception of the PDPA revolved mostly around the three key personalities of Nur Mohammed Taraki, Babrak Karmal, and, slightly later, Hafizullah Amin. While they initially worked together, most of the PDPA's history has been marked by severe hostility between the two ideological perspectives held by the three aforementioned men.[211]

4.1. Origins of the PDPA

Taraki was born to a poor, agrarian Pashtun family in the Ghazni Province in 1917. He began studying during the rule of Amanullah and was the first of his family to be literate. In the 1930s, he went to Mumbai for work where he was able to learn English and educate himself further. At this time, he reportedly met with members of the Communist Party of India, which may have influenced his ideological leanings. After his return in 1937, he earned a degree in law and political science at Kabul University.[212]

His diploma landed him a variety of mid-level governmental positions and, according to Soviet sources, he also became a prolific writer on the issue of the class struggle. Taraki later started working for a small opposition newspaper, *Angar*, which was closed soon afterward and many of the employees were jailed. However, Taraki was deemed a "minor figure" by Shah Mahmud's regime and was instead offered the position

[210] While there are some reports of a couple of individual Afghan socialists visiting the USSR and attending Comintern meetings in the 1920s and 1930s, they were virtually unknown in Afghanistan and did not make any significant impact. See J. Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1986), 30.
[211] Anthony Arnold named his *magnum opus* on the subject in a manner that fittingly captures the dichotomy, see Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism: Parcham and Khalq* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).
[212] Ibid., 15–16.

of cultural attaché in the U.S. in early 1973.[213]

When Daoud took power, he was publicly denounced by Taraki at a news conference in New York as a dictator. However, Taraki later retracted those comments and quietly returned home, where he was put under police surveillance.[214] His clash with Daoud meant that he was no longer able to work for the government. As a result, Taraki started a translation company, and translated for the U.S. embassy from 1955 to 1963. He continued with writing during this period and also organized several private study groups.[215] After the constitutional monarchy was established, Taraki began intensive preparatory work for the establishment of a new party.[216]

Karmal, on the other hand, came from a different social milieu altogether. He was born in 1929 in Kabul into the wealthy family of an army officer.[217] His family provided Karmal with the best available education – he studied at a German lyceum and, similarly to Taraki, studied law and political science at Kabul University. While he did not possess Taraki's writing talents, he became a key member of the student union during his studies as well as an influential orator. However, unlike Taraki, he was arrested during the crackdown on the opposition.[218]

The incarceration was allegedly a turning point in Karmal's life. During this time, he met Mir Akhbar Khyber,[219] an imprisoned police officer to whom Karmal attributes his full conversion to Marxism in his official biography.[220] Following his release in 1956,

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[213] Bradsher characterizes Taraki as a "dreamer, a teahouse talker, rather than a schemer, a man with lofty goals but little realistic sense of how to achieve them, a vain man easily deluded by flatterers." See Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 4.

[214] David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 36.

[215] Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 37–39.

[216] Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention*, 3–5.

[217] Karmal means "friend of labor" in Dari. His real name was Sultan Hussein. Also, his ethnicity is shrouded in mystery, as Arnold (1983) argues. While he claimed to be Pashtun, he spoke Dari as his first language. Bradsher (1985) suggests that he might have been of Kashmiri origin. For further discussion on the controversy, see Shaista. Wahab and Barry. Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 161.

[218] Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism*, 19–20.

[219] Khyber was reportedly like a second father to Karmal. See M. E. Hirsh, *Kabul* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 269.

[220] Bradsher described Karmal's character prior to his imprisonment as follows: "Up to then, politics seems to have been excitement for Karmal more than an ideological commitment…there was little sign that this youth born with the Afghan equivalent of a silver spoon in his mouth had the understanding of the common people's plight that sprang from the personal experience of Taraki, or that…he had the burning sense of social injustice that motivated some other leftists." Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 40.

similarly to Taraki, Karmal also began to work as a translator (but of German instead of English) and was soon drafted into the army. In 1959, he returned to Kabul, finished his university degree, and found employment as a clerk in the Translation and Compilation Department of the Ministry of Education. In 1964, as a consequence of the new constitution, he quit his position to focus fully on politics.[221]

Unlike Taraki and Karmal, Amin was not present during the foundation of the PDPA, but he would soon become Taraki's right hand and eventually overthrow him. Like Taraki, Amin was born into a poor rural family in 1921. He was a bright student who would later become the principal of a high school in Kabul. Owing to the U.S. aid program, he went to study at Columbia University, earning a degree in educational administration. It is possible that he was influenced by being in contact with Marxist students during his stay. However, it is known that during his second stay in the U.S. from 1962, he became a key member of the Associated Students of Afghanistan (ASA), a CIA front, and in 1964 he indicated his ideological views in ASA's 1964 yearbook.[222] Because Amin also heavily criticized the Afghan government, his student visa was not extended (upon the request of the Afghan government). Amin had to return home a couple of months after the foundation of the PDPA and had to work through its ranks as a junior member.[223]

Both Taraki and Karmal were in the contact with the Soviets even before the actual founding of the PDPA. Arnold (1983) already suspected early Soviet involvement – he interviewed an émigré Afghan social democrat who told him that both Taraki and Karmal had been regular guests at the Soviet embassy since the late 1950s.[224] This is echoed by KGB defector Vladimir Kuzichkin, who claimed that Karmal had been a KGB agent for a long time.[225] Owing to the work of Mitrokhin (2009), a former KGB archivist, we now know that Kuzichkin was right. Taraki became a KGB agent already in 1951. His

[221] Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism*, 20–21.
[222] For more information on CIA activities at U.S. campuses, see Karen M. Paget, *Patriotic Betrayal: The Inside Story of the CIA's Secret Campaign to Enroll American Students in the Crusade Against Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 120.
[223] Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 40–42.
[224] Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism*, 20.
[225] Anthony Arnold and Rosanne Klass, "Afghanistan's Communist Party: The Fragmented PDPA," in *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited*, ed. Rosanne Klass, Revised Edition (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), 141.

codename was "Nur" and he was in contact with seven Soviet KGB operatives. Similarly, Karmal became an agent in 1957, with the codename "Marid". He first met Taraki late, in 1962. Since then, they plotted the unification of their respective political base, resulting in the creation of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan on 1st January, 1965.[226]

4.2. Early Years and Split, 1965-1973

Soon after the new constitution of 1964 came into effect, about 30 men gathered in Taraki's residence and chose him as the Secretary General with Karmal as his deputy. However, the foundation of the PDPA was not simply a meeting of Taraki's "worshippers" or a revolutionary youth movement. Rather, as Hyman (1982) argues, it was a strategic agreement between two divergent factions to briefly join forces in an ambition to succeed in the upcoming elections.[227] Nevertheless, the elections proved to be an utter disappointment to the party, as only a few members gained seats in the parliament, with Taraki and his brethren among the unlucky ones.[228] Eventually, Karmal and his fellows[229] succeeded in putting themselves in the center of attention due to their fierce criticism of the monarchy among other things.[230]

The PDPA thus had a tumultuous history from the very beginning. In fact, several of the delegates to the First Congress left the party "in a huff" because they were not given important positions among the party ranks. The differences between the followers of Karmal and of Taraki quickly resurfaced. Amin played a key role in this feud as he detested Karmal and saw him as a part of the ruling elite.[231]

The emergence of the PDPA was of great interest to the Soviets. Boris Ponomarev, head of the International Department of the Central Committee, invited

[226] Kalinovsky, "The Blind Leading the Blind," 17–18.
[227] Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81*, 55.
[228] However, political parties were still not allowed, so they did not label themselves as PDPA members.
[229] An important role was played by Anahita Ratebzat, a medical doctor, Karmal's mistress and a prominent women's rights activist. She also acted as the Deputy Head of State within Karmal's government in 1980-1986.
[230] In one instance, Karmal caused a great controversy in the parliament when he omitted the usual *bismillah* (in the name of God) at the beginning of his speech. After being warned of the mistake, he simply continued his speech from where he had left off causing the parliament to break out in a great "hubbub". See Edwards, *Before Taliban*, 40.
[231] Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 162–163.

Taraki to Moscow. He instructed Taraki to act cautiously and work within the system. Since the Soviets were funding his election campaign and giving him a personal allowance, he was requested to set up a newspaper to legalize his incomes. The KGB also stopped its agents from contacting Taraki in order to maintain utmost secrecy. The Soviets also tried to mediate the growing animosity between Karmal and Taraki, but without much success.[232]

In 1967, these brewing tensions resulted in a split – Taraki established the *Khalq* ("masses") faction and Karmal the *Parcham* ("banner") faction. Both factions started publishing a magazine with the same name. However, *Khalq* was soon closed down by the government due to its support for revolution. *Parcham*, on the other hand, continued publishing until 196 and supported the establishment while advocating a long road to communism. Both groups began to recruit followers from diametrically different backgrounds. *Parcham* appealed to the intelligentsia, mainly but not limited to the Tajik group. On the other hand, *Khalq* had predominantly Pashtun followers from diverse economic strata. Their political activism also differed – when U.S. Vice President Spiro Agnew visited Kabul, *Khalqists* participated in the demonstration. On the other hand, *Parcham* let the U.S. Embassy know that they would not be participating.[233]

4.3. The PDPA and Daoud, 1973-1978

When the government shut down the *Parcham* newspaper in 1969, Karmal and his followers grew invisible to the public eye. However, this change was only on the surface, as *Parchami* leadership began to attend Daoud's clandestine meetings, where he was plotting his way back to power. *Parchamis* saw it as an opportunity to get to share power without being elected. [234] Interestingly, two months before the coup, the U.S. Embassy analyzed the Afghan left. It believed that while the left had grown significantly over the previous years, it was still insignificant and fragmented, with the threat to Zahir being "probably minimal, no matter how much trouble they might cause initially in…the

[232] Kalinovsky, "The Blind Leading the Blind," 18–22.
[233] Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 49–51.
[234] Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism*, 43–44.

chaotic halls of Parliament." The analysis also notes that "if the mullahs were unleashed all leftists in the country would be dead within 24 hours."[235]

In fact, when the coup started in July 1973, it succeeded mostly due to the support of key army officers and the Minister of Interior, all closet *Parchamis*. The help of *Parcham* was initially rewarded, and the faction would get about half of the ministerial posts. [236] To prevent further PDPA infighting, the Secretariat of the CC CPSU instructed Taraki and Karmal in January, 1974 to fully support Daoud and cooperate with each other.[237] This was reiterated in a letter from CC CPSU in June 1974, because the mutual hostility between the two factions had continued.[238]

While *Parcham* held more power than *Khalq* prior to the coup, the difference between the two began to dwindle. Daoud restricted *Parcham* in its recruitment activities, but *Khalq* was free to recruit throughout the country and especially from within the military. At this point in time, Amin was already the second most important person in *Khalq* after Taraki himself and was directly responsible for the army recruitment. Hence, during the first years, the relationship between Daoud and both PDPA factions was adequate, as he was seen by them to be a progressive ruler.[239]

However, the first problems appeared by 1975, when Daoud started to deviate from the line of Soviet foreign policy. First of all, he improved relations with Pakistan and diminished his support for Pashtun self-determination. Secondly, he improved relations with Iran, a move strongly unappreciated by the Soviets. Thirdly, he began seeking ties with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and India to reduce Afghanistan's dependency on the Soviets.[240] In October 1977, Foreign Minister Waheed Abdullah met with U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and asked for closer mutual ties and a "very visible" U.S.

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[235] "U.S. Embassy Kabul to Department of State, Airgram A-33" May 22, 1973, Record Group 59, SN 70-73, POL 15 AFG, National Archives, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB59/zahir11.pdf.
[236] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 88–89.
[237] "DECREE of the Secretariat of the CC CPSU - An Appeal to the Leaders of the PDPA Groups 'Parcham' and 'Khalq'" January 8, 1974, TsKhSD, f. 89, op. 46, d. 103, ll. 31, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112505.
[238] "CC CPSU Information for the Leaders of the Progressive Afghan Political Organizations 'Parcham' and 'Khalq' Concerning the Results of the Visit of Mohammed Daud to the USSR" June 21, 1974, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112504.
[239] Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism*, 43–47.
[240] Ibid., 49–51.

presence in Afghanistan.[241] Daoud additionally gradually marginalized *Parchamis* within the government and created a new constitution under which all parties would join into one National Revolutionary Party – an act opposed by *Parcham*.[242]

4.4. The PDPA and the Saur Revolution, 1978

The adoption of the 1977 constitution meant that the cooperation between *Parcham* and Daoud was finally over. As a result, despite their ideological differences, both PDPA factions united in July over the intention to overthrow Daoud. At that time, the army supporters of *Khalq* exceeded *Parchamis* by a factor of four.[243] This was also perhaps due to the fact that, for many young officers, *Khalq* was synonymous with Pashtun nationalism after Daoud had stopped supporting the Pashtun cause.[244]

The unification was also a result of direct Soviet pressure as well as of that of the intermediaries of the Iranian Tudeh and Indian Communist parties. With its disdain for Daoud, Moscow sought a united PDPA that would participate in a more broadly based regime, but was forced to reevaluate its policy in the aftermath of the April coup.[245] The coup to overthrow Daoud was not unplanned, as it had been carefully rehearsed several times; however, the murder of Khyber accelerated the events leading to it.[246]

In the assessment of the Afghan situation in November 1977, the U.S. noted Daoud's anxiety pertaining to Soviet meddling in Afghanistan; but it did not foresee any threat from the PDPA: "it is evident that the great majority of Afghans are anti-Soviet. While atiny [*sic*], semi-clandestine, pro-soviet communist party exists, the chances of its prevailing politically are remote."[247] Later, in its assessment from January 1978, the U.S. Embassy did not see any serious challenge to Daoud's rule and did not even mention the

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[241] "Cable from AMEMBASSY Kabul to SECSTATE," January 30, 1978, A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "Towards an International History of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AfghanistanV1_1978-1979.pdf.
[242] Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 104–105.
[243] Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 69–71.
[244] Amstutz, *Afghanistan*, 35.
[245] Ewans, *Conflict in Afghanistan*, 85.
[246] The coup was originally planned for August. See Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism*, 56–57.
[247] "U.S. Policy as the Afghan Succession Approaches" November 21, 1977, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1977, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=270826&dt=2532&dl=1629.

PDPA.[248]

While the U.S. inability to predict the coup was understandable, it is interesting that that neither the KGB nor the Kremlin had any prior knowledge of the coup as well. The KGB even entertained the notion that the coup might have been orchestrated by Mossad[249] in order to destroy Daoud's government.[250] When Soviet Ambassador Alexander Puzanov met with other ambassadors in Kabul five days after the coup, he expressed his "complete surprise" as he had just been escorting a Soviet delegation to the airport when the tanks had started rolling.[251] Perhaps even better evidence of Soviet non-involvement in the coup is that from 21st April, 1978 when PDPA protests were underway and the CC CPSU granted Daoud's request for the donation of "45 BTR-65 PB armored personnel carriers with ammunition; 26 combat radios for border troops; 10,000 Kalashnikov rifles (AK); and 5,000 Makarov pistols (PM) with ammunition, totaling about 6.3million rubles."[252]

Notably, the ensuing Saur Revolution was achieved with limited manpower. Available sources estimate that there were between 10,000 and 18,000 PDPA members with only about 2,000 soldiers.[253] On 27th April, the day of the coup, the U.S. Embassy already suspected *Khalq* involvement even though the first initial broadcast of rebels in Radio Kabul was ambiguous.[254] The following radio broadcasts, however, clearly showed that *Khalq* was in command. In his early speeches, Taraki was careful not to use the word "communist" revolution, but rather referred to it as "nationally democratic".[255]

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[248] "Cable from AMEMBASSY Kabul to SECSTATE."
[249] "Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations" – Israeli intelligence agency.
[250] Kalinovsky, "The Blind Leading the Blind," 26.
[251] "Afghan Regime Displays New Red Flag." Also, Brezhnev famously said to Carter that the Soviets first heard about the coup in a radio broadcast. See Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2013), 261.
[252] "The Delivery of Special Equipment to the DRA, CC CPSU Politburo Meeting" April 21, 1978, N. I. Marchuk "Neob"yavlennaya voina v Afganistane : ofitsial'naya versiya i uroki pravdy" Moscow "Luch", 1993, p. 80 RTsKhDS CC CPSU Special Folder d. 3, t. 2, l. 193, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113139.
[253] Fred Halliday and Zahir Tanin, "The Communist Regime in Afghanistan 1978–1992: Institutions and Conflicts," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 8 (December 1998): 1360.
[254] "William G. Bowdler/Harold H. Saunders to the Secretary" April 27, 1978, The Gelman Library, The National Security Archive, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/carterbrezhnev/docs_intervention_in_afghanistan_and_the_fall_of_detente/doc15.pdf.
[255] M.S. Agwani, "The Saur Revolution and After," *International Studies* 19, no. 4 (1980): 561.

