

The Ominous Shadow of Communism in Afghanistan (1979-1989): An Analytical Study

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Abstract—The period from 1979 to 1989 in Afghanistan was marked by the ominous shadow of communism, as the country became embroiled in a complex and tumultuous struggle. The Soviet intervention and the subsequent establishment of a communist government led to widespread resistance from various factions within Afghan society. The decade-long conflict left a lasting impact on the nation, causing immense human suffering and contributing to the destabilization of the region. The legacy of communism in Afghanistan is a stark reminder of the profound consequences of ideological conflicts, and it serves as a cautionary tale for the challenges and complexities inherent in attempting to impose political ideologies on diverse and historically rich societies. The scars of this tumultuous era continue to shape Afghanistan's trajectory, emphasizing the importance of understanding the historical context to navigate the complexities of the nation's present and future.

This article delves into the tumultuous era of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, marked by the pervasive influence of communism. Focused on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, it unravels the intricate socio-political dynamics, shedding light on the ideological clashes, power struggles, and the enduring impact on Afghan society. By examining the consequences of the communist era, this article seeks to elucidate how Afghanistan's historical narrative was shaped by external interventions and internal complexities. Through a nuanced exploration of this critical period, the article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the lasting repercussions of communism in Afghanistan.

Index Terms—Afghanistan, Communism, Soviet intervention, Cold War, Jihad, Mujahedin, Afghan Communism.

I. Introduction

The Soviet Union maintained relatively close relations with Afghanistan prior to 1979. Diplomatic ties were established in 1919, with the Soviet Union being among the earliest nations to recognize Afghanistan's independence from Britain during that year. Throughout the Cold War, the Soviet Union viewed Afghanistan as a strategically vital buffer state situated between itself and the Middle East. Consequently, the Soviet Union extended both economic and military assistance to Afghanistan, with Soviet advisors playing a significant role in the modernization of the Afghan military.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet Union provided economic assistance to Afghanistan, contributing to the country's infrastructure development, industrialization, and improvements in living standards. The Soviet Union also supported the Afghan government's initiatives to implement land reforms and enhance the status of women.

Nonetheless, relations between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan were occasionally strained. Tensions arose over Afghanistan's non-aligned foreign policy, which the Soviet Union perceived as a potential challenge to

its influence in the region. In summary, the Soviet Union's relationship with Afghanistan before 1979 was intricate, characterized by a blend of economic collaboration and political disagreements. Afghanistan was viewed as strategically significant, but there were concerns about its potential for instability if it pursued too much independence or aligned too closely with Western powers. To gain deeper insight into this matter, let's briefly explore the historical dynamics of Afghanistan-Soviet relations.

Historical shifts in both Afghan and Russian circumstances paved the way for the development of close ties between the two sides, which had not only become possible but also desirable. While past Tsarist behavior had engendered general distrust among Afghans and often led them to seek support from Britain as a counterforce, new dynamics emerged that encouraged Afghanistan to set aside, at least temporarily, historical fears of Russian ambitions in favor of strengthening relations with the Soviet Union.

King Amanullah, dissatisfied with Britain's attitude, found it necessary to seek recognition and support from the Soviets. From the Bolshevik perspective, this presented a significant opportunity to rebalance historical power dynamics. Their objectives included:

- Fostering the Afghans' growing desire for complete independence from British influence.
- Providing an exemplar of positive Afghan-Soviet relations to encourage other nations, particularly neighboring Muslim countries, to pursue similar affiliations.
- Establishing an espionage network in Afghanistan to further the spread of communism into India.
- Deterring Afghanistan from actively supporting its Muslim counterparts in Central Asia. This evolving context set the stage for a transformation in Afghan-Soviet relations during that era (Saikal, 2004, pp. 66-67).

Following extensive bilateral discussions, the initial Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Good Neighborly Relations was formalized in February 1921. This treaty marked the commencement of Soviet economic and military assistance to Afghanistan and had varying implications for the Afghan-British relationship.