4.5. PDPA at Power, 1978-1979

Owing to the relative supremacy of *Khalq* over *Parcham*, Taraki was named President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Karmal obtained the position of Vice-President and Deputy Prime Minister, and Amin was given the position of Foreign Minister and Second Vice-President. When the new government was proclaimed on 30th April, 1978, the USSR was the first country to recognize it.[256]

Soon having assumed power, the unity of the PDPA began to deteriorate again. Amin secretly contacted the Soviets and attempted to persuade them to work exclusively with *Khalq*. Already in June, Karmal sent his close confidant, Nur Ahmad Nur, to Puzanov and warned the Soviets of Amin's attempt to replace Taraki and purge *Parcham* from the government. Puzanov tried to persuade Taraki to sustain the unity of the PDPA, but was unsuccessful. The first phase of the purge began in the beginning of July and leading *Parchamis*, including Karmal, were exiled as ambassadors. [257] In August, several key officials associated with *Parcham*, such as Minister of Defense Abdul Qadir and Army Chief of Staff Shahpoor Ahmadzai were arrested and executed on charges of attempting a coup. The rest of the *Parchamis* were either imprisoned or expelled from the government. In September, *Khalq* ordered the ambassadors to return home, but they refused and instead sought refuge in Eastern Europe. In response, Amin sent an assassination team to get rid of Karmal, but the plot was uncovered by Czechoslovak intelligence.[258] As a consequence of the purges, the ratio of *Parchamis* to *Khalqists* dropped from 9:13 in May to 1:23 in August (Figure 4.1).

[256] Hilali, "The Soviet Penetration into Afghanistan and the Marxist Coup," 712.
[257] Westad, "Prelude to Invasion," 52–54.
[258] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 107–108. For a U.S. perception on the events regarding *Parchami* Ambassadors, see "Recall of Parchamist Ambassadors" September 6, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=218281&dt=2694&dl=2009.

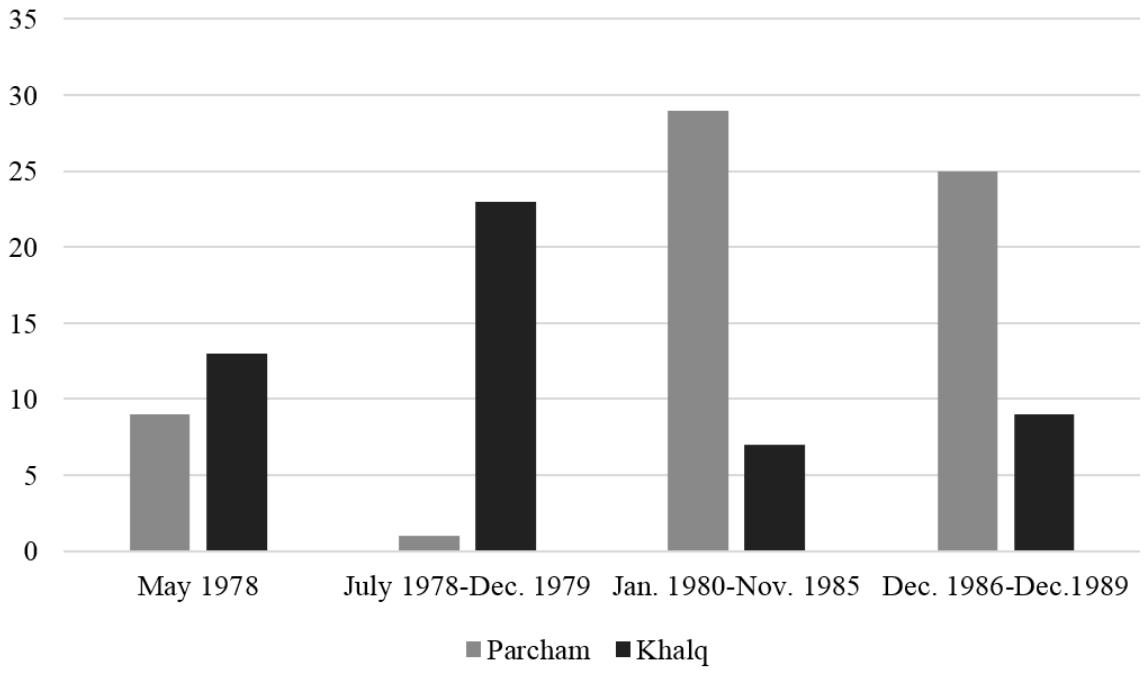

Figure 4.1 The factional composition of the PDPA government[259]

Four months after the Revolution, prominent scholar Louis Dupree visited the U.S. Embassy in Kabul to share his expert opinions. In doing so, he made several interesting predictions, some of which were rather accurate. Firstly, he argued that the PDPA's regime, unlike Daoud, would never have the respect of the rural areas and therefore he expected unrest to increase in autumn which would result in the collapse of the regime by March, 1979. Dupree also said that Amin had already won the power struggle with Taraki and that he would sooner or later displace him (and presumably send him into exile). Perhaps the most striking of Dupree's predictions (U.S. Ambassador Dubs did not agree with it) was that Amin was very likely to be assassinated by the KGB.[260]

In dealing with its opponents, *Khalq* clearly drew inspiration from Stalinist purges. The Soviets tried to follow-up on the efforts of Puzanov and sent Ponomarev to

[259] Based on data from *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 114.
[260] "Departing American Scholar's Views on the Afghan Regime" August 28, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=212147&dt=2694&dl=2009.

warn Taraki that the USSR would turn away from him if he continued with his efforts to eliminate *Parcham*. However, these warnings fell on "deaf ears". According to Zubok (2007), Taraki and Amin knew that the Soviets could not afford to let them down and therefore they had the freedom to proceed as they wished. They were indeed correct – at the same time, an agreement was signed between the KGB and the Afghan side on intelligence-sharing and cooperation. This was followed by the Treaty of Friendship, signed by Brezhnev and Taraki in Moscow in December.[261] On their part, *Khalqists* preserved their decorum and let their amicable position toward the Soviet Union be known in the press.[262]

After getting rid of *Parcham* and securing Soviet support, Taraki and Amin now felt confident enough to push through with reforms, which included land redistribution, social reforms relating to the customs and women's rights, educational reforms, and several symbolic changes such as a new flag that omitted any Islamic symbols.[263] However, the rapid pace of reforms was "doubly self-defeating". Not only did they significantly strengthen the still weak opposition against the regime, but they largely failed to bring about any changes, as their implementation was inefficient and arbitrary.[264]

Thus, in the winter of 1978-1979, the situation started to quickly deteriorate. Unrest spread from the Pashtun areas into the adjacent provinces in central and western Afghanistan. At about the same time, in January 1979, Shah Reza Pahlavi, a long-time ruler of neighboring Iran, was overthrown. The rapid success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran perplexed the Americans and, by the same token, the Soviets were surprised when the Herat Uprising (in which about 50 Soviet advisors died), happened in March 1979.[265]

As a result of the events in Herat, factionalism within the PDPA increased further. However, this time it was *Khalq* that started fragmenting into a pro-Amin faction and an

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[261] Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 260.
[262] "Afghan Leadership Underscores Ties to USSR" November 16, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=284655&dt=2694&dl=2009.
[263] For a more detailed analysis of the reforms, see chapter "A Brief Overview of Afghan History."
[264] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 989.
[265] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, Reprint edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 220.

anti-Amin faction (led by Taraki) which blamed him for the political blunders. Taraki took the first step and put his close allies into key positions, a group known as the "Gang of Four."[266] Amin's response was to create a "Homeland Defense Committee", intended to negate the executive power of the defense and interior ministry.[267]

In the summer of 1979, Moscow intensified its efforts to pacify Amin. It pushed for a creation of a broad-based government led by a non-communist leader with the former Prime Minister under Zahir, Nur Ahmed Etemadi, being a top candidate.[268] While Taraki responded neutrally, Amin rejected it outright, claiming that the PDPA was already broad enough. Now effectively more powerful than Taraki, Amin started to deviate from Soviet foreign policy positions, similarly as Daoud had done during his second tenure. To gain more popularity with the hostile population, he turned to Pashtun nationalism and also expressed strong anti-Persian sentiment against Khomeini.[269]

On 1st September, the KGB suggested to Moscow that Amin should be eliminated from leadership and face trial for his repressive measures and failed policies. On 10 September, Brezhnev met Taraki in Moscow and told him that "the concentration of excessive power in the hands of others, even your closest aides, could be dangerous for the fate of the revolution. It can hardly be expedient for someone to occupy an exclusive position in the leadership of the country, the armed forces and the organs of state security." As Mitrokhin (2009) argues, this was a hint to Taraki to get rid of Amin.[270]

The events that unfolded after Taraki's return to Kabul are still not well understood. However, it is known that Taraki refused to obey Soviet suggestions in regards to Amin, because he had heard that Amin had prepared countermoves. However, key Soviet figures such as the Soviet Ambassador Alexander Puzanov demanded an immediate audience with Taraki and Amin. After Puzanov read a long list of Afghan wrongdoings, both Taraki and Amin pretended to be united and promised that everything

[266] The "Gang of Four" consisted of the Minister of Interior, Minister of Defense, head of the AGSA (intelligence agency) and a prominent military officer.
[267] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, 38–39.
[268] However, Taraki, Amin and Karmal would be all included in this new government.
[269] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, 40. The Soviets were afraid that further antagonism against Pakistan and Iran would result in more Pakistani support for the resistance, a change from their previous stance prior to the Saur Revolution.
[270] Vasiliy Mitrokhin, "The KGB in Afghanistan," Working Paper #40 (Washington, D.C: Cold War International History Project, 2009), 49–50.

would be fixed. In the upcoming days, Taraki sent assassins to kill Amin after having learned that Amin had started preparations for an army coup. Amin survived the plot and called a Politburo meeting which expelled Taraki and elected Amin as the PDPA's new leader. He also proceeded with further purges and concluded with an execution of Taraki himself on 9th October.[271]

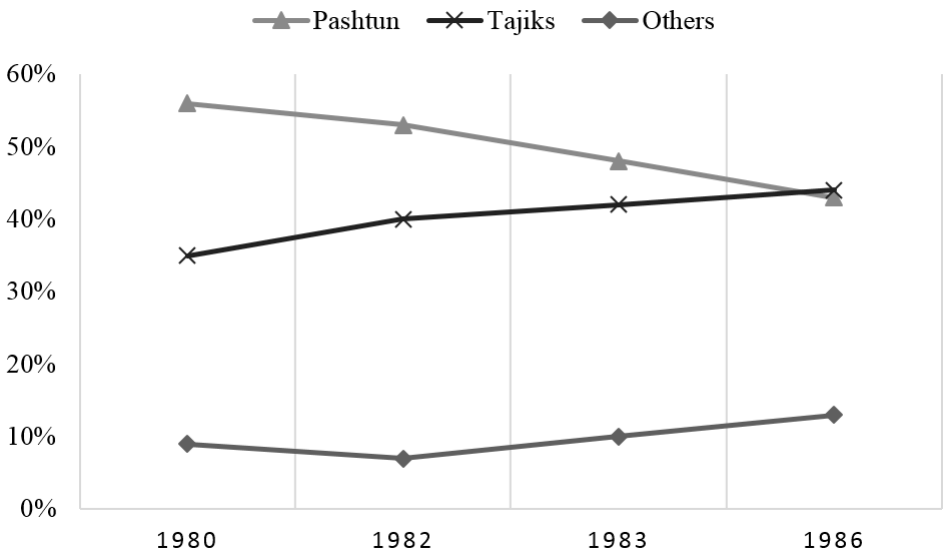

Figure 4.2 Ethnic origin of the PDPA members[272]

Suspecting Soviet involvement in the plot to remove him, Amin decided to seek closer ties with the U.S. and Pakistan, which further infuriated the Soviets. [273] He met with U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Bruce Amstutz and tried to repair the damage done by the assassination of the U.S. Ambassador Dubs in February 1979, who was reportedly killed in a shootout with police after his abduction by a Tajik, anti-Pashtun separatist group, the *Setam-i-Milli* (Oppressed Nation Movement).[274] His Foreign Minister, Shah Wali, echoed these efforts in New York when meeting with Under Secretary for Political Affairs David

[271] Westad, "Prelude to Invasion," 61–62.
[272] Unfortunately, data on ethnicity (Table 4.2) and social composition (Table 4.3) of the PDPA members are not available for the pre-1979 period. The graph is based on data from Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, 257.
[273] Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 71–75.
[274] "U.S. Embassy Kabul 7218," September 27, 1979. Cited in Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 1008.

Newson.[275] However, the Afghan attempts to improve relations with the United States did not go beyond words and the Soviet fear of Amin turning to the U.S. was unfounded.[276]

Similarly, Amin's attempts to appease Pakistan fell on deaf ears.[277] Since September 1979, Amin had provided an extended an invitation to General Zia and his Foreign Minister Agha Shahi. However, Zia though that an official Pakistani visit would demoralize the resistance. Eventually, after months of Amin's frantic efforts, Shahi's visit was planned for 22nd December, but had to be rescheduled due to snow to 30th December, but this was already too late for Amin.[278]

Upon assuming presidency, Amin began to publicly defame the USSR and especially Ambassador Puzanov.[279] However, Amin's consolidation of power was clearly a Pyrrhic victory, and only temporary at best. Due to his excesses, the mood in Moscow gradually shifted from opposition to the support of an armed intervention. Ultimately, on 27th December, 1979, Amin was killed by the KGB and succeeded by his long-time bitter opponent, Babrak Karmal. From that moment on, the PDPA was, for the first time, in the hands of *Parcham*. Due to Karmal's marginalization of *Khalqists* within the PDPA, the ethnic makeup started to change and Pashtun dominance was in a decline (Figure 4.2).

[275] "Cable from SECSTATE to AMEMBASSY Kabul," September 29, 1979, A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "Towards an International History of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AfghanistanV1_1978-1979.pdf.
[276] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 1080.
[277] By the time Amin became president, Afghanistan had been publicly accusing Pakistan, which they held solely responsible for the unrest. See Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 121.
[278] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 1008.
[279] Mitrokhin, "The KGB in Afghanistan," 70–71.

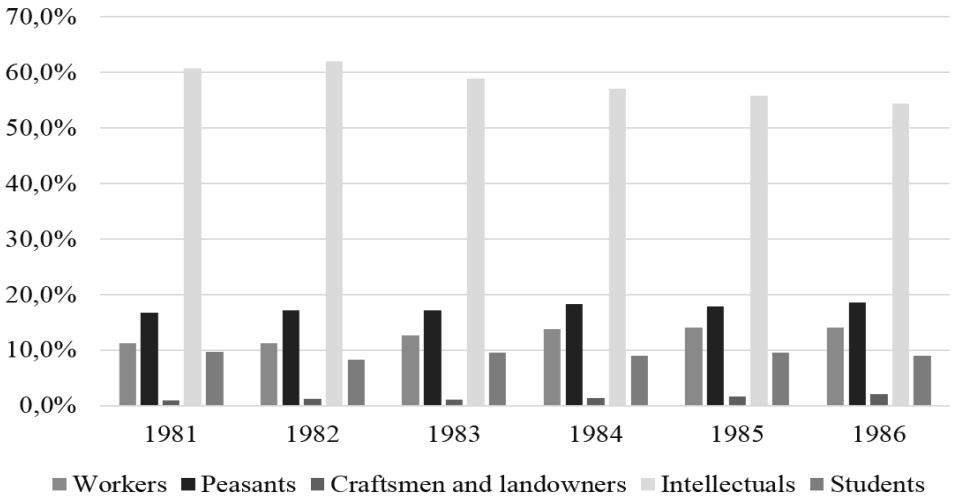

Figure 4.3 Social composition of the PDPA members[280]

4.6. Summary

From one perspective, the history of Afghan communism prior to the Soviet invasion can be seen as a power struggle between the three distinct personalities of Nur Ahmed Taraki, Hafizullah Amin, and Babrak Karmal. On the other hand, it can also be seen as the broader antagonism between two divergent socialist ideologies. The adherents of the first one, *Khalq*, usually came from poor rural areas and saw themselves as ideological successors of Lenin and Stalin. They believed that the time was right for socialism in Afghanistan, and that it would be achieved through a revolution.[281] *Parchamis*, however, were usually more moderate communists and they mostly came from the urban environment and were well-educated. They realized that the Afghan society was still not ready to embrace socialism because the conservative majority of the Afghan population saw Marxism as a threat to their values. Also, the working class formed only a minority of the Afghan society and the majority of the PDPA members were intellectuals and students (Figure 4.3). For this reason, *Parcham* preferred to work on gradual change

[280] Graph based on data from Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978-1992*, 258.
[281] Soon after the Saur Revolution, Amin told Taraki that his decrees must be carried out without questioning and objectors are to be shot, as Stalin would have done. When Puzanov asked Taraki in August, 1979 not to execute the *Parchamis*, Taraki responded with: "Lenin taught us to be merciless towards the enemies of the revolution and millions of people had to be eliminated in order to secure the victory of the October Revolution." See Mitrokhin, "The KGB in Afghanistan," 33–41.

within the system. They were also closely aligned with the Kremlin's position and it is therefore unsurprising that *Parchamis* were in leading positions from 1980 onwards.

In light of this incoherence, the fragmentation of the communist party, the PDPA, was inevitable despite Moscow's idealistic wishes for the contrary. Ideological and ethnic differences played a crucial role as did the charismatic personalities of the three leaders. Thus, the PDPA was able to unite only on two brief occasions – its creation in 1965-1967 and also for the coup against Daoud in 1977-1978. Most importantly, during its first two years in power, which Dupree characterizes as "more Groucho than Karl",[282] it failed to cooperate when it was needed the most to counter the increasingly dangerous insurrection. This infighting further worsened its already fragile position, and arguably precipitated the Soviet invasion.

[282] Don Oberdorfer, "The Making of a Soviet Coup," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 1980, http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/01/02/the-making-of-a-soviet-coup/175c9707-dddb-4052-87be-9bf4f048bf56/.

5. Afghanistan and the Foreign Policy of Neighboring States

While the major focus of this work is on Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan, the examination of other involved players is helpful as it provides an important regional context. It also serves to analyze the framework of Cold War dynamics in Asia. While some states such as China were only marginally involved in Afghanistan, others such as Pakistan and to a lesser degree Iran occupied an important place in Afghan domestic and foreign affairs.

Researching this issue is a technical challenge due to the limited body of literature on the subject and the negligible amount of direct primary sources. When analyzing U.S. and Soviet foreign policy, there are numerous archival documents available for both perspectives. This is, however, not the case with Pakistan, Iran, and to a large degree China, as their archives remain closed to researchers. As a consequence, this chapter relies mostly on indirect archival evidence – i.e. Soviet and American documents that contain interactions with a policymakers from either of the three countries.

5.1. The People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China (PRC) and Afghanistan are neighbors only in the strictest technical sense. They only share a 76-km long border, a narrow strip of land high in the Hindu Kush. It is called the Wakhan Corridor and lacks the adequate infrastructure that would connect both countries. Afghanistan has thus featured on the Chinese agenda predominantly only during regional spillovers of security threats. This was the case of the Soviet invasion, when the PRC became a major sponsor of the *mujahedeen*.[283]

The Wakhan Corridor itself has no demographic logic, rather it is a legacy of the "Great Game". It was supposed to serve as a buffer that would separate British India and Tsarist Russia. After both powers formulated the precise form of the Wakhan Corridor, they made a couple of subsequent revisions which shifted the Chinese border with Afghanistan to the east. China did not object to this change because it did not consider its

[283] Andrew Small, "Afghanistan: The View from China" (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2014), 1, http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/afghanistan-the-view-from-china/.

border with Afghanistan as having any strategic importance.[284]

This Chinese indifference continued into the 20th century. While the PRC and Afghanistan recognized each other as early as in 1950, it took another five years to establish diplomatic relations. With the exception of Nepal and Laos, Afghanistan was the last bordering country to do so.[285] The PRC's official classification of Afghanistan in that time was "peaceful and neutral."[286] One document from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade from 1955 argues that trade opportunities with Afghanistan were limited: "Afghanistan exports an extremely small variety of commodities, [and] they are moreover not what our country needs." However, the PRC was willing to supply Afghanistan with industrial equipment on credit.[287] Five years later, the Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Geng talked with the Pakistani ambassador to Afghanistan and told him that while the relations between the PRC and Afghanistan were friendly, the volume of the trade had been very low – around $300 thousand in total.[288]

Kabul was consistently supportive of the PRC's membership in the UN (as opposed to that of Taiwan) and even abstained from condemning the PRC's involvement in the Korean War.[289] Nonetheless, the first high-level visit between both countries occurred as late as 1957-1959.[290] At this time, mutual trade agreements were implemented and in 1960, the Treaty of Friendship was signed, further followed by the

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[284] Gerald Segal, "China and Afghanistan," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 11 (November 1, 1981): 1159. For the list of all of the historical agreements that shaped Afghan borders, see Office of the Geographer, "Afghanistan - U.S.S.R. Boundary," International Boundary Study (Washington, D.C.: The U.S. Department of State, September 15, 1983).

[285] Segal, "China and Afghanistan," 1161.

[286] "Report from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, 'Draft Plan for Attending the Asian-African Conference'" April 4, 1955, PRC FMA 207-00004-01, 1-7, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112896.

[287] "Report from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade, 'Scheme for Our Participation in the Trade Activities of the Asian-African Conference (Revised Draft) (Preliminary Paper)'" March 12, 1955, PRC FMA 207-00070-03, 86-94, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113252.

[288] "Memorandum of Conversation Between Deputy Minister Geng and Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan Khan Abdur Rahman Khan at Ambassador Khan's Banquet for Vice Premier Chen" August 22, 1960, PRC FMA 203-00033-11, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117119.

[289] Yitzhak. Shichor, *The Middle East in China's Foreign Policy, 1949-1977* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 29.

[290] "Summary of the Two Conversations between Premier Zhou and Prime Minister Khan of Afghanistan" January 21, 1957, PRC FMA 203-00024-08, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121607.

1963 Border Agreement.[291]

The 1960 treaty was important in the Cold War context because of the Sino-Soviet split.[292] While the USSR was already a major player in Afghanistan by late 1950s, signing the Treaty of Friendship meant that Afghan-PRC relations remained cordial despite growing Soviet influence, about which China grew increasingly worried. Also, in order to counter its other important rival, India, the PRC maintained close relations with Pakistan, to which the importance of Afghanistan was always subordinate.[293] China considered the Pashtunistan dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan to be an unnecessary distraction for Pakistan's foreign policy and military. Therefore, the PRC used every opportunity to push both countries to resolve the issue.[294]

Unsurprisingly, the level of Chinese engagement remained low well into the 1970s, owing to the perceived strategic unimportance of Afghanistan, the turbulent Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong, and growing Chinese support for Pakistan.[295] In 1965, both countries signed an aid agreement. However, by 1971-1972, Chinese aid to Afghanistan remained only meager[296] but the PRC was still the 4th largest donor of foreign aid, which totaled $21 million in grants and $44 in loans for industrial projects such as textile and paper mills.[297] Nevertheless, this contribution paled in comparison

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[291] Shen-Yu Dai, "China and Afghanistan," *The China Quarterly* 25 (1966): 218.

[292] The Sino-Soviet split marked a deterioration of relations between the two countries in the aftermath of Stalin's death and stemming from ideological and strategic differences. In the early 1970s, the Sino-Soviet split was followed by Sino-U.S. rapprochement under the Nixon Administration. The importance of both events in the context of the Cold War and Sino-Afghan relations is difficult to overstate. For more information, see Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974: From "Red Menace" to "Tacit Ally"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Sergey Radchenko, "The Sino-Soviet Split," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 2: Crises and Détente*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 349–72; Vladislav M. Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Krushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 210–235.

[293] Jonathan Ludwig, "Sino-Afghan Relations in the Twenty-First Century: From Uncertainty to Engagement?," *Griffith Asia Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (2015): 41.

[294] For Pakistan, see "Summary of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and Pakistan's Ambassador to the PRC, Rashidi (Excerpt)" March 8, 1962, PRC FMA 105-01799-02, 9-16, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121570; for Afghanistan, see "Summary of the Two Conversations between Premier Zhou and Prime Minister Khan of Afghanistan."

[295] Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence*, 145–146.

[296] Bernhard Grossman, "International Economic Relations of the People's Republic of China," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 9 (September 1970): 794.

[297] Jonathan Z Ludwig, "Sixty Years of Sino-Afghan Relations," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 2 (June 2013): 397 However, the visibility of China's aid was aided by the fact that it was

with the $517 million extended by the USSR.[298] Finally, a quantitative analysis of mutual diplomatic activity further underscores the relative unimportance of Afghanistan to the PRC. With 12 treaties signed in the 1970s, Afghanistan occupied the 34th place among China's relations.[299]

In 1973, when Daoud instigated a coup, the PRC became ever more concerned about increasing Soviet influence. In the same year, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai told Henry Kissinger that he believed that the ultimate plan of the Soviets was to get the whole of Afghanistan under their rule.[300] Nevertheless, Daoud's efforts to balance Soviet influence soon reassured the Chinese. As a reward, they offered a $55 million interest-free loan to Afghanistan.[301]

The Saur Revolution of 1978 made alarmed the Chinese once more and reinforced their perception of Soviet expansionism in the region. As soon as May 1978, Chinese attempted to persuade the U.S. to repair its ties with Pakistan.[302] In June, they dwelled on the issue again, this time explicitly asking the U.S. to assist Pakistan.[303] In January 1979, U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski noted that the Chinese were even more anxious after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and that they saw a pattern between Soviet actions in Ethiopia, South Yemen, Afghanistan, and Vietnam,[304]

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extended in a period when both superpowers were cutting back on their contributions; see Newell, "Foreign Relations," 82.

[298] Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, 51.

[299] Takashi Shinobu, "China's Bilateral Treaties, 1973-82: A Quantitative Study," *International Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (December 1987): 449–452.

[300] "Memorandum of Conversation" November 11, 1973, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 100, Country Files, Far East, Secretary Kissinger's Conversations in Peking, National Archives, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v18/d56.

[301] A.Z Hilali, "China's Response to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 20, no. 3 (September 2001): 326.

[302] "Memorandum of Conversation" May 21, 1978, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Office, Outside the System File, Box 46, China: Brzezinski, Carter Library, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v13/d110. U.S.-Pakistani ties worsened when General Zia ul-Haq deposed and executed previous U.S. ally Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. General Zia was also aggressively pursuing the acquisition of nuclear weapons, which ran against U.S. security interests. See Robert J. McMahon, "Nationalism and Regionalism in an Era of Globalization: US Relations with South and Southeast Asia, 1975–2000," in *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*, ed. Robert D. Schulzinger (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 440–54.

[303] "Memorandum of Conversation" June 2, 1978, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Oksenberg Subject File, Box 56, Carter Library, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v13/d117.

[304] While the Soviets supported the regime in Hanoi, the Chinese started supporting the Khmer Rouge government in the Cambodian-Vietnamese War. When the Vietnamese overthrew the Khmer Rouge, China continued its support for the remnants of the regime. The Khmer Rouge was responsible for the Cambodian

thus fearing Soviet encirclement.[305]

Interestingly, the Saur Revolution did not completely terminate relations between the PRC and Afghanistan.[306] As late as July 1979, a trade contract for cotton valued at $7 million was signed. However, immediately after the Soviet invasion, China started channeling arms and military advisors through Pakistan to bolster resistance in Afghanistan. To some degree, it cooperated with the U.S. in this endeavor, allowing for the transit of U.S. planes carrying supplies to the *mujahedeen*. On top of all that, China encouraged its Muslim Uighurs to go and wage *jihad* against Soviets in Afghanistan.[307] During a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown on 8th January 1980, Deputy Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping summarized the new Chinese foreign policy toward Afghanistan:

> …the only correct approach to Afghanistan is to give aid to the resistance forces, and we should work together on this. But, I'd emphasize that this kind of aid must be more than symbolic….Facts in Afghanistan prove that most of the Afghan troops have leaned toward the resistance forces…The Afghan people have been fighting fiercely against Soviet aggression. We must turn Afghanistan into a quagmire in which the Soviet Union is bogged down for a long time in a guerrilla warfare.[308]

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genocide (1975-1979), in which approximately two million people perished. See Charles McGregor, "China, Vietnam, and the Cambodian Conflict: Beijing's End Game Strategy," *Asian Survey* 30, no. 3 (March 1990): 266–83; Michael Haas, *Genocide by Proxy: Cambodian Pawn on a Superpower Chessboard* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991).

[305] "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) to President Carter" January 25, 1979, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, VIP Visit File, Box 2, China: Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, Carter Library, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v13/d196.

[306] Nevertheless, Taraki himself did not have much sympathy for China, saying that the "leaders of China allied themselves to the enemies of communism. The People's Democratic Party has cleared the army and the state apparatus of the Maoist elements." See "Soviet Communication to the Hungarian Leadership on the Situation in Afghanistan" October 17, 1978, National Archives of Hungary (MOL) M-KS 288 f. 11/4377.o.e., History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113147.

[307] Mohammad Mansoor Ehsan, "Afghanistan-China Relations, 1955-2012," *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 17, no. 3/4 (2013): 236–239. For the implications of this decision on the current security situation in Uighur Xinjiang, see Jeff Reeves, "Does China's Afghan Foreign Policy Consitute a Grand Strategy?," *Defense Concepts* 5, no. 4 (2010): 25–27; China's Muslim minority is located near its borders with Afghanistan in the Xintiang Province. China previously used this fact to improve mutual ties. See Shichor, *The Middle East in China's Foreign Policy, 1949-1977*, 18.

[308] "Memorandum of Conversation" January 8, 1980, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Oksenberg Subject File, Box 26, Brown (Harold), Carter Library, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v13/d292.

5.2. Iran

Iran shares a significantly longer border with Afghanistan than China – 936 kilometers. It also shares many cultural, linguistic and religious similarities.[309] Despite this, the relations between the two countries have for the most part been strained.[310] Most of the area that constitutes Afghanistan was historically part of the Persian Empire and the core of the mutual coldness can be traced to the historical uprisings of Sunni Muslim Afghans against the Iranian Shia Muslim rule.[311]

Official diplomatic relations were established during the rule of Amanullah in 1921, when the Treaty of Friendship was signed followed by the Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression in 1927. However, since the very beginning, mutual ties were marked by border disputes that often revolved around the usage of water from the Helmand River.[312] After the CIA-sponsored overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddegh,[313] the relationship between Iran's ruler Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and the U.S. became closer as a result.[314] Afghanistan thus regarded the Shah to be a puppet of the U.S.[315] In 1956, Afghan governmental press blamed the construction of the Iranian dam for severe floods in their shared border areas.[316] Subsequently, in 1958, ambitious Iranian attempts to propose a federation of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan failed to gain the support of both of Iran's neighbors.[317]

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[309] Bruce. Koepke, *Iran's Policy on Afghanistan: The Evolution of Strategic Pragmatism* (Solna: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2013).
[310] Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iranian Support to the Afghan Resistance" July 11, 1985, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/us7.pdf.
[311] "Special National Intelligence Estimate 34-70" September 3, 1970, Central Intelligence Agency, NIC Files, Job 79R01012A, Box 387, Folder 3, Central Intelligence Agency, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve04/d86.
[312] Frank A. Clements and Ludwig W. Adamec, *Conflict in Afghanistan: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 8.
[313] Mosaddegh's policies threatened British interests in Iran and the U.S. was afraid of growing Soviet influence in the country. See Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The Causes of Iran's 1953 Coup: A Critique of Darioush Bayandor's Iran and the CIA," *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 5 (September 1, 2012): 669–78.
[314] For a comprehensive account on U.S.-Iran relations see Babak Ganji, *Politics of Confrontation the Foreign Policy of the USA and Revolutionary Iran* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006).
[315] Amin Saikal, "Iranian Foreign Policy, I921-1979," in *The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol.7*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin. Hambly, and Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 442–447.
[316] "Czechoslovak Embassy in Kabul to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," May 22, 1956, Territorial Division - regular files, 1945-1959, BOX 2, Archive of the Foreign Ministry, Prague.
[317] "Telegram from Karachi," August 20, 1958, Territorial Division - regular files, 1945-1959, BOX 2, Archive of the Foreign Ministry, Prague; Louis Dupree, "A Suggested Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran Federation," *The Middle East Journal*, 1963, 383–99.