On one hand, the treaty compelled the British to adopt a more accommodating stance toward Afghanistan's pursuit of full independence. There was a genuine concern that failing to do so might drive Amanullah closer to the Soviets. Conversely, it heightened British apprehensions about potential hidden motives behind Soviet overtures of friendship with Afghanistan. British perceptions, to a large extent, were influenced by misunderstandings rather than a clear-eyed assessment of King Amanullah's objectives.

The primary purpose of cultivating friendship with Soviet Russia was to facilitate the advancement of Afghan foreign policy objectives. This policy aimed to provide Afghanistan with a diplomatic tool to counter British influence and, concurrently, encourage Britain and other Western powers to engage with Afghanistan on a similar basis (Saikal, 2004).

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study on "The Ominous Shadow of Communism in Afghanistan (1979-1989)" has been conducted through a meticulous examination of various sources. In addition to historical books, a diverse range of materials, including journals, articles, newspapers, maps, and documentaries pertinent to the issue, were scrutinized.

The research methodology employed in this article is qualitative in nature. The initial phase involved the comprehensive collection of sources relevant to the subject matter. Subsequently, a rigorous evaluation of their authenticity and credibility was conducted to ensure the reliability of the data. Once the raw materials were gathered, a systematic process of review, synthesis, refinement, and analysis was undertaken. This involved organizing and connecting various points related to specific topics and sub-topics in a logical manner.

By employing a multi-faceted methodology, this research aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the factors that led to direct interference and the Soviet Union's invasion (1979-1989) in Afghanistan, along with its consequences on both a national and global scale.

III. AREA OF STUDY: AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a nation with a complex history marked by enduring conflicts of interest involving both regional and international powers. The persistent interference by regional and global powers in Afghanistan's internal affairs has given rise to wars and political upheaval, rendering the country's path to stability a challenging one. In this context, the external factors contributing to instability and civil unrest within Afghanistan are often more conspicuous than the internal factors. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the primary causes behind Afghanistan's instability and conflicts, it becomes imperative to conduct an in-depth examination of the involvement of global powers, with a particular focus on Soviet Union's invasion in Afghanistan and its impact on Afghan Society.

IV. RESULTS

The result of this text is a comprehensive analysis of the period from 1979 to 1989 in Afghanistan, emphasizing the profound impact of communism, the Soviet intervention, and the subsequent struggles faced by the nation. The study explores the intricate historical context, delving into Afghanistan's strategic importance in global power struggles, from the "Great Game" to Cold War rivalries.

Key findings include the complex decision-making behind the Soviet intervention, influenced by geopolitical considerations and concerns about Western influence. The aftermath, marked by economic dependency and global denunciation, reveals the significant defeat the Soviet Union faced, akin to the American experience in Vietnam. The installment of Karmal as a puppet leader, subsequent efforts to bolster the communist regime, and the turning point in 1986 with increased U.S. and Pakistan involvement are highlighted.

The study underscores the challenges of imposing political ideologies on diverse societies, emphasizing the enduring legacy of the Afghan civil war. Despite the Geneva Accords in 1988 and the Soviet Union's withdrawal, the expected collapse of the Afghan government did not materialize, leading to a protracted and brutal civil war that persists to the present day. The article serves as a poignant reminder of the lasting consequences of ideological conflicts, urging a profound understanding of Afghanistan's complex historical context in navigating its present and future.

V. DISCUSSION

A. The Prelude to Invasion

Throughout its long and storied history, Afghanistan has consistently found itself caught in the crosshairs of international conflicts. Geographically situated at the nexus of major civilizations, this land has witnessed a procession of foreign powers exerting their influence, often to the detriment of its indigenous population. From the ancient Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks to the conquering campaigns of historical figures like Alexander the Great, Afghanistan's strategic location has made it a coveted prize for centuries.

During the last two centuries, Afghanistan emerged as a pivotal arena for global geopolitics. It served as the battleground where Tsarist Russia and the British Empire, and later the Soviet Union and the United States, vied for supremacy. This intense rivalry was famously dubbed the "Great Game" by the Russians and British, as Moscow, London, and Calcutta believed that Afghanistan and Persia were the arenas where their empires clashed, and the victor of this contest would reshape the global balance of power.