Nevertheless, on some occasions such as in 1963, Iran helped to ease the Afghan-Pakistan tensions by mediation.[318] Also, when Iran signed a 1967 agreement with the USSR, exchanging its gas for Soviet light arms, it effectively strengthened its image for Afghanistan by seeming less dependent on the U.S.[319] In March 1973, an agreement settling the Helmand River dispute was signed. When Daoud initially came to power in 1973, the Shah of Iran was anxious and even plotted to instigate a counter-coup, which would put Zahir's son-in-law, Abdul Wali, to power. Furthermore, he deported one million illegal Afghan workers back to Afghanistan, fueling further discontent. However, after negotiations in October 1974, mutual relations improved substantially.[320] Both countries signed trade deals and Iran promised the construction of a highway connecting Afghanistan to the duty-free seaport in the Gulf. They also started planning joint industrial and agricultural projects and even the exploitation of Afghan oil deposits, previously deemed as uneconomical.[321]

The Iranian Shah's policy toward Afghanistan was to prevent it from falling into Soviet hands, as he believed that Soviets aim was to gain access to the warm water ports of the Indian Ocean and effectively encircle Iran.[322] He believed that Soviets planned to do this by supporting independence movements in Baluchistan [323] and Pashtunistan.[324] In a 1975 conversation with President Ford and Kissinger, the Shah expressed his fears of a possible coup by pro-Soviet military officers against Daoud.[325] To this end, in 1974, the

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[318] Safia S. Mohammadally, "Pakistan-Iran Relations (1947-1979)," *Pakistan Horizon* 32, no. 4 (December 1, 1979): 55–60.
[319] Saikal, "Iranian Foreign Policy, I921-1979," 449.
[320] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 93–94.
[321] Mehrunnisa Ali, "The Attitude of the New Afghan Regime towards Its Neighbours," *Pakistan Horizon* 27, no. 3 (September 1, 1974): 58–61; Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 179.
[322] Saikal, "Iranian Foreign Policy, I921-1979," 456; "Memorandum of Conversation" July 26, 1973, RG 59, Central Files 1970–1973, POL 7 IRAN, National Archives, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d29.
[323] There are about 10 million Balochi people, most of them located in Pakistan and to a lesser degree in Iran and Afghanistan. Balochi separatists therefore mostly fought against the Pakistani government. Henry Kissinger is reported to say that "I wouldn't recognize the Baluchistan problem if it hit me in the face." See Selig S. Harrison, "Baluch Nationalism and Superpower Rivalry," *International Security* 5, no. 3 (1980): 152–63; Selig S. Harrison, "Nightmare in Baluchistan," *Foreign Policy*, no. 32 (1978): 136.
[324] Hasan Askari Rizvi, *Pakistan and the Geostrategic Environment: A Study of Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 89–90.
[325] "Memorandum of Conversation" May 16, 1975, National Security Adviser, Memoranda of Conversations, Box 11, Ford Library, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v27/d127.

Shah promised $2 billion[326] in development aid to Daoud in order to reduce Afghan dependency on the Soviet Union.[327] Even though only $10 million was eventually extended due to turmoil in both countries, the plan was ambitious.[328] While previously a negligible donor, Iran would become by far the most important one in Daoud's seven-year plan of 1976-1983.[329]

The Shah also encouraged Afghanistan to join the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) alongside Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. However, Daoud rejected this offer, as he perceived the RCD to be a pro-U.S. pact which would violate Afghan neutrality.[330] Nevertheless, their cooperation became personal – the Shah actively supported Daoud's purges of leftist elements in the government and Daoud made use of Iran's secret police, SAVAK, to locate Soviet agents, which further angered the PDPA and, arguably, hastened his fall.[331]

In the end, the Iran-Afghan relationship was changed significantly by the overthrow of Daoud in the Saur Revolution in April, 1978, and by the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which started in January, 1978 and resulted in the overthrow of the Shah in January, 1979. While still antagonistic towards the Soviet Union and the Communist ideology as the Shah had been, the new Iranian regime would switch its support from the Afghan government to some groups in the Shiite resistance.[332] It would also send its nationals to participate in the armed uprisings and spread Khomeini's ideology and politics.[333] It is important to note, however, that in a larger context, the Afghan-Soviet

[326] Oil-rich Iran was a founding member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and, in the mid-1970s, it profited significantly from increased oil prices.
[327] This would be more than the entirety of Soviet and American aid provided since 1953. See Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81*, 49–50.
[328] Amin Saikal, "Islamism, the Iranian Revolution, and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 3: Endings*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 126.
[329] Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, 51.
[330] Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*, 100.
[331] Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 178–179.
[332] In fact, as Emadi (1995) observes, not all Shiite in Afghanistan were pro-Khomeini. Only two out of seven resistance groups had explicit ties to Iran.
[333] Emadi, "Exporting Iran's Revolution"; for a chronological analysis of Iran's support for the insurgents, see Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iranian Support to the Afghan Resistance."

War was not a priority for Iran. The goal to win the protracted war with Iraq (1980-1988) overshadowed all other foreign policy considerations, including Afghanistan.[334]

5.3. Pakistan

In 1947, owing to the independence movement of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, sovereign Pakistan was established. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan share much of their history and culture, including some national heroes such as Jamal al-Afghani, a prominent pan-Islamist.[335] However, despite the similarities, mutual relations have been marked with hostility stemming from the Pasthunistan issue – an irredentist claim of Afghanistan to those parts of Pakistan that are inhabited by Pashtun tribes. Therefore, any analysis of Afghan-Pakistan relations cannot be divorced from the core issue of the Pasthunistan dispute, as it was a matter of primary importance for the Afghan government well into the mid-1970s.[336]

Nevertheless, from the Pakistani foreign policy perspective, its rivalry with Afghanistan came second to the antagonism against India. The roots of bitterness with India date back to medieval times, when Islam and Hinduism competed for dominance in the South Asian region. This continued into the period of British India, where Muslims and Hindus vied for jobs and elected offices.[337] During the partition of British India in 1947, local principalities alongside the future border had to choose whether they would join India or Pakistan. Several principalities, such as Junagadh and Hyderabad would eventually join India, while Jammu and Kashmir would become disputed territory between both countries. Some issues, such as the Indus River Dispute, were resolved peacefully;[338] however, many have escalated into full-blown conflicts. The years of 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999 experienced limited wars, skirmishes and standoffs, mostly related to the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. This can be seen as an analogy to the Pasthunistan Dispute. The troubled ties between India and Pakistan further suffered because of the

[334] Mohsen M. Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): 227.
[335] Mujtaba Razvi, "Pak-Afghan Relations since 1947: An Analysis," *Pakistan Horizon* 32, no. 4 (December 1, 1979): 34.
[336] For a discussion of the Pashtunistan issue, see chapter "A Brief Overview of Afghan History."
[337] Rizvi, *Pakistan and the Geostrategic Environment*, 18.
[338] By the Indus Water Treaty in 1960.

acquisition of nuclear weapons by India in 1974 and by Pakistan in 1998.[339]

Ties between India and Pakistan have thus been marked by a protracted history of territorial disputes and the inability to reach permanent agreement. This has been mirrored by developments in Afghan-Pakistan relations from 1947-1979. Most scholars agree that there is not a dominant cause of this pervasive antagonism in the post-1947 era of independence. Power asymmetry (Pakistan being weaker and smaller),[340] ideological incongruity between secular and democratic India and Islamic Pakistan,[341] and the systematic creation of the "other" identity [342] are together one of the possible explanations.

Tensions between India and Pakistan also affected Afghanistan. After the partition of British India, the issue of the Durand Line was passed onto Pakistan and India could enjoy friendly relations with Afghanistan. Ties were maintained partially for strategic considerations against Pakistan and also as a consequence of Cold War dynamics. While generally amicable to the USSR, India joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and Afghanistan tried to pursue its policy of neutrality called *bi-tarafi*.[343] India thus damaged its reputation in the NAM when it supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Even though India was not particularly content about the invasion, Indian policy makers feared that a possible victory of the *mujahedeen* would lead to the establishment of a pro-Pakistani government (which ultimately happened when the Taliban gained in power in 1996-2001).[344]

The regional position of Pakistan was not ideal. It was surrounded by hostile India to the east and Afghanistan to the west, and also separated only by a small strip of the Wakhan Corridor from the intimidating USSR. Feeling encircled, Pakistan sought closer relations with the U.S. through joining the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)

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[339] Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
[340] T. V. Paul, "Why Has the India-Pakistan Rivalry Been so Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict," *Security Studies* 15, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 600–630.
[341] Rizvi, *Pakistan and the Geostrategic Environment*, 19.
[342] Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 131–135.
[343] Harsh V. Pant, "India in Afghanistan: A Test Case for a Rising Power," *Contemporary South Asia* 18, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 133–53.
[344] Sumit Ganguly and Nicholas Howenstein, "India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009): 127.

and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in the mid-1950s.[345] This enabled Pakistan to receive substantial military and economic aid from the U.S., especially in the 1960s under the military dictatorship of Ayub Khan.[346]

As a response to Pakistan's moves, the Soviet Union started supporting the Afghan position in the Pasthunistan Dispute.[347] With Soviet approval and aid, Daoud could pursue the Pasthunistan issue more aggressively, which resulted in the lowest point in Afghan-Pakistani relations in 1961-1963.[348] Following the Bangladeshi War of Independence and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, India and Pakistan signed the Simla Agreement which significantly improved relations between the two nations. Also, following Daoud's resignation, Pakistani relations with Afghanistan started to improve.[349] When Daoud came to power for the second time in 1973, the relationship soured again, but only for a short time. Realizing his fragile position which depended on the PDPA and the Soviets,[350] he started to normalize relations with Pakistan in early 1975, when it was under the leadership of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.[351] When meeting President Ford in 1975, Bhutto confirmed that Pakistani relations with both India and Afghanistan had improved significantly.[352]

This thaw continued even when an ardent Islamist, Zia-ul-Haq, overthrew Bhutto in a 1977 coup; however, the Saur Revolution of 1978 completely changed Pakistan's position towards Afghanistan. First of all, Pakistan became a sanctuary to increasing amounts of Afghan refugees who escaped the rule of the PDPA (Figure 5.1). Many of the refugee bases were hotbeds of Afghan resistance.[353] Most importantly, while Bhutto

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[345] Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Pakistan and Afghanistan: The Strategic Relationship," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 6 (June 1991): 496–511.
[346] Rizvi, *Pakistan and the Geostrategic Environment*, 10–11; For a graph showing the historical trends in U.S. assistance to Pakistan, see "Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers," *Center For Global Development*, accessed August 21, 2015, http://www.cgdev.org/page/aid-pakistan-numbers.
[347] Soviets also started supporting East Pakistani (Bangladesh) secessionist movements. See Agha Shahi, "Pakistan's Relations with the United States," in *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 163–81.
[348] Razvi, "Pak-Afghan Relations since 1947."
[349] S. M. M. Qureshi, "Pakhtunistan: The Frontier Dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Pacific Affairs* 39, no. 1/2 (April 1, 1966): 99–114.
[350] Since the early 1970s, more than two thirds of government revenue came from foreign aid, which was overwhelmingly Soviet. See Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan*, 54.
[351] Qassem, *Afghanistan's Political Stability a Dream Unrealised*, 50–53.
[352] "Bhutto Visit Wrapup" February 12, 1975, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1975, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=96838&dt=2476&dl=1345.
[353] Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 72.

provided some backing for Hekmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islam* in 1975 for his unsuccessful uprising against Daoud, since 1978, under Zia, Afghan *mujahedeen* received arms and training from Pakistan in dedicated camps.[354] The extent of Pakistani cooperation with China prior to the Soviet invasion on the assistance to the *mujahedeen* is not well understood.[355] However, the U.S. started channeling limited aid to the Afghan resistance through Pakistan as early as in July, 1979.[356]

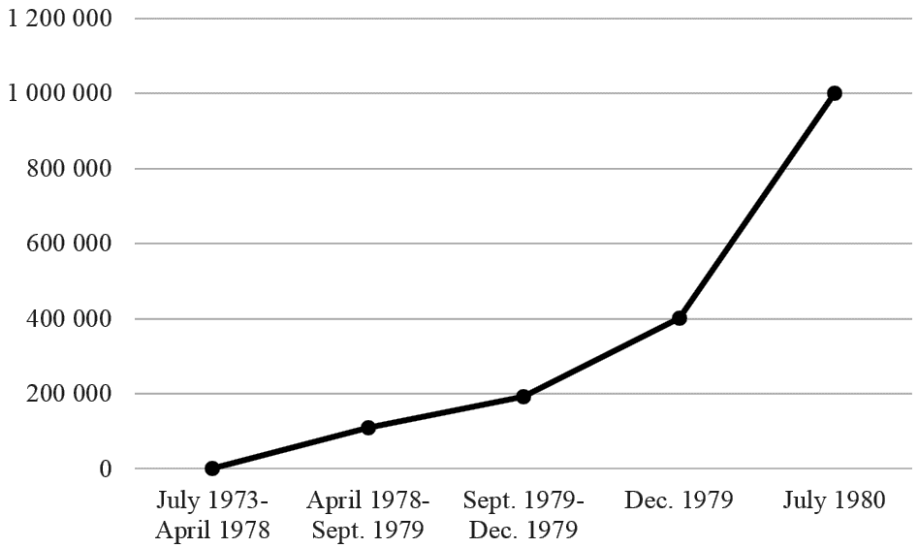


Figure 5.1 Population totals of Afghan refugees in Pakistan[357]

[354] Misdaq, *Afghanistan Political Frailty and External Interference*, 124; Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 93–134.
[355] Robert Gates, former CIA director, writes that on April 4, the Chinese informed the Afghan *mujahedeen* that they might supply arms to them. See Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 146. However, during the high level U.S.-Pakistani talks in October 1979, the Pakistani representative said: "The Chinese had adopted a hands-off policy. There were allegations that the insurgents were receiving arms from the Chinese, but Pakistan had no evidence of this." See "Cable from SECSTATE to AMEMBASSY Islamabad," October 24, 1979, A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "Towards an International History of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AfghanistanV1_1978-1979.pdf. Furthermore, in a memorandum for President Carter from 26 December 1979, Brzezinski does not appear to know about any existing Chinese assistance to the Afghan rebels. See "Memorandum from Zbigniew Brzezinski for the President," December 26, 1979, A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "Towards an International History of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AfghanistanV1_1978-1979.pdf.
[356] For a discussion on the U.S. decision to support the *mujahedeen* prior to the Soviet invasion, see chapter "Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan".
[357] Graph based on data from Nancy Hatch Dupree, "The Demography of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," in *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 366–94.

5.4. Summary

The respective foreign policies of China, Pakistan and Iran towards Afghanistan up to 1979 differed in some aspects, but also shared some key commonalities. For the most part, China had friendly relations with Afghanistan, which was eager to benefit from Chinese trade and aid. However, up to the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan was regarded as a low-priority country for the PRC. Similarly, Iran was only marginally involved in pre-1979 Afghanistan despite its geographical proximity. Mutual relations were initially tense due to border disputes, but ultimately became friendly during Daoud's second term, owing to the large amount of aid promised by the Shah. In contrast to China and India, Pakistani ties with Afghanistan were overwhelmingly hostile. The central issue was the Pasthunistan Dispute, which strongly influenced foreign and domestic policies of both countries until the mid-1970s. However, similarly to China and Iran, Pakistan did not perceive Afghanistan to be its foreign policy priority due to its conflict with India.

Since the mid-1950s, Iran, Pakistan and China shared antipathy towards the USSR. China felt encircled by the Soviets and India, while the Iranian Shah feared an alleged Soviet drive towards the Indian Ocean, which he thought would be achieved by covert Soviet support for the Balochi and Pasthunistan independence movements. Finally, Pakistan saw itself as being surrounded by a hostile India, USSR, and Afghanistan. As a result, concerned with the increasing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, all three states became early backers of the *mujahedeen* resistance movement.[358]

[358] As noted earlier, there is very little published on the Chinese support for the *mujahedeen* prior to the Soviet invasion. Nevertheless, the armed terrorist who took the Ambassador Dubs hostage in February 1972, had reportedly demanded the release of pro-Chinese Tajik guerrilla leaders, who were in Afghan custody. See Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 99,275.

6. Soviet-American Involvement in Afghanistan

Researching U.S. and Soviet foreign policies is a notoriously challenging task. As Holsti (2006) argues, foreign policy should not be seen as a monolith. In both the Kremlin and Washington, policy decisions were made in the context of several "clusters" of intervening variables. Furthermore, the leadership of both superpowers held diverse and sometimes competitive beliefs on the conduct of foreign policy.[359] This can be illustrated on the Vance-Brzezinski Split,[360] which occurred between two competing National Security Council committees within the Carter Administration. While the Policy Review Committee, chaired by Vance, put emphasis on human rights and international economic issues, the Special Coordination Committee, led by Brzezinski, emphasized focus on intelligence gathering, arms control and crisis management.[361]

Despite these constraints on the research of foreign policy, it is possible to make several generalizations about the Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan prior to the 1979 invasion. For instance, Soviet involvement in Afghanistan started earlier and was more intensive, especially in the post-Stalin era. Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was significant also in the context of the Central/South Asian region (Figure 6.1). On the other hand, the United States was a latecomer and its pre-1979 involvement in Afghanistan lagged not only in the regional context (Figure 6.2), but also only in direct comparison with the Soviets (Figure 6.3).[362]

[359] Ole Holsti, *Making American Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2006), chap. 3.
[360] Cyrus Vance was the U.S. Secretary of State and Zbigniew Brzezinski was the U.S. National Security Advisor. Both served in Jimmy Carter's administration.
[361] John Dumbrell, *The Carter Presidency: A Re-Evaluation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 179–209.
[362] The relatively low level of U.S. engagement in this period is even more striking, when put into contemporary context. In between 2001-2013, U.S. aid to Afghanistan was 27 times higher than in the whole period of 1950-1979.

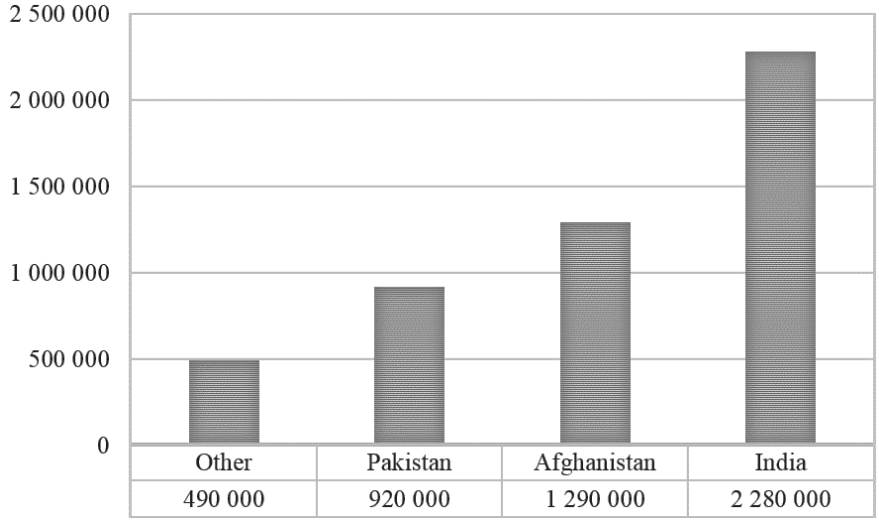


Figure 6.1 Soviet economic aid, 1955-79, thousands $US (historical)[363]

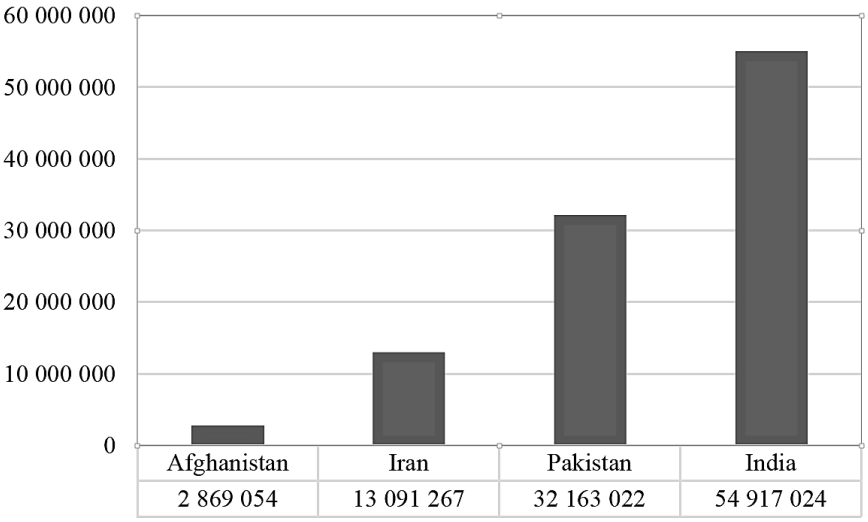
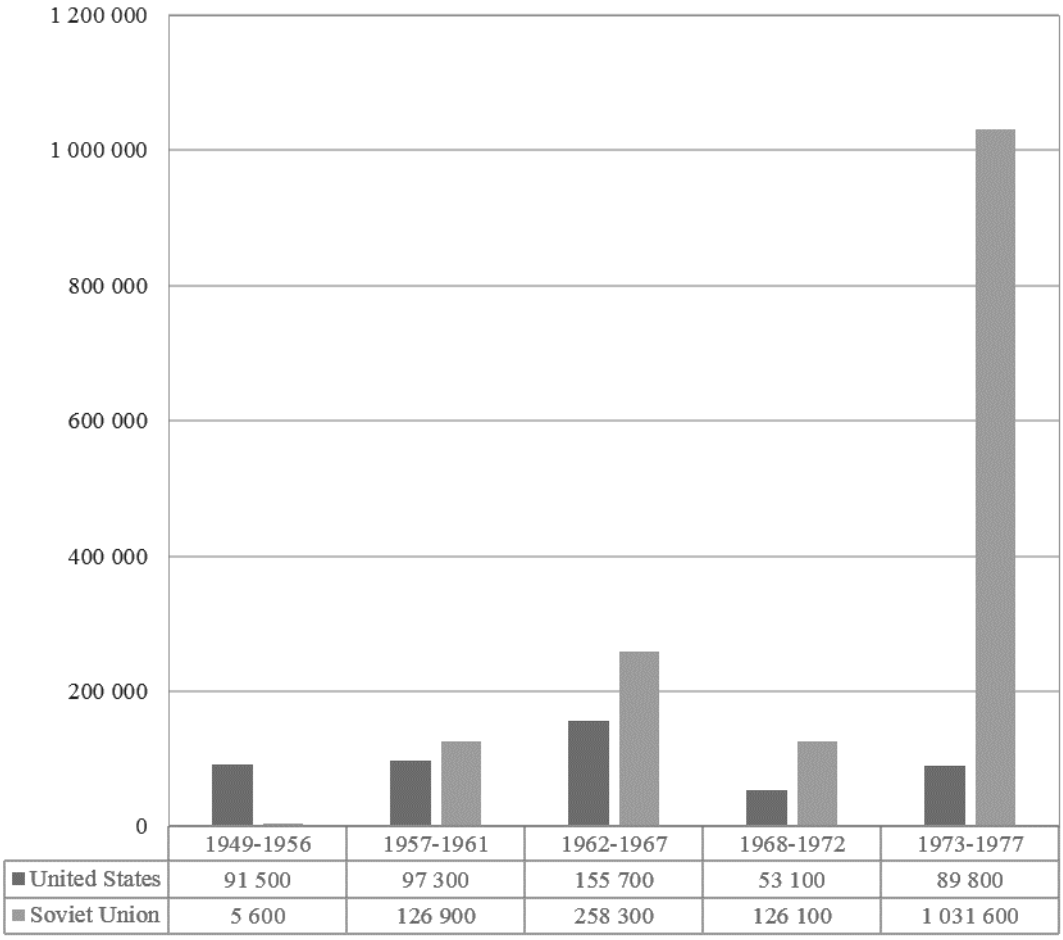


Figure 6.2 Combined U.S. aid, 1950-79, thousands $US (constant 2013)[364]

[363] Note that Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2 are not directly comparable, as the Soviet assessment does not include Soviet military aid (which is still classified) and is available only in historical dollars. See Central Intelligence Agency, "Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1979 and 1954-79," A Research Paper (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, October 1980), http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000499891.pdf.
[364]Based on data from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2013," *USAID*, 2013, http://explorer.devtechlab.com/reports-greenbook.html.



	1949-1956	1957-1961	1962-1967	1968-1972	1973-1977
United States	91 500	97 300	155 700	53 100	89 800
Soviet Union	5 600	126 900	258 300	126 100	1 031 600

Figure 6.3 Aid to Afghanistan compared, 1949-77, thousands $US (historical)[365]

6.1. Early contacts

The newly formed USSR first became involved in Afghanistan during the reign of Amanullah. In 1919, Lenin sent a letter congratulating Amanullah on his accession to the throne and expressed hope that Afghanistan would follow the Soviet example.[366] In 1921, the Treaty of Friendship was signed and followed by the Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression in 1926. However, mutual ties cooled when the Soviet Union started to suppress Muslim separatism in Turkmenistan and incorporated this area into the Union.

[365] Note that Figure 6.3 does not include military aid. Soviet military aid figures are not available, however it is known, for example, that the Soviets extended $100 million in 1956. Also, most Soviet aid in 1973-1977 was extended during the first two years of the five-year plan. Based on data from Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 84–96.
[366] Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81*, 41.

On his part, Amanullah began seeking closer ties with Britain, which further angered the Kremlin.[367] When King Zahir came to the throne in the 1930s, two additional treaties that reaffirmed mutual nonintervention were signed. However, mutual ties were not particularly warm as the royal family requested technical aid from Germany. As a result, Soviet pre-WWII involvement in Afghanistan was only marginal.[368]

In the case of the United States, Amanullah was more proactive from the very beginning, but his overtures were largely ignored. For instance, in 1921, Amanullah sent a delegation to Washington to establish mutual relations. However, while the U.S. Secretary of State recommended to President Harding that he should receive the delegation, he added that it is not necessary to "go beyond their courteous reception."[369] Finally, as late as in 1934, President Roosevelt granted diplomatic recognition to Afghanistan.[370] As a gesture of goodwill, the Afghans provided oil concessions to Inland Oil Company in 1936; however, the company subsequently abandoned the concessions in 1938, upsetting the Afghans as a result.[371] Nevertheless, soon after, the WWII erupted and Washington started to be more mindful about its interests in Asia, resulting in the opening of the legation in Kabul in 1942. As Poullada (1995) argues, "the War accomplished in a few days what years of maneuvering by Afghan officials…failed to do."[372]

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[367] A Department of State document from 1951 observed that "Afghanistan has long feared the USSR, and although it mistrusted the British, it regarded the latter as an offset to Soviet encroachment." See "United States Policy with Respect to Afghanistan."

[368] Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence*, 126–127.

[369] "The Secretary of State to President Harding," July 18, 1921, Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1921, Volume I, United States Department of State, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1921v01.

[370] "President Roosevelt to Mohammed Zahir Shah of Afghanistan," August 21, 1934, Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers, 1934. Europe, Near East and Africa, Volume II, United States Department of State, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1934v02.p0850&id=FRUS.FRUS1934v02&isize=M&q1=afghanistan.

[371] Afghan oil was less profitable in comparison to the recently discovered oil deposits in Saudi Arabia. See Poullada, "Afghanistan and the United States," 180–181.

[372] Poullada and Poullada, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan & the United States, 1828-1973*, 61.

6.2. Post-WWII Years

After WWII, the United States emerged as the new superpower, replacing Britain whose empire had dissolved resulting in the creation of India and Pakistan.[373] The Afghan royal family was fascinated by the new U.S. hegemony, and, in 1946, they requested U.S. economic assistance for the first time. However, aid for the Helmand Valley Project was denied. Afghanistan then turned to the private sector – Morrison Knudsen Company; however, Afghan funds soon ran out. Consequently, the Afghans tried to request economic assistance several times during the upcoming years,[374] resulting in a limited loan of $21 million from the U.S. Export-Import Bank in 1949.[375] Crucially, in this time, the Afghans also requested U.S. military aid for defense against the Soviets:

> Abdul Majid referred repeatedly to the "war," indicating his belief that a war between the US and USSR is inevitable, and said that when war came to Afghanistan would of course be overrun and occupied. But the Russians would be unable to pacify the country. Afghanistan could and would pursue guerrilla tactics for an indefinite period. Abdul Majid said that the early supply of light military equipment…was closely related to the possibility for a long and determined resistance to some future aggressive action by the USSR.[376]

The U.S. policy statement from 1951 also notes Afghan anxieties regarding the Soviets. It also sets out that the U.S. interest was to preserve the neutrality of Afghanistan and lessen the chances of Soviet penetration. While it also notes that Soviet pressure on Afghanistan had not yet been severe, it provided a guideline on how the U.S. should react in the case of Soviet aggression:

> 1) initiate conversations with Afghanistan, Pakistan and India to ascertain their reactions to prompt UN consideration and action; 2) consider what military

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[373] However, under the "Lancaster plan" in 1945, Britain aided Afghanistan with 30 million rupees' worth of military equipment and training, which was supplied by British India. See Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 75.

[374] See for instance "Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Richard S. Leach of the Division of South Asian Affairs," February 11, 1949, Foreign relations of the United States, 1949, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI, United States Department of State, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1949v06.p1793&id=FRUS.FRUS1949v06&isize=M&q1=afghanistan.

[375] Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*, 74–75.

[376] "Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Richard S. Leach of the Division of South Asian Affairs," December 8, 1948, Foreign relations of the United States, 1948, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (in two parts), Volume V, Part 1, United States Department of State, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1948v05p1.p0506&id=FRUS.FRUS1948v05p1&isize=M.

> assistance might be practicable with a view to prolonging guerrilla resistance within the country; and 3) consult with India and Pakistan concerning measures to be taken jointly…for the defense of the approaches to the subcontinent.[377]

To decrease Soviet pressure in the post-War years, Afghanistan used the U.S. ambassador in Moscow, Averell Harriman,[378] to convey a message "concerning the plight of neutral, powerless and non-threatening Afghanistan," which genuinely seemed to work.[379] Moreover, the Soviet position in the region was weakened by their withdrawal from Iran in the aftermath of the Iran Crisis of 1946 and the abandonment of the short-lived socialist republics on Iranian territory.[380] Consequently, as the policy statement noted, the Soviets were not significantly involved in Afghanistan in the immediate post-War years. However, the Soviets saw an opportunity to gain leverage by helping during the Pashtunistan Crisis in 1950. Given the problems regarding the transit of goods through Pakistan, Afghanistan agreed with the Soviets to barter Afghan agricultural products for various Soviet commodities and duty-free transit through Soviet territory. This marked the first time the USSR used the Afghan shortsighted Pashtunistan policy to its benefit.[381]

6.3. The Post-Stalin Era

The repeated Afghan attempts to gain military aid in the late 1940s failed mainly due to opposition from the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) which considered Afghanistan to be of little strategic importance, unlike Pakistan (Figure 6.1). The DOD also suggested refraining from unnecessary activities in Afghanistan as they could precipitate Soviet aggression. Nevertheless, despite the continuous rejections, the Afghans kept trying well

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[377] "United States Policy with Respect to Afghanistan."
[378] Harriman had good working relations with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov.
[379] Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 109–110.
[380] One of the first Cold War crises, caused by Soviet unwillingness to withdraw from occupied Iranian territory which was gained the in Anglo-Soviet invasion of 1941. Immediately after the end of WWII, the Soviets helped to create two new socialist republics – the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad (1946-1947) and the People's Government of Azerbaijan (1945-1946). See Stalin's letter to the Azerbaijani leader, explaining the reasons for the Soviet withdrawal. "Joseph V. Stalin to Ja'far Pishevari, Leader of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan" May 8, 1946, AVP RF, f. 06, op. 7, p. 34, d. 544, ll. 8-9, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117827. For the history of the Iranian crisis, see Louise L. Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[381] Arnold, *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism*, 30.

into the mid-1950s. However, the U.S. demonstrated its explicit preference for Pakistan, which became a member of SEATO and CENTO by the Mutual Assistance Agreement under which Pakistan received over $100 million in aid.[382] Afghanistan, on the other hand, unequivocally refused any military pacts with the U.S., fearing the potential Soviet reaction, and this position further reinforced U.S. reluctance to become more involved. Therefore, after the last unsuccessful attempt was made in December 1954, Daoud had little choice but to proceed to talks with the Soviets given the urgent need for weapons in the worsening Pashtunistan quarrel.[383]

Table 6.1 U.S. military aid, 1950-84, thousands $US (historical)[384]

Type	Afghanistan	Pakistan
Total grants	5,643	704,682
Total loans	0	567,633
Total loans and grants	5,643	1,272,315

Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World was significantly reassessed in the aftermath of Stalin's death in 1953. Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor, "saw unlimited possibilities for the Soviet Union in the Third World" by offering assistance to the regimes that opposed U.S.-sponsored military pacts.[385] Consequently, in July 1954, Soviets supplied Afghanistan with technical aid followed with a propaganda triumph – an agreement to pave the streets in Kabul, a project that was previously rejected by the U.S.[386] Nevertheless, while taking note of these Soviet moves, in the 1954 analysis, the United States did not seem to be overly concerned:

> Soviet economic penetration may well result in a gradual drift of Afghanistan toward the Soviet orbit...However, we do not believe that the USSR will actually-

[382] Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 56.
[383] Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 20.
[384] Based on data from Milton Leitenberg, "United States Foreign Policy and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," *Arms Control* 7, no. 3 (1986): 273. Note that in the case of Afghanistan, military assistance only contained the education of Afghan officers, not military equipment.
[385] Rubinstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy*, 19–38.
[386] Arnold, *Afghanistan*, 34.