The British, in particular, harbored concerns that Russia had designs on seizing Constantinople, the Ottoman capital, and subsequently pushing south through Afghanistan. Such a move would grant the Russian Empire access to coveted warm-water ports along the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, further amplifying the stakes of this geopolitical tug-of-war on Afghan soil (Reidel, 2014, pp. 8-9).

Russian imperial ambitions had historically extended toward securing a southern border along the formidable Hindu Kush mountain range, and some even entertained notions of reaching the Arabian Sea. However, as the 19th century drew to a close, Russian leaders pragmatically scaled back their territorial aspirations in Central Asia. Instead, they recognized the strategic value of an independent Afghanistan serving as a buffer state.

This practical approach endured with their Soviet successors, who maintained a similar perspective. By the 1970s, the Soviet Union had already achieved its coveted warm-water ports along the Indian Ocean, effectively replacing Britain as the preeminent power in India's sphere of influence. Consequently, Afghanistan no longer figured prominently as a necessary pathway to attain these goals. Soviet leaders thus found it advantageous to foster mutually beneficial interests with Afghanistan, recognizing that the nation could be an ally rather than a conquest (Wahab & Yongermen, 2007, p. 149).

In any case, international factors played a significant role in the Soviet decision to undertake its fateful invasion of Afghanistan. The rupture in relations with Mao Zedong's China had alerted the Soviet Union to the presence of a potent and adversarial neighbor along its eastern borders. This apprehension was further exacerbated by the rapid improvement in relations between China and the United States during the late 1970s. The détente that followed President Nixon's visits and the resumption of diplomatic ties between Beijing and Washington raised concerns of a potential Beijing-Washington alliance aimed squarely at the Soviet Union. Additionally, regional instability was on the rise due to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which harbored a hostile stance toward the presence of the United States in the region. The U.S. government, in response, was actively seeking alternative permanent military facilities to replace those previously provided by Iran. As Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, would later state in an interview with Pravda following the Soviet invasion, these circumstances were of significant concern and weighed on their decision-making process "a real threat that Afghanistan would lose its independence and be turned into an imperialist military bridgehead on our southern border" (Areny, 1990, p. 110).

During the 1970s, the Cold War had evolved into a global contest for influence and control. Following the tragic events of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Leonid Brezhnev articulated his doctrine that categorically stated, "Any state that had once adopted socialism would not be allowed to return to its original form of government or any other." This doctrine laid the groundwork for a hardened Soviet stance.

In response, the Reagan administration crafted its own doctrine, the Reagan Doctrine, which proclaimed that "no communist conquests, de facto or otherwise, would be allowed to go uncontested." This doctrine placed a strong emphasis on opposing and reversing communist gains and expansion wherever they manifested. William J. Casey, Reagan's appointee to head the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from 1981 to 1987, emerged as a highly active participant in this Cold War strategy. He employed a wide range of methods, both conventional and covert, to counter the advances made by the Soviet Union and its allies (Rasanayagam, 2011, p. 84).

B. Daoud's Modernization and Soviet Aid

Upon taking office, Daoud pursued a set of interconnected policy objectives. His foremost aim was to centralize power extensively under his leadership, followed by the implementation of a command-driven approach to accelerate social and economic transformation. Simultaneously, he sought to champion the concept of Pashtunistan as the cornerstone of Afghan nationalism, entailing a commitment to support the establishment of 'Pashtunistan.' Importantly, Daoud was determined to attain these objectives without forsaking or jeopardizing Afghanistan's longstanding policy of neutrality in international affairs.

To achieve these ambitious goals, Daoud recognized the critical need for substantial foreign assistance, both in terms of technical-economic support and military aid. While he held a personal admiration for the technical and industrial achievements of the Soviet Union, his ideological reservations, historical Afghan distrust of the Soviets, aversion to communism, and Moscow's limited influence over Pakistan led Daoud to initially prioritize the United States as the primary source of such aid. In 1953-1954, he made at least two formal requests to the U.S. for arms and economic assistance, emphasizing his role as a mediator, actively and impartially fostering dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Saikal, 2004, pp. 121-122).