> gain control of Afghanistan…It is unlikely that the now negligible pro-Communist element within Afghanistan can gain sufficient strength to overthrow the regime in the foreseeable future. The USSR could easily take over Afghanistan if it chose to do so, but openly aggressive action against Afghanistan would almost certainly entail anti-Soviet reactions elsewhere…which the USSR would wish to avoid. [387]

6.4. The Beginning of the Cold War Competition in Afghanistan

The events of 1955 shocked U.S. policy-makers. In December, Khrushchev and Bulganin visited Kabul and signed a series of agreements. Among them was an agreement on the provision of $100 million in economic aid for the first Afghan five year plan (1956-1961) as well as explicit Soviet support for Pashtunistan. This was followed by an agreement on Soviet military aid in 1956 for the provision of weapons, advisors and training to Afghan officers.[388]

While initially slow to react, the Eisenhower Administration [389] also promised substantial economic assistance in the late 1950s, thus hoping to limit Soviet influence. Consequently, U.S. involvement in the country would steadily increase, reaching a peak in the mid-1960s.[390] Though Soviet projects tended to be high-profile, [391] Afghanistan also started to depend on crucial U.S. projects which supported agriculture, bureaucracy, and the health and educational sectors. Furthermore, while still rejecting the provision of military aid, the United States started to provide military training for Afghan officers. However, the commitment amounted to a meager $3 million, and as a result, the number of trained officers were an order smaller than that of the Soviets. Consequently, by 1962,

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[387] "National Intelligence Estimate," October 19, 1954, Foreign relations of the United States, 1952-1954. Africa and South Asia (in two parts), Volume XI, Part 2, United States Department of State, http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=goto&id=FRUS.FRUS195254v11p2&isize=M&submit=Go+to+page&page=1481.
[388] Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*, 84.
[389] President Eisenhower himself visited Kabul in 1959.
[390] Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 209.
[391] The major Soviet projects included a highway network, several airports, a tunnel under the Hindu Kush, the Kabul Polytechnic Faculty, a fertilizer plant, irrigation networks in rural areas, and the construction of a gas pipe connecting both countries. See Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence*, 136–137.

Soviet aid amounted to over half a billion dollars while total U.S. aid was roughly one-third of the Soviet contribution.[392]

U.S. effort lagged behind Soviet involvement not only in terms of funds, but also in the context of project implementation. The U.S. supply route was much longer that the Soviet one, and, in addition, the bitter Afghan-Pakistani feud meant that the American supply chain had to go through Iran which was more expensive. Also, approving the assistance was a time-consuming, bureaucratic hurdle on the part of the U.S. administration.[393] Finally, American diplomacy failed to resolve the Pashtunistan Dispute while the Soviets skillfully exploited the issue.[394]

Interestingly, Soviet-American involvement in Afghanistan was not only about competition. As Roberts (2003) observes, Afghanistan was the only country in the world during the Cold War where both superpowers sometimes cooperated on developmental projects.[395] As a result, during the 1960s, Afghanistan appeared to start becoming the Finland of Asia –– a neutral state limited in its foreign relations by Soviet proximity.[396]

6.5. Hiatus and Disengagement

In 1964, U.S. involvement in Afghanistan peaked at $42 million.[397] However, toward the late 1960s, the U.S. started to be increasingly involved in the Vietnam War. As Westad (2007) argues, Washington was afraid of other "Vietnams" happening in the Third World. This resulted in the disengagement of U.S. positions in the South Asian region leaving the containment of the Soviet Union to the Sino-Soviet rivalry.[398] This also meant

[392] Mussarat Jabeen, Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, and Naheed S. Goraya, "US Afghan Relations: A Historical Perspective of Events of 9/11," *South Asian Studies* 25 (2010): 151–152; Hilali, "The Soviet Penetration into Afghanistan and the Marxist Coup," 693.
[393] Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 208–209.
[394] Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, 31.
[395] For instance, the United States provided equipment for the Soviet-built airport in Kabul. See Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 217.
[396] Jabeen, Mazhar, and Goraya, "US Afghan Relations," 152.
[397] U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2013."
[398] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, New edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159–160. For an early account of Nixon's foreign policy in the context of the Vietnam War and its effect on U.S. involvement with the Third World see Michael J. Brenner, "The Problem of Innovation and the Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1973): 255.

that U.S. policy on Afghanistan effectively returned to the pre-1955 state (Figure 6.4). After that, the U.S. kept a low profile in Afghanistan until the Soviet invasion when it began providing covert support to the *mujahedeen*.[399]

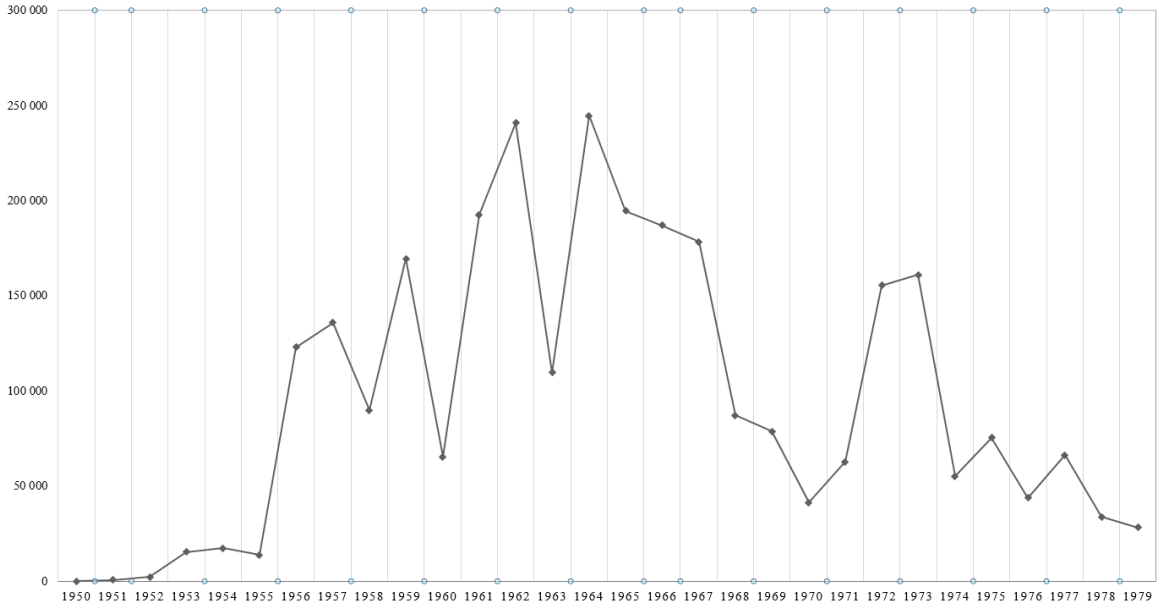

Figure 6.4 Combined U.S. aid by year, 1950-79, thousands $US (constant 2013)[400]

Significant changes also occurred within the Kremlin. With the new triumvirate of Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny replacing Khrushchev's administration, their policy towards the Third World was reevaluated. While this was an era of decolonization that offered prospects for the advancement of socialism outside of Europe, the Kremlin was increasingly obsessed with the PRC as an increasing threat to its security. Furthermore, Soviet leaders became irritated at the zeal that North Vietnam and Cuba professed in their desire to fight the United States. Consequently for the Soviets, the period of the mid-1960s onwards was filled with doubts and disappointments.[401] As a result, a policy of "peaceful coexistence" was devised through which the Soviets wanted to regain a sense of stability and security by halting the arms race (once strategic parity was achieved) and

[399] Khan, "US Policy towards Afghanistan," 66.
[400] Based on data from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2013."
[401] Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 157.

also neutralizing the threat of the Sino-U.S. collusion.[402]

This also reflected on Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. While most of the ambitious projects, such as highways and airports, were completed in the era of Khrushchev, under Brezhnev the Soviets were more concerned with sustaining their gains and with the sustainability of Afghan loans. Therefore, a large part of aid went to the northern areas where most of the gas deposits are located.[403] Aside from economic aid, the USSR hoped to achieve political gains by supporting the newly founded PDPA.[404]

The Soviets seemed to be satisfied with Afghan affairs by all measures by the end of the 1960s. Mutual relations were excellent and Afghanistan was diligently pursuing its policy of nonalignment. Also, the Soviet aid had created a significant economic dependency which was further strengthened in an agreement with King Zahir in which the Soviets promised $120 million for the fourth Afghan five year plan (1972-1976). However, it is important to note, that the Soviets received at least part of their finances back, since Soviet revenue from Afghan gas ranged from $8 million in 1969 to $35 million in 1975.[405]

6.6. Afghanistan in the 1970s

The official U.S. stance on Afghanistan in the 1970s is outlined in a 1969 Country Policy Statement which sees U.S. objectives as a "non-aligned Afghanistan, willing and able to impose limitations on Soviet influence in its affairs" and the "development of closer Afghan regional ties through the improvement of relations with Pakistan and Iran," both crucial U.S. allies.[406] Furthermore, the document outlines the strategy on achieving these goals:

> Our strategic aim is to maintain a substantial U.S. presence in Afghanistan to enable us to continue developing offsetting influences to the Soviet presence in

[402] Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution, and Cold War, 1945-1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 68.
[403] Hilali, "The Soviet Penetration into Afghanistan and the Marxist Coup," 698.
[404] For an examination of the Soviet relationship with the PDPA, see chapter "The Development of Afghan Communism"
[405] Rubinstein, *Soviet Policy toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence*, 136–137.
[406] "Country Policy Statement on Afghanistan" August 6, 1969, Nixon Presidential Materials, Box 591, Country Files, Middle East, Afghanistan, National Archives, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d326.

> the country. It would not be realistic for us to seek the exclusion of Soviet influence, nor would our interests be served by competing with the U.S.S.R. for preeminence in the country. We do not want Afghanistan to become a serious friction point in U.S.-Soviet relations and, it would appear, the Soviets share our view. Our presence in Afghanistan takes the form of economic aid programs, diplomatic representation, modest assistance in military training, a Peace Corps program and informational activities. Our strategy will be to exert influence on Afghan policy through building on the base of the cordial diplomatic relations we now enjoy with Afghanistan…This posture can effectively, and relatively inexpensively, be strengthened through periodic visits of high-level U.S. officials to Afghanistan.[407]

However, the document, subsequently reaffirmed in 1974 after Daoud's ascension to power, clearly exaggerated the practical importance of Afghanistan to U.S. interests in the 1970s.[408] For instance, while the first three years of the 1970s were marked by some resurgence of U.S. aid in comparison with late 1960s, U.S. commitment fell soon afterwards to the pre-1955 level and this trend was not averted even by Kissinger's 1974 visit to Kabul.[409] The primary concerns of Washington in this period were the resurgent Afghan-Pakistani tensions [410] and also poppy seed cultivation.[411] U.S. efforts throughout the 1970s had only a negligible impact on Afghan opium production. Hence, in 1976, the United States threatened Afghans with further reductions of aid in case their poppy cultivation was not curtailed.[412] This resulted in a joint U.S.-Afghan anti-narcotic commission in 1977, a move enthusiastically received by Washington. In turn, Daoud was invited for a state visit in the summer of 1978.[413]

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[407] Ibid.
[408] "Review of U.S. Policy towards Afghanistan" February 21, 1974, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1974, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=21170&dt=2474&dl=1345.
[409] U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2013"; Jabeen, Mazhar, and Goraya, "US Afghan Relations," 1853.
[410] "Intelligence Note RNAN-51" November 5, 1973, RG 84, Islamabad Embassy Files: Lot 77 F 114, Pakistan/Afghanistan, July-December 1973, National Archives, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v13/d110.
[411] "Minutes of the Working Group of the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control" February 11, 1975, RG 59, INM/P Files, Lot 84D147, Cabinet Committee–Working Group, Washington National Records Center, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve03/d172.
[412] "Telegram 3367 From the Embassy in Afghanistan to the Department of State" May 4, 1976, RG 84, Kabul Embassy Files: Lot 79 F 132, Subject Files, Box 133, SOC 11-5, Cables 1976, National Archives, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve08/d21.
[413] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 98.

In sum, for the majority of the 1970s, U.S. involvement in Afghanistan seemed to follow the sentiment outlined in Ambassador Neumann's 1972 assessment:

> For the United States, Afghanistan has at present limited direct interest: it is not an important trading partner . . . not an access route for U.S. trade with others . . . not a source of oil or scarce strategic metals . . . there are no treaty ties or defense commitments; and Afghanistan does not provide us with significant defense, intelligence, or scientific facilities. United States policy has long recognized these facts.[414]

For the Soviets, Daoud's coup in July of 1973 was a pleasant surprise that promised even better relations between both countries and increased Soviet involvement. As soon as in September, 1973, Afghanistan was visited by a Soviet military delegation which approved an increase in military aid.[415] In 1974, Daoud visited Moscow and was promised $428 million for developmental projects.[416] This was followed by a further $600 million in 1975, financing Daoud's new five-year plan (1973-1977).[417]

However, Soviet enthusiasm soon quickly faded in the light of Daoud's domestic and foreign policy moves.[418] At home, Daoud initiated purges of the PDPA which resulted in the loss of political power of the Kremlin's protégées. On the international level, Daoud started to improve relations with non-communist states in an attempt to lower Afghan dependency on Soviet aid. Furthermore, in Soviet-Afghan ties, Daoud attempted to renegotiate the price of natural gas.[419] The low-point in mutual relations occurred during Daoud's visit to Moscow in April, 1977. During the talks, Brezhnev complained about the presence of Western advisors in Afghanistan and asked Daoud to expel them. According to Abdul Samad Ghaus, the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, Daoud responded to Brezhnev with the following, before abruptly leaving the room:

> We will never allow you to dictate to us how to run our country and whom to employ in Afghanistan. How and where we employ the foreign experts will

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[414] Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan*, 19.
[415] George Ginsburgs and Robert Melville Slusser, *A Calendar of Soviet Treaties: 1958-1973* (Alphen aa den Rijn: Sijthof & Noordhoff International Publishers, 1981), 727.
[416] For example, a thermal power plant, copper-processing plant, and the expansion of the chemical fertilizer industry.
[417] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 96.
[418] For more a detailed analysis, see chapter "A Brief Overview of Afghan History" and "Development of Afghan Communism."
[419] Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan*, 165.