The formal rejection of Daoud's requests by the United States not only left him feeling slighted but also fueled his perception that the U.S. was increasingly aligning itself with Pakistan at Afghanistan's expense. In April 1954, a U.S. diplomatic observer noted a growing belief within Afghan governmental circles that the United States had effectively turned its back on Afghanistan. Faced with this situation, the Afghan government deemed it necessary to play its 'Soviet card' by seeking aid from the Soviet Union. This strategic shift had significant consequences, ultimately paving the way for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan more than two decades later.

The rapid American influence in the region, coupled with the U.S. failure to align with the neutral positions of several countries, including Afghanistan and India, posed a significant challenge and pretext for the Soviets to initiate regional actions. The Soviets could not afford to overlook the opportunity created by the U.S. denial of military aid to Afghanistan, which had implications for the broader South-West Asian Region. From Moscow's perspective, this region held greater importance for the Soviet Union than for its Western adversaries due to its proximity to the Soviet Union, extensive borders, and shared cross-border Islamic ethno-linguistic groups with the region's key constituent states (Saikal, 2004).

While concerned about the possibility of U.S. encirclement and the establishment of strategic military bases in Iran and Pakistan, the Soviets viewed Afghanistan's request for support in 1955 as an opportunity. Skillfully navigating the realm of power politics, the Soviets quickly capitalized on these developments. They not only initiated a substantial program of economic and military assistance to Afghanistan but also aligned themselves with the Afghan government in its disputes with Pakistan. Additionally, they provided similar aid to newly independent, non-aligned India, which was also engaged in significant border and political conflicts with Pakistan. This laid the groundwork for the potential development of a Moscow-Kabul-New Delhi axis (Ghaus, 1988, p. 85).

C. Soviet Penetration

The Soviets experienced rapid success in Afghanistan through their aid program, allowing them to establish a significant presence within the Afghan armed forces. Within a decade, the majority of the Afghan military had received training and equipment from the Soviets. Additionally, the Soviet influence extended to various aspects of the country's economic and administrative infrastructure. While Afghanistan welcomed experts from different countries in fields like education, economic planning, communications, justice, and fiscal management, the military sector remained largely under Russian influence.

Furthermore, according to a 1955 agreement, Afghanistan annually sent 100 non-military students to the Soviet Union for both short and long-term training programs. As part of their curriculum, these students were also required to attend weekly classes in Marxism-Leninism (Saikal, 2004, pp. 123-124).

Afghan students studying in the Soviet Union became susceptible targets for recruitment by the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security), commonly known as the KGB, which was responsible for foreign intelligence and domestic security within the Soviet Union. Upon their return to Afghanistan, these students often operated as covert agents, subtly guided by both the Soviet Embassy and its affiliated agencies, including consulates and trading companies.

Given Afghanistan's acute shortage of trained personnel and Daoud's aspirations for swift military and socio-economic modernization, many of these students' quickly ascended to influential roles in policy formulation and implementation. This positioning allowed them to collaborate closely with Soviet advisors and, in conjunction with them, exert influence over governmental policies. Moreover, they served as conduits for keeping the Soviet embassy apprised of developments within the Afghan government and received instructions from the embassy in return. This covert collaboration culminated in the rapid establishment of an informal, subterranean Soviet-Afghan network. Its effectiveness in enabling the Soviets to wield substantial influence over the future trajectory of Afghan politics surpassed the expectations of Afghan leaders.

However, the Soviets also made inroads into specific cultural spheres within Afghanistan, including select institutions of higher education. This allowed a limited amount of their ideological and propaganda literature to infiltrate Afghanistan, often facilitated by their Afghan agents. Additionally, Afghan-Soviet trade saw a remarkable surge during this period, establishing the Soviet Union as Afghanistan's largest trading partner by 1960.

Furthermore, the Soviets played a pivotal role in enabling an alternative transit route for Afghanistan, especially during a period of escalating tensions and significant border skirmishes with Pakistan. This led to a breakdown in diplomatic relations between the two countries from 1961 to 1963. In this context, the Soviets provided valuable assistance to Afghanistan (Saikal, 2004).

In summary, Daoud's tenure as Prime Minister from 1953 to 1963 witnessed substantial Soviet investment in Afghanistan, leading to growing Soviet influence in the country. During this period, there was a noticeable reduction in the traditional resentment of the Soviet Union within the Afghan power elite. Additionally, many of Daoud's foreign policy interests and decisions, such as his opposition to colonialism, imperialism, and Zionism, as well as his support for non-alignment and liberationist movements, aligned with those of the Soviet Union.

This convergence of interests meant that Afghanistan increasingly aligned itself with the Soviet Union. By the early 1960s, some in the Western world hastily characterized Afghanistan as a nation becoming more dependent on and falling within the sphere of Soviet influence (Hagen, 1966, pp. 73-74).

a. Soviets debate for invasion

Through the course of 1978 and 1979, the prevailing consensus within the United States intelligence community was that the Soviet Union was unlikely to commit substantial ground forces to the escalating situation in Afghanistan, which was beginning to resemble a protracted quagmire akin to the Vietnam War. Soviet archives also revealed that a majority of the Politburo members held this perspective. Even as late as September 28, 1979, the official community assessment maintained that Moscow would not intervene with

significant force if it seemed probable that the Khalq government was on the verge of collapsing (MacEchin, 2007, p. 11).

However, as the insurgency in Herat reached its peak, the Soviet Politburo convened a comprehensive meeting from March 17 to 19, 1979, to deliberate upon the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and consider potential courses of action. During his introductory briefing, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko reported that, according to available intelligence, insurgent groups consisting of saboteurs and terrorists, some of whom had received training in Iran and Pakistan, had formed alliances with domestic counter-revolutionaries. This coalition included fervent adherents of religious leaders and was responsible for committing heinous acts of violence.

Gromyko further explained that he had engaged in a telephone conversation with Afghan leader Amin, who had painted a different picture of the situation, asserting that everything was under control. However, subsequent information indicated that Taraki, the preceding Afghan leader, had urgently summoned the chief Soviet military advisor in Kabul, General Gorelov, and the charge d'affairs, Alexeev, seeking immediate assistance in the form of military equipment, ammunition, and food rations. This plea was interpreted as a request for the deployment of ground and air forces into Afghanistan. The Politburo, in light of these developments, concurred with Gromyko's assessment: "we must proceed from a fundamental proposition in considering aid to Afghanistan, namely: under no circumstances may we lose Afghanistan" (Rasanayagam, 2011, p. 85). In accordance with the 'Brezhnev doctrine,' which had been articulated a decade earlier following the invasion of Czechoslovakia, "every Communist country had the right to intervene wherever socialism was under siege" (Wahab & Yongermen, 2007, p. 152).

Defense Minister Ustinov indicated that his forces could be prepared for deployment within a three-day timeframe. However, KGB chief Yuri Andropov voiced strong opposition to the use of Soviet forces, a stance that found support from Gromyko. Andropov emphasized that, in accordance with the UN Charter, a nation could request assistance and, consequently, troops could be dispatched if it faced external aggression. In the case of Afghanistan, there had been no such external aggression. Therefore, contrary to the narratives circulating in international media at the time and later in the extensive literature that emerged on the subject, the Soviet leadership did not display a keen eagerness to dispatch their armed forces into Afghanistan (Rasanayagam, 2011, p. 88).

Moreover, the Soviet leadership began to entertain concerns that if Afghanistan were to slip from their sphere of influence, the United States might seize the opportunity to establish a new regional foothold in the country. Prior to the tragic killing of U.S. Ambassador Dubs, Amin had maintained amicable relations with him, meeting on a regular basis, typically twice a month. This engagement raised suspicions among some, including KGB chief Yuri Andropov, who believed that Amin, who had been educated in the United States, might have connections to the CIA. Such allegations were widely circulated through Soviet-sponsored underground newsletters.

Furthermore, certain members of the Soviet establishment perceived the hand of the CIA behind the uprisings that erupted across Afghanistan in 1978 (Wahab & Yongermen, 2007, pp. 152-153). Ultimately, Brezhnev declared that: "Right now our mission is to determine our further actions or a full-scale armed intervention, to preserve our position in Afghanistan and to secure our influence there" (Rasanayagam, 2011, pp. 89-90). The stage was set for a potential Soviet military intervention, and preparations were made for establishing a post-Amin regime complaint structure.