> remain the exclusive prerogative of the Afghan state. Afghanistan shall remain poor, if necessary, but free in its acts and decisions.[420]

Shocked, Brezhnev attempted to repair the damage by inviting Daoud to a private meeting, but Daoud rejected the offer. Despite this *faux pas*, Soviet aid continued uninterrupted for the remainder of Daoud's presidency. Even more surprisingly, the Soviets agreed to a 30% increase of the price of gas in the fall of 1977.[421] Nevertheless, fearing reprisals from Daoud towards the Afghan communists, the Soviets successfully persuaded the *Khalq* and *Parcham* factions of the PDPA to unite and to select substitutes for every member of the PDPA's Central Committee, and city and provincial organization. This Soviet move, in retrospect, might have unintentionally hastened Daoud's fall.[422]

6.7. The Saur Revolution and After

The deposition and elimination of Daoud in April 1978 bewildered the Soviets who did not expect the PDPA to proceed with such a radical move without the prior approval of the Kremlin. Nonetheless, to ensure its survival, the Soviets had to start supporting the regime rapidly.[423] This was largely a pragmatic rather than an ideological decision given the divergence in the opinions of both parties.[424]

Within half a year after official Soviet recognition, 30 agreements worth $14 billion were signed. This immense increase in Soviet involvement was further boosted by 25 agreements between Afghanistan and the COMECON states. The Soviets also updated the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Friendship from 1921 with a new version in December 1978. It essentially provided a possible back door for Soviet intervention by agreeing to "guarantee security, independence and territorial unity" of Afghanistan on request from the legitimate government. In addition, the Soviets also started supplying military

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[420] Ibid., 179.
[421] Ibid., 183.
[422] Emadi, *Dynamics of Political Development in Afghanistan*, 100.
[423] For a further discussion on PDPA-Soviet relations in 1978-1979, see chapter "The Development of Afghan Communism" and "Soviet Motives for the Invasion."
[424] The Kremlin and *Khalq* differed in several crucial positions, such as the implementation of reforms and purges against *Parcham*. See Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan a History of Struggle and Survival*, 188.

advisers in increasing numbers – 2,000 by November, 1979.[425]

Nevertheless, the PDPA felt that even this extent of Soviet involvement was insufficient and they kept requesting more equipment and technical assistance.[426] On one such occasion, during the uprising in Herat in March 1979, Taraki explicitly asked the Soviets for their troops, but it was more than the Soviets were willing to provide, at least until December 1979.[427]

Similarly to the Soviets, the United States was caught off guard by the Saur Revolution, resulting in a flurry of confused messages from the U.S. Embassy during the last days of April.[428] However, in the short term, the U.S. policy towards the new government was not substantially changed according to official documents:

> We should do what we can to avoid a situation which forces Afghanistan to rely totally on the USSR by continuing our modest programs of assistance (including IMET, Peace Corps, and cultural and educational exchanges) and thus-to give the DRA maneuvering room as it seeks to work out its relations with the Soviets…and with us. Likewise, we share your view that we should stay alert to any signs that the DRA is veering away from a genuinely nonaligned stance…which would make it difficult…for us to carry out our assistance activities.[429]

Hence, despite the setbacks, the U.S. assistance programs continued and the United States even managed to arrange for a sale of $55 million worth of airplanes to the Afghan Airlines.[430] By December 1978, Washington believed that a complete U.S. disengagement would further reduce U.S. influence in the region and would effectively give a "blank check signal to Moscow." Therefore, the United States was to continue in finding opportunities to establish "mutually compatible objectives" with the Afghan

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[425] Ibid., 190–191.
[426] Westad, "Prelude to Invasion," 55.
[427] "Telephone Conversation between Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin and Afghan Premier Nur Mohammed Taraki" March 17, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113141.
[428] "Military Conflict in Kabul" April 27, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=109027&dt=2694&dl=2009.
[429] "U.S. Policy toward The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan" August 18, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=204580&dt=2694&dl=2009.
[430] "Status of U.S. Programs in Afghanistan" September 20, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=232239&dt=2694&dl=2009.

leadership.[431]

However, this rather sanguine U.S. position was changed by the murder of the U.S. Ambassador Adolph Dubs in February 1979. Soon afterwards, Washington announced severe cuts to its aid program followed by the complete termination of all activities by August, 1979.[432] Dubs was one of the main advocates of a cautious engagement with the PDPA and his death thusly had far-reaching effects on the U.S. policy on Afghanistan.[433]

6.8. U.S. and the Mujahedeen prior to the Soviet invasion

The official narrative[434] regarding U.S. support for the Afghan resistance is that it commenced as a reaction to the Soviet invasion.[435] However, when former CIA director Robert Gates published his memoirs in 1996, he wrote that on 3rd July, 1979, President Carter signed a directive providing non-lethal aid to the insurgents through the CIA. This aid, according to Gates, was worth only about half a million dollars[436] and was drawn within six weeks.[437] This was subsequently confirmed in an interview with Brzezinski in a French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1998. He also claimed that:

> I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention…We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.[438]

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[431] "Assessment of Afghan Developments and U.S.-Afghan Relations" December 1, 1978, Record Group 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams, 1978, National Archives, http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=301833&dt=2694&dl=2009.
[432] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, 34–35.
[433] Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 78.
[434] Whether pre-invasion U.S. involvement was a tightly kept secret is debatable. In early 1979, several magazines brought coverage of alleged CIA officers in Pakistan that were supposedly training the Afghan rebels. See Joe Stork, "U.S. Involvement in Afghanistan," *MERIP Reports*, no. 89 (July 1980): 25.
[435] For scholarly accounts of U.S. support for the *mujahedeen* after the Soviet invasion, see for example Charles Gati, ed., *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000*; Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Companion to American Foreign Relations* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).
[436] Half a million dollars is a relatively small amount, considering the covert U.S. aid during the Soviet invasion started with $30 million in 1980 and peaked at $600 million in 1987. See Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 146; Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 179–181.
[437] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 146–147.
[438]See the full English translation of the interview in Gibbs, "Afghanistan," 241–242. However, later, in an interview for the Realnews.com, Brzezinski said that he was misquoted by French weekly on the U.S. intention to provide Soviets with their own "Vietnam" by intentionally luring them to intervene.

Contrary to the bold assertions of Brzezinski, it is unlikely that such a low amount of aid to the *mujahedeen* played a major factor in their late 1979 successes against the regime; however, this revelation was of symbolic importance. As one of the explanations for the Soviet invasion, the Soviet official newspaper *Pravda* claimed that the USSR was reacting to the U.S.-financed resistance groups.[439]

Finally, in 2004, the aforementioned presidential directive was declassified. In it, Carter explicitly authorized the director of the CIA to:

> Support insurgent propaganda and other psychological operations in Afghanistan; establish radio access to the Afghan population through third country facilities. Provide unilaterally or through third countries as appropriate support to Afghan insurgents, either in the form of cash or non-military supplies. [440]

According to Coll (2004), the CIA used their intermediaries in Germany to cover their tracks and CIA officers began shipping medical equipment, radios and cash to Pakistan where it was passed on to the Pakistani ISI, who were responsible for the distribution to the *mujahedeen*.[441] Stansfield Turner, then-Director of the CIA, reportedly admitted that it was not difficult to convince Carter to support the *mujahedeen* given the influence Brzezinski had on him.[442] Furthermore, Gates writes that by the end of August, General Zia was pressuring the United States to arm the insurgents and Turner thus ordered the Directorate of Operations[443] to come up with a concrete plan. The Directorate suggested several options, such as using the Saudis and Pakistanis as proxies to channel finances and arms to the *mujahedeen*, a standard policy during the Soviet-Afghan War.[444]

Nevertheless, he agreed that the non-lethal assistance was provided before the invasion. See TheRealNews, *Brzezinski and the Afghan War Pt2*, accessed August 10, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGjAsQJh7OM.

[439] Gibbs, "Reassessing Soviet Motives for Invading Afghanistan," 255.

[440] "Presidential Finding: Afghanistan," July 3, 1979, Counsel Cutler Papers, Box 60. Folder: Central Intelligence Agency Charter, 2/9-29/80, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, http://presidentiallibraries.c-span.org/Content/Carter/CarterAfghanistan.pdf.

[441] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 46.

[442] A. Z. Hilali, *US-Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), 155.

[443] A clandestine branch of the CIA.

[444] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 146–147.

6.9. Summary

After World War II, the United States had an opportunity to forge close mutual ties with Afghanistan owing to the explicit pro-U.S. bias of the Afghan leaders combined with their antipathy towards the Soviet Union. However, Washington did not perceive Afghanistan to be of strategic value and focused on Iran and Pakistan instead. Given this U.S. neglect, Afghan leaders turned to the Soviets in the mid-1950s for economic and military aid, intending to secure Afghanistan's internal and external security needs.

The United States was initially slow to react to this sudden Soviet involvement; nevertheless, in the late 1950s, it joined the Cold War aid competition in Afghanistan which continued well into the mid-1960s. However, U.S. assistance in this period never surpassed Soviet levels. Furthermore, starting with Johnson's administration and continuing with Nixon's administration, global developments such as the Vietnam War and *détente* lowered U.S. presence in the region.[445]

While Soviet aid was lower under Brezhnev, the assistance continued stably during the constitutional period and rapidly increased in the years 1973-1975 after Daoud came to power. After the subsequent Saur Revolution, the Soviet Union realized the necessity to prop up a growingly unpopular regime and started supplying Afghanistan with even higher quantities of economic, military and technical assistance, but it was still not in favor of explicit troop commitments. The United States, perhaps surprisingly, did not initially disengage from the country, but cautiously cooperated with the regime.[446] However, the death of Ambassador Dubs prompted a complete overhaul of the U.S. policy, resulting in the termination of all U.S. aid. Finally, the U.S. started supporting the *mujahedeen* as early as six months before the actual Soviet invasion; however, the total scope of the assistance was negligible compared to the levels from 1980 onwards.

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[445] For overall trends in U.S. aid giving, see Robert K. Fleck and Christopher Kilby, "Changing Aid Regimes? U.S. Foreign Aid from the Cold War to the War on Terror," *Journal of Development Economics* 91, no. 2 (March 2010): 185–97.

[446] Afghanistan was not the only country where the U.S. cooperated with a socialist government. For instance from 1974-1977, the United States cooperated with Ethiopia, whose biggest enemy was Soviet sponsored Somalia. However, when Somalia invaded Ethiopia over the disputed Ogaden Region, the Soviet Union and the U.S. switched sides and, eventually, the United States ended up supporting another socialist government in Mogadishu. See Edmond J. Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia: From Empire to People's Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

7. Soviet Motives for the Invasion

In January 1979, when the situation in Afghanistan was escalating, *Time* magazine quoted Zbigniew Brzezinski as saying:

> An arc of crisis stretches along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries.[447]

Brzezinski's statement related to a sequence of conflicts and pro-Soviet revolutions that occurred in the developing world in the 1970s. His sweeping claim is clearly an exaggeration and simplification of the situation, and as Trofimenko (1981) observes: "Brzezinski…has invented an "arc of crisis" without ever understanding that the arc he has drawn from Bangladesh to Aden is nothing other than an element of the general geographic layout of developing countries."[448] Nevertheless, there is a point to Brzezinski's argument – the analysis of the Soviet invasion should not be separated from the global context of the Cold War and the events of the 1970s. While the invasion of Afghanistan is often perceived as the main cause, there was arguably no single event that ended détente between the superpowers. Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin concisely wrote in his memoirs that "one could say that detente was to a certain extent buried in the fields of Soviet-American rivalry in the Third World."[449] While it is not the aim of this chapter to be a comprehensive overview of all of the crises, it would focus on the developments that were the most threatening to Soviet security.

7.1. The Cold War Context

Before 1968, the Soviet Union could count on well-developed links with Western European communist parties. Many of them had a substantial amount of followers and

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[447] "IRAN: The Crescent of Crisis," *Time*, January 15, 1979, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,919995-1,00.html.
[448] Henry Trofimenko, "The Third World and U.S.-Soviet Competition," *Foreign Affairs*, 1981, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1981-06-01/third-world-and-us-soviet-competition.
[449] Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War a Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 141–142.

held sympathies for the Soviet model. However, the events of the Prague Spring followed by the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact armies stunned the Western communists. As a result, disillusioned leaders of the two major communist parties, *Parti Communiste Français* and *Partito Comunista Italiano*, gradually started distancing themselves from the Kremlin. This "Eurocommunist" trend further accelerated in the 1970s and the parties envisaged themselves independent of the USSR by adopting the policy of "socialism with a human face."[450]

Poland proved to be another source of troubles for the Kremlin. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the intelligentsia were responsible for the calls for reforms, but in Poland it was predominantly the working class. Polish workers were responsible for several protests, strikes and sit-ins across the country. Towards the end of the 1970s, they started to organize themselves into unions[451] and they began posing a serious challenge to the communist orthodoxy.[452] This was further boosted by the 1978 election of Karol Wojtyla as the first Polish Pope in four and a half centuries. When he visited Poland in 1979, millions of people turned up to see him, and this was observed with anxiety by the Kremlin. As the British historian Timothy Garton Ash observed: "For nine days the state virtually ceased to exist, except as a censor doctoring the television coverage. Everyone saw that Poland is not a communist country – just a communist state."[453]

The Soviet Union was also facing a strategic crisis in Europe. In late 1977, the Soviets started deploying SS-20s, intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM), to Europe and the situation reached a climax on 12th December 1979, when NATO announced the so-called "double-track decision," which envisaged the deployment of Pershing missiles to Europe in order to match nuclear parity with the Soviets, and also further stimulated the arms race. While the deployment was announced a day before the Soviets passed the Politburo resolution, which enabled the invasion, it is not clear to what

[450] Alessandro Brogi, "France, Italy, the Western Communists, and the Prague Spring," in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 283–318.
[451] One of them would be Solidarność, founded in September 1980 and claiming 10 million members before the end of 1981.
[452] Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 421–437.
[453] R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – And After* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 365.

extent the NATO's move contributed to the Soviet decision to invade, as there are no mentions of it in the Soviet archival documents.[454]

Soviet stability was further threatened by its hostility with China. Mao Zedong's death in 1976 had contributed to a certain easing of tensions and Sino-Soviet relations never went back to the low-point of the conflict in 1969. However, their conflict did continue in South Asia. In January 1979, the PRC established full diplomatic relations with the U.S., and, a month later, invaded Soviet-supported Vietnam. The Chinese invasion was punishment for the deposition of its client regime in Kampuchea in December 1978 where the Vietnamese installed a pro-Soviet government [455]

The Soviets were also becoming anxious over developments on the southern frontier. In Iran, the Islamic Revolution had managed to depose the U.S.-supported Shah Reza Pahlavi. Though this was clearly a detriment of the Carter Administration, the Soviet Union was puzzled by the new pro-Islamic foreign policy of Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini's hostility was aimed mainly at the United States but he did not have much affection for the Kremlin either, condemning the Soviet Union as "the other Great Satan."[456] When the angry mob overran the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took the diplomatic staff as hostages, it made the Kremlin even more concerned about the possibility of a U.S. intervention given the increased U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf. Ustinov reportedly complained: "Are we expected to sit on our hands while the Americans deploy their forces on our southern borders?!"[457]

The developments in Iran were closely related to the Soviet decision to invade in Afghanistan. Soviets feared in the case of failure of the PDPA in Afghanistan, Soviet Union would end up having two Islamist states on its southern border, where population shared similar ethnicity to that of the northern Afghanistan. The Soviet concerns were not unfounded – in 1978, there was a Tajik riot in Dushanbe.[458]

Finally, besides supporting the PDPA regime in Kabul, the Soviet Union was

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[454] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 935–975.
[455]Robin Edmonds, *Soviet Foreign Policy in the Brezhnev Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 170–177.
[456] Saikal, "Islamism, the Iranian Revolution, and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," 112–121.
[457] Jonathan. Haslam, *Russia's Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 324.
[458] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 1032.

involved in other Third World engagements in the 1970s, with mixed results. For instance, when Anwar Sadat came to power in Egypt, he launched a wide-scale purge against the pro-Soviet officials in the government, marking an end of alignment with the Soviet Union under previous leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser.[459]

On the other hand, in cooperation with Cuba, the Soviets successfully supported the Sandinistas in Nicaragua who managed to overthrow Somoza's government in 1979.[460] They were less fortunate in the Horn of Africa - Soviet Union was formerly supporting the Somalian regime of Siad Barre, however, when the Soviets rejected Barre's claim on Ethiopian territory, he launched an invasion Ethiopia in 1977, starting the Ogaden War and effectively cutting the mutual ties. As a result, Soviets would start supporting Ethiopia instead.[461]

Also, the Soviet Union supported Marxist FRELIMO in Mozambique, first in the independence struggle against Portugal and then since 1977 in the civil war against right-wing RENAMO.[462] Perhaps the most curious crisis in this period was the diplomatic furor over the "Cuban brigade issue" in the fall of 1979. A small contingent of Soviet troops had been left at the island after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. However, they were lost in the "fog of war" and subsequently discovered by U.S. intelligence services 17 years later.[463] Nevertheless, even this affair further eroded the mutual trust between the Soviet Union and the United States.