The demise of Taraki in October and Amin's assumption of power in Kabul marked a pivotal and decisive moment for Soviet policymakers. Amin's ascent deeply offended Brezhnev on a personal level. He expressed his indignation to his associates, stating, "What a despicable act by Amin, to kill the man with whom he had once forged the revolution" (Braithwaite, 2011, p. 73).

In any case, Amin faced accusations of conspiring with the CIA to undermine Soviet interests in Afghanistan. Under the direction of Yuri Andropov's KGB, plans were developed to remove Amin from power and replace him with Karmal. By early December, Andropov conveyed to Brezhnev that the KGB believed the achievements of the Saur Revolution were in jeopardy, and Afghanistan was at risk of falling into the Western sphere of influence.

The ultimate decision reached by the Moscow Politburo was to depose Amin and install a more moderate leader from the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), namely Karmal. On December 12, 1979, Brezhnev and other senior Politburo members formally endorsed the operation by signing a document authorizing the change in leadership (Reidel, 2014, p. 25).

Based on Rajah Anwar's recollections of his discussions with Amin's widow while they were in Pul-i-Charkhi prison, it appears that the initial Soviet strategy involved incapacitating Amin physically. The plan involved tampering with his food, administered by his Russian cook, with the aim of rendering him unconscious. Subsequently, the intention was to transfer Amin to a Soviet medical facility before any trial for Taraki's murder or potential exile could take place. It's worth noting that there were alternative versions of this account. However, these plans seemed to have gone off course, leading to a different outcome. It appears that KGB commandos, possibly in conjunction with Spetznaz forces, took action against Amin's residence and carried out an operation that resulted in his death (Anwar, 1988, pp. 187-189).

Under the banner of "saving the motherland and the revolution," Karmal assumed power with direct support from Soviet forces, resulting in Afghanistan losing its sovereignty and effectively becoming a puppet of the Soviet Union. Consequently, "The new regime in Kabul became the creature of a foreign power for the first time since Amir Abdul Rahman Khan had begun laying the foundations of a neutral and independent Afghan state 100 years earlier" (Rasanayagam, 2011, p. 90).

b. Invasion and Occupation

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, spanning from 1979 to 1989, stands as a pivotal chapter in both Afghan and Cold War history. This incursion commenced officially with the deployment of the 40th Army to Kabul Airport on December 25, 1979, ultimately concluding with the Soviet withdrawal on February 15, 1989.

Throughout the course of the conflict, Afghan mujahideen received support from various countries, including the United States, Great Britain, China, and other Western nations. They also found backing from Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and Jordan. In addition to aid, the mujahideen underwent training, courtesy of the United States and Pakistan, as part of the broader Cold War struggle, with the CIA providing assistance through the ISI.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan strained relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, intensifying the tensions of the Cold War. The United States and its allies vehemently condemned the Soviet intervention and offered support to the Afghan resistance. This conflict in Afghanistan evolved into a focal point of the proxy war between the two superpowers, with the United States and the Soviet Union indirectly engaging in hostilities through their respective Afghan allies. Ultimately, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan culminated in a humiliating defeat for the Soviets, leading some to liken it to the American experience in Vietnam (Runion, 2007, pp. 105-106).

In any case, the Soviet invasion stemmed from a protracted period of economic and political engagement by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. This engagement had been further expedited by internal political and military developments within Afghanistan during the latter part of 1979. The extensive economic investment by the Soviets had led to a state of economic dependency, wherein the political influence of Soviet interests began to overshadow the national interests of Afghanistan.

The invasion not only expanded the scale of the ongoing insurgency but also profoundly disrupted Afghan society. It internationalized the crisis in Afghanistan, galvanizing both national and international efforts against the Sovietization of the country (Nojumi, 2002, pp. 57-58).

On December 25, four motorized divisions crossed into Afghanistan from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, commencing their southward advance along two primary routes. One of these columns reached Kabul by the following day, while the arms of this pincer movement soon converged in Kandahar. Simultaneously, airborne troops were deployed near Herat, Kandahar, and Jalalabad. By the 27th, the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan had swelled to 50,000 troops, with 5,000 of them stationed in Kabul. They were strategically positioned near critical facilities and key locations. On that same day, Soviet forces disabled Kabul's telephone infrastructure and seized control of the radio station. Meanwhile, other units encircled the Darul Aman Palace, where Amin had taken refuge. Special agents, disguised in Afghan uniforms, infiltrated the building. It is recounted that, "in close fighting, Amin himself was killed, and those of the 1,800 Afghan guards who

survived the fighting were reportedly executed to eliminate witnesses, though a few managed to escape” (Wahab & Yongermen, 2007, p. 155).

The global denunciation of the Soviet invasion was resounding, and in a special session, the United Nations General Assembly condemned this act of aggression. President Carter, for his part, labeled the invasion as the most significant threat to peace since World War II. In response, he unveiled a series of punitive measures, including the non-ratification of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) II non-proliferation treaty, an embargo on exports of wheat and high technology to the USSR, and a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics (Runion, 2007, p. 111).

The replacement of Amin with Karmal by the Soviets did little to halt the ongoing deterioration of the situation within Afghanistan. The regime found itself effectively powerless in the countryside, losing control over a staggering 85% of the population. This dire state of affairs prompted the Soviets to contemplate whether they should intervene in order to prevent the Marxist government in Kabul from facing an ignominious defeat. Such a defeat would not only tarnish the credibility of the Soviet Union but also held grave implications, given Afghanistan's proximity to Soviet borders.

Moreover, the potential failure of the Afghan Army, which had received advisory, training, and equipment support from the Soviet Union, would reflect negatively on the Soviets. Afghanistan's role as a buffer state was once again thrust to the forefront of international politics (Clements, 2003, p. xxiii).

c. Life under Occupation

Karmal announced his own accession to power as the new phase of the Saur Revolution. On December 27, 1979, at 8:45 P.M., he began broadcast to the nation by intoning the traditional Koranic invocation, embracing all elements of the Afghan nation, and paying lip-service to Taraki, “our dear leader and noble founder of our party murdered by ‘that rogue’ Amin”. He went on to throw open the gates of the Pul-i-Charkhi Prison, and decided to induct non-Party individuals into his administration in fulfillment of his old strategy of setting up a national democratic government that would mobilize all sections of society before a socialist transformation could be effected (Anwar, 1988, p. 215).

Karmal issued a call to all segments of the population to unite under a banner of a 'National Democratic Government.' He emphasized that socialism would be introduced in a gradual manner, following a step-by-step transformation of society. Karmal also announced a general amnesty, encouraging refugees to return and reclaim their property. In addition, he informed the public that a new provisional constitution had been prepared, which notably featured a Department of Islamic Affairs, highlighting the significance of Islam. Subsequent broadcasts, originating from the Kabul station, officially designated Karmal as President, Prime Minister, and Secretary General of the PDPA. These broadcasts also conveyed the news that Amin had been 'executed' for crimes against the people (Wahab & Yongermen, 2007, p. 157).

Indeed, the newly established government in Kabul was effectively a puppet regime, entirely reliant on Soviet support and guidance. For instance, Foreign Minister Shah Mohammad Dost had conveyed to Gromyko that during a meeting of the Afghan Politburo, 'Babrak continuously stressed the necessity of heeding the friendly and timely advice and wishes emanating from the Soviet leaders.'

During his visit to Kabul at the outset of February 1980, Andropov outlined the overarching principles of the domestic policies that the Afghan leadership was expected to adhere to. He underscored the importance of fostering genuine party unity within a broad-based PDPA that included both Parcham and Khalqi elements. He also emphasized the necessity of strengthening the PDPA's relations with the government and the broader population, including the tribes and moderate religious leaders. Additionally, Andropov stressed the importance of restoring normal economic activity in the country and enhancing the readiness of the armed forces (Rasanayagam, 2011, pp. 92-93).

The Afghan communists held a strong desire to expand Afghanistan's borders, extending them to reach the sea. Much like many Afghans, the PDPA leadership actively supported the Pashtunistan cause. Taraki, for instance, openly discussed this with Brezhnev, asserting that "we must not leave the Pakistani Pashtun and Baluchi in the hands of the imperialists." He believed that it was now possible to initiate a national liberation struggle among these tribes and incorporate the Pashtun and Baluchi regions into Afghanistan.