7.2. The Decision

The Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan emerged in the context of the tumultuous events of the late 1970s. Soviet leaders cautiously welcomed the new communist regime that assumed power in April 1978 and ended Daoud's tilt towards the West. However, it rapidly became clear that Afghanistan was not yet ready for socialism and that the

[459] David, "Soviet Involvement in Third World Coups."
[460] Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 277–290.
[461] Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution, and Cold War, 1945-1991*, 83.
[462] Mark N. Katz, "Anti-Soviet Insurgencies: Growing Trend or Passing Phase?," in *The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Third World*, ed. Roger E. Kanet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 42–69.
[463] Gloria Duffy, "Crisis Mangling and the Cuban Brigade," *International Security* 8, no. 1 (July 1, 1983): 67–87.

excessively zealous reforms undertaken by the PDPA were about to estrange the population. Soviet fears were further reinforced by early signs of PDPA infighting and the subsequent purges. Even though the Soviets refused to accept the PDPA as a member of the socialist community, they threw their considerable economic and technical support behind the regime by the end of 1978 and the situation seemed to stabilize.[464]

However, the relative calm did not last too long. The Herat Uprising in March 1979, which caused the deaths of many Soviet advisers, made the Kremlin consider more direct military involvement in Afghan affairs for the first time.[465] On 17th March, during a telephone conversation with Kosygin, Taraki desperately demanded covert Soviet military involvement to quash the uprising:

> Taraki: Propaganda help must be combined with practical assistance. I suggest that you place Afghan markings on your tanks and aircraft and no one will be any the wiser. Your troops could advance from the direction of Kushka…They will think these are Government troops.
>
> Kosygin: I do not want to disappoint you, but it will not be possible to conceal this. Two hours later the whole world will know about this. Everyone will begin to shout that the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan has begun.[466]

As Kalinovsky (2011) argues, most of the power in decisions regarding Afghanistan was held by the so-called Troika of Andropov, Gromyko and Ustinov.[467] On the same day of the phone conversation between Taraki and Kosygin, the Soviet Politburo discussed the possibility of intervention. While Gromyko and Ustinov initially seemed to be in favor of the intervention, they eventually changed their minds after the session, claiming that the conflict is Afghan was an internal affair.[468] On 18th March, Konstantin Chernenko tried to reassure his colleagues: "If we introduce troops and beat down the Afghan people then we will be accused of aggression for sure. There's no getting around it here."[469]

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[464] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 1023–1024.
[465] Haslam, *Russia's Cold War*, 321–322.
[466] "Telephone Conversation between Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin and Afghan Premier Nur Mohammed Taraki."
[467] Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 23–24.
[468] "Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Discussions on Afghanistan" March 17, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, TsKhSD, f. 89, per. 25 dok.1, ll. 1, 12-25, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113260.
[469] "Exerpt from Politburo Meeting on Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan" March 18, 1979, TsKhSD, f. 89, per. 25, d. 1, pp. 12-25, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112465.

Eventually, after the immediate crisis had subsided a couple of days later, Taraki visited Moscow and Kosygin gave him the collective Politburo decision, which sharply clashed with the reality of late 1979:

> Our common enemies only wait for the moment when Soviet troops would appear on the territory of Afghanistan…if we were to introduce our troops the situation in your country not only would not Improve, but to the contrary it would become more complicated. One must not fail to see that our troops would have to fight not only with a foreign aggressor but also with some part of your people.[470]

Notwithstanding the resolution of the crisis in Herat, the internal situation in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate during the following months. In April 1979, the Politburo sharply condemned the PDPA's policies towards the Islamist opposition and the inability to widen its support base. While noting that the resistance was not yet well organized, it was successful in attracting many recruits from the rural areas.[471] Throughout March and April, the Soviets sent about 40 military helicopters to Afghanistan to be used by Taraki. The Politburo's decision stressed the importance of using Afghan crews only, as the participation of Soviet pilots could be used as an excuse by the "enemies" to carry out anti-Soviet propaganda in Afghanistan.[472] However, given the Afghan army's trouble with desertions, Taraki continued with his demands for pilots. In May, the Politburo decided to send a significant volume of military assistance, but again denied Taraki's request for Soviet pilots.[473] When Ponomarev visited Kabul and met with Taraki, he once again faced Taraki's inquiry about the possibility of the provision of Soviet troops for emergency situations, this time it being a request for a parachute division.[474]

In the summer of 1979, the Politburo directed the Soviet Ambassador Alexander Puzanov to put pressure on Amin and Taraki to include *Parchamis* in their government, as well as some proponents of Islamism. However, Amin adamantly rejected these

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[470] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 994.
[471] "Memo on Protocol #149 of the Politburo" April 1, 1979, TsKhSD, f. 89, per.14, dok. 28, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, ttp://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110060.
[472] "Protocol #150 of the CC CPSU Politburo Session" April 21, 1979, TsKhSD, f. 89, per. 14, dok. 28, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111283.
[473] "CPSU CC Protocol #152/159" May 24, 1979, TsKhSD, f. 89, per. 14, dok. 30, st. 1-3, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113270.
[474] "Boris Ponomarev, Reports from Kabul (excerpts)" July 19, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113274.

suggestions. The Soviets thus began to realize that Amin might be the core of the problem and started plotting his removal. However, the situation got out of hand and it was Taraki who was eliminated by Amin.[475]

This development was deeply humiliating for the Soviets, as Brezhnev had considered Taraki his friend. The cooling of mutual relations was immediately tangible. For example, Puzanov would ignore Amin's diplomatic events while Amin did not attend the sixty-second anniversary of the October Revolution at the Soviet Embassy. Amin's Foreign Minister, Shah Wali, met up with all of the ambassadors of the communist countries and blamed Puzanov of complicity in the attempt to kill Amin. This was yet another embarrassment for the Soviets, who had to replace Puzanov with Fikryat Tabeyev.[476]

Nevertheless, the Kremlin had little choice but to continue supporting Amin. Even in late October, the Troika was still unwavering in its conviction not to intervene militarily, which was echoed in their report:

> The situation in Afghanistan following the events of September 13-16 of this year, as the result of which Taraki was removed from power and then physically destroyed, remains extremely complicated.
> Taking account of this and starting from the necessity of doing everything possible not to allow the victory of counter-revolution in Afghanistan …it is considered expedient to…1. Continue to work actively with Amin…not giving Amin grounds to believe that we don't trust him and don't wish to deal with him. Use the contacts with Amin to assert appropriate influence and simultaneously to expose further his true intentions.[477]

Very little is known about the internal discussions of the Troika from that moment to early December. However, Georgy Kornienko, Gromyko's deputy, noted that Gromyko suddenly stopped discussing with him the question of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Gromyko had previously posed the question: "can we afford to lose Afghanistan, or can and must we even resort to Soviet military intervention to preserve a friendly regime?" It

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[475] For a more detailed account of the Taraki/Amin confrontation, see chapter "The Development of Afghan Communism." Westad, "Prelude to Invasion," 59–64.
[476] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 1005–1007.
[477] "Report on the Situation in Afghanistan, Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, and Ponomarev to CPSU CC" October 29, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111576.

would seem that during November, opinion of the Troika would start swaying towards the intervention option.[478]

In the beginning of December, the Troika seemed to emerge convinced about the necessity of a Soviet intervention. Ustinov thus gave directives to his deputies to start planning for the dispatch of the Soviet army. The fateful decision to invade Afghanistan was made on 12th December, 1979 in a rather ambiguous document, titled "Concerning the situation in 'A'," which ratified the measures proposed by the Troika, but otherwise not mentioning Afghanistan at all.[479] Soon after, on 17th December, the CIA would start reporting a military buildup along the Soviet borders with Afghanistan. Director Turner would correctly report:

> Most of the countryside is now in rebel hands, but no major cities are expected to fall unless there are significant defections from the Army. We believe the Soviets have made a political decision to keep a pro-Soviet regime in power and to use military force to that end if necessary. They either give this a higher priority than successful completion of SALT, or they may believe it is irrelevant to SALT.[480]

The subsequent invasion was thus executed in a swift, pre-planned manner. On 25th December, encountering no resistance, Soviet troops began to be arrive at Kabul airport. On 27th December, the first troops entered Kabul and started to take positions around key governmental buildings. In the meantime, the *Spetsnaz* commando assassinated Amin. On 28th December, Radio Kabul announced the change of the regime and Babrak Karmal as the new General-Secretary of the PDPA. On 31st December, Troika reported to the CC CPSU that the situation was normalizing and that "the conviction can be expressed that the new leadership of DRA will find effective ways to stabilize completely the country's situation."[481]

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[478] Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, 1009–1010.
[479] "CC CPSU Politburo Resolution # 176/125, Concerning the Situation in 'A'" December 12, 1979, TsKhSD, f. 89, per. 14, dok. 31, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113675.
[480] "Special Coordination Committee Meeting," December 17, 1979, A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "Towards an International History of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AfghanistanV1_1978-1979.pdf.
[481] "Report on the Situation in Afghanistan, Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, and Ponomarev to CPSU CC" December 31, 1979, APRF, f. 3, op. 82, d. 173, s. 118-127, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110029.

7.3. The Justification

When the Soviet Union presented the bewildered international community with a fait accompli, it provided three official reasons for the intervention. Firstly, the USSR allegedly reacted to the official request for military assistance. Secondly, the Soviet commitment for that assistance had basis in the December 1978 Treaty of Friendship. Thirdly, the Soviets appealed to Article 51 in the UN Charter.[482]

To what extent was the Soviet proclamation grounded in reality? As discussed in the previous chapters, by the fall of 1979, the relationship between President Amin and the Kremlin was severely strained and Amin was publicly unsympathetic to the USSR, and, at the same time, he was seeking better relations with other countries. Washington was very well aware of the "strains" that existed between Amin and the Soviets.[483] While it is clear that Taraki asked for the Soviet intervention repeatedly several times in the course of the 1979, there is not much evidence that Amin continued these requests once he became president. Baumann (1993) writes that Taraki and Amin have asked for the Soviet intervention more than 16 times until 17th December.[484] However, the documentary records remains scarce. For instance the report from Troika on the 29th October notices Amin's overtures to the West, but does not mention any requests from Amin regarding the intervention.[485] The only available evidence of Amin's request relating to Soviet soldiers is the document from 6th December, which authorizes a covert dispatch of about 500 men to protect Amin's residence.[486]

Furthermore, the appeal to the 1978 Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Co-operation was not used only as the official justification to the outside world, but it was also used by Andropov, Gromyko, Ustinov and Ponomarev in their Top Secret report

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[482] Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81*, 166–167.
[483] "Cable from AMEMBASSY Kabul to AMEMBASSY Ankara," October 30, 1979, A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "Towards an International History of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/AfghanistanV1_1978-1979.pdf.
[484] Robert F. Baumann and Combat Studies Institute, *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1993), 133.
[485] "Report on the Situation in Afghanistan, Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, and Ponomarev to CPSU CC," October 29, 1979.
[486] "Extract from CPSU CC Politburo Decision" December 6, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111579.

to the CC CPSU.[487] However, even this validation was not factual, as the treaty provision explicitly required the consent of both the Afghan and the Soviet government:

> Article 4. The High Contracting Parties, acting in the spirit of the traditions of friendship and good-neighborliness and in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations *shall consult with each other and shall, by agreement* [emphasis added], take the necessary steps to safeguard the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries.[488]

Finally, it is difficult to judge the legality of the Soviet invasion in relation to the UN Charter given its vagueness. Article 51 reads:

> Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.[489]

Ambiguity also plagues other parts of the Charter that relate to the use of force. For example, Article 2(4) prohibits the use of force that would violate the territorial integrity of a nation. However, it is not clear whether an invitation by a recognized government engaged in civil war counts as the violation of territorial integrity.[490] Lastly, the invocation of Article 51 by the Soviet Union was not without an international precedent. After the U.S. deployed regular combat units into Vietnam during 1965, they released a legal memorandum which referred to the right of the U.S. and South Vietnam to participate in collective defense against communist North Vietnam. They specifically referred to the UN Charter and Article 51: "South Viet-Nam enjoys the right of self-defense…against armed attack…and, indeed, article 51 expressly recognizes that the right is inherent."[491] It is not very well understood to what extent the Kremlin was influenced by the previous usage of Article 51 in the case the Vietnam War. It is clear,

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[487] "Report on the Situation in Afghanistan, Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, and Ponomarev to CPSU CC," December 31, 1979.
[488] "Soviet Relations with Afghanistan," *Survival* 21, no. 2 (March 1, 1979): 92–93.
[489] "Charter of the United Nations: Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace and Acts of Aggression," *The United Nations*, accessed August 27, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml.
[490] John Norton Moore, "Legal Standards for Intervention in Internal Conflicts," *Ga. J. Int'l & Comp. L.* 13 (1983): 194.
[491] Office of The Legal Adviser Department of State, "The Legality of United States Participation in the Defense of Viet Nam," *Yale Law Journal*, 1966, 1087.

however, that the invocation of the right to collective self-defense as a justification of the Soviet invasion was far from unique.

7.4. Summary

The motivation behind the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 should be seen in the context of a series of crises which the Soviet Union faced in the late 1970s. While some earlier literature on the subject suggests that the Soviet invasion was in fact a continuation of the Kremlin's expansionist policy towards warm water ports, presently available evidence does not support this assertion.[492]

While the Soviets supported the PDPA since its inception, they did not plan for it to ascend to power in the Revolution of 1978. From the very beginning, the Soviet Union was reluctant to intervene. However, there were two Afghan developments that made them reconsider their position. The first one of them was the Herat Uprising in March 1979 and the second one was the removal of Taraki by Amin in September. As Ewans (2002) argues:

> The Soviets were thus left with the worst of all possible worlds. They were stuck with Amin, who was now completely in charge and supported by relatives and personal adherents in key positions, and who was convinced that the Soviets had been implicated in the attempt on his life.[493]

On top of that, the Soviets feared that Amin would do "Sadat" on them and turn to the non-communists for assistance.[494] While this fear was clearly exaggerated, it illustrates the lack of mutual trust after Amin's takeover. From the very beginning, the Kremlin was involved in a cost-benefit analysis on whether it was worth supporting a regime that was insubordinate and overzealous. However, by December 1979, the Soviet leaders had changed their prior stance and decided to support its client regime.

The rationale behind the decision rested on four different considerations – strategic, security, economic and reputational. The collapse of the Afghan communist regime would result in worsening of the strategic situation of the Soviet Union by losing

[492] See chapter "Literature Review."
[493] Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 200.
[494] Njølstad, "The Collapse of Superpower Détente, 1975–1980," 150.

a valuable buffer state. Moreover, without the intervention, the likely result would be the establishment of a hostile, anti-Soviet, regime directly at the Soviet borders. Given the fact that the large part of the Soviet Muslims lived in the vicinity of the Afghan and Iranian border, a strongly pro-Islamic regime would threaten the internal stability of the Soviet Union. Also, since the Soviet Union had invested in excess of $1.2 billion into the Afghan economy prior to the invasion, a hypothetical collapse of the regime would mean that large part of that amount would be lost. Finally, the reversal of the gains of the socialist revolution directly at the Soviet doorstep would further undermine the reputation of the Marxist doctrine in the Third World.

Conclusion

The fateful decision by the Soviet leaders to assist the communist regime in Kabul resulted in one of the bloodiest Cold War conflicts, in which about one million perished. The invasion was largely condemned in the international community, and resulted, among other things, in the United States boycotting the 1980 summer Olympic Games in Moscow.

The understanding of the dynamics that led to the Soviet invasion is one of under-researched areas of Afghan history and this study aims to begin to fill in this gap and analyze both the internal and external influences that led up to a situation in which, in the Soviet perspective, the invasion was unavoidable.

The internal dynamics were marked by a struggle between modernity and tradition, between rural and urban areas, and also between two strikingly different ideologies – Communism and Islamism. Furthermore, internal Afghan stability was also threatened by the issue of Pashtunistan, which had a detrimental effect on the Afghan economy and also on relations with Pakistan.

On the other hand, the external dynamics were marked by Soviet-American involvement. However, the Soviet Union emerged as dominant by 1955 at the latest. While the United States participated in the Cold War competition in providing development aid, its contributions were relatively meagre when compared to those given to Afghanistan's neighbors, Iran and Pakistan. Afghan rulers showed their preference for the United States as their donor from as early as the 1930s, but Afghanistan did not occupy a significant place in U.S. foreign policy in the period until 1979.

Our understanding of the Soviet decision to invade has begun to shift with the newly uncovered documents from Russian archives. While it has previously been thought of as being an opportunistic move to spread socialism in the Third World and a stepping stone to the future Soviet moves towards the oil-rich Gulf, we now know that the invasion was a reaction to emerging events in the aftermath of the Saur Revolution of 1978, over which the Soviets had little control. The evidence suggests that the Soviets were adamantly reluctant to invade Afghanistan, at least until the Herat Uprising in March 1979 and the subsequent overthrow of Nur Mohammad Taraki by Hafizullah

Amin in September 1979.

Ultimately, the strategic, security, economic and reputational concerns prevailed. The Soviet Union could not afford to lose its client regime and have Afghanistan to turn to be another hostile state on its southern border alongside Iran, risking further spread of the insurgency to the sensitive Soviet Central Asia. Furthermore, Soviet Union also wanted to avoid a situation, in which the failing socialist revolution reflects poorly on the Soviet ideology in the Third World. Finally, the victory of the counterrevolutionaries would mean that large part of the investment, which the Soviet Union had given to Afghanistan since mid-1950s, was lost.

While the situation of researchers of Afghanistan has currently significantly improved in comparison with the Cold War era due to the relatively newly opened archives, there are still several limitations. Firstly, not all of the files from the Russian archives have been declassified or are available, and our knowledge of certain timeframes is fragmented as a result. Furthermore, the field would benefit from research into the role of other relevant players such as Czechoslovakia, East and West Germany, and the Gulf countries. Finally, the role of China in regards to the *mujahedeen* prior to the Soviet invasion is not well understood and would benefit from further study.

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