Amin shared Taraki's enthusiasm for Afghan territorial expansion. He expressed to the Soviet ambassador that "the territory of Afghanistan must extend to the shores of the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean. We aspire to witness the sea with our own eyes and require access to the Indian Ocean." Similarly, Karmal was determined to repudiate and negate the Durand Line, aiming to shift Afghanistan's border to the valley of the Indus River (Mitrokhim, 2009, pp. 110-111). Karmal's freshly installed government initiated actions to advance the cause of Pashtunistan. They rekindled relations with Baluchi separatist groups in Afghanistan, a relationship that had roots dating back to the time of Prime Minister Daoud. Karmal's newly established intelligence service, the Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawlati (KHAD), also known as the State Intelligence Agency, was brought into existence with support and funding from the KGB (Mitrokhim, 2009, p. 141).

Under the leadership of Najibullah, the KHAD experienced significant expansion. Starting from a relatively modest size of just a few hundred members in 1980, it swiftly grew to encompass more than 16,000 personnel by 1982, with nearly all of them receiving training in the Soviet Union. In addition, the KHAD established units of "bandit mujahedin," a covert group of agents who assumed the guise of mujahedin fighters. However, their actual mission was to undermine the credibility of genuine mujahedin by perpetrating atrocities and sowing discord among the opposition to the regime (Mitrokhim, 2009, pp. 135-137).

Karmal's regime took steps to rectify certain aspects of the Khalq era's policies. For instance, they reverted to the traditional tricolor flag, and the pace of implementing the land reform program was decelerated. The regime also aimed to project a more nationalist image and distance itself from hardline communism. Islam

was no longer automatically treated as an adversary of the state. Moscow, along with the KGB, encouraged Karmal to initiate measures aimed at regaining some level of popular support. However, despite these efforts, the resistance against the regime continued to grow stronger rather than wane (Reidel, 2014, p. 27).

Approximately two months following the arrival of Soviet forces, a widespread movement known as "Allah-u-Akbar" (God is great) was mobilized against the Karmal regime. This movement orchestrated processions where slogans condemning the regime and its Soviet supporters were fervently chanted. During nighttime, communities across the nation would assemble on rooftops to recite the azan, the Muslim call to prayer, as an innovative form of non-violent protest. Anti-government pamphlets were disseminated, and instances of terrorism escalated both in urban centers and rural regions. Party members and activists faced assassination attempts (Rasanayagam, 2011, p. 95).

The Soviets made efforts to garner support for the communist regime by initiating an extensive aid program. A multitude of experts were dispatched to Afghanistan to partake in what was termed "Nation Building." This endeavor saw the construction of factories, residential complexes, power stations, and various other facilities with financial support from the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Soviet allies in Eastern Europe were encouraged to contribute to these developmental efforts as well (Kalinovsky, 2011, p. 134). Furthermore, significant efforts were directed towards the reconstruction of the Afghan army. By the end of 1979, the Afghan army had dwindled to a force of fewer than 25,000 troops. However, by 1989, the army had grown substantially, boasting strength of 150,000 personnel, including regular forces. The Afghan air force, which included over 400 aircraft and 100 helicopters, emerged as one of the region's formidable air forces. Nevertheless, the Afghan forces grappled with issues of low morale and were frequently met with skepticism by the Red Army command (Braithwaite, 2011, p. 136).

The Soviets held the expectation that they could maintain control over the country by securing major cities and critical road networks, periodically conducting sweeps of the countryside to eliminate insurgent groups. For instance, Kunar province underwent military operations in March, May, and September of 1980, yet the mujahideen remained resilient and undefeated. Similar challenges were encountered in other regions, including Paktia, Ghazni, and Nangarhar provinces.

In September 1980, a significant offensive was launched into the Panjshir Valley with the objective of defeating the predominantly Tajik guerrilla force under the command of Massoud. However, the Soviets faced continued resistance. In 1981, the Russians began to rely even more heavily on their own forces for offensive operations, while the Afghan army assumed the responsibility of defending the cities. Two additional major offensives were conducted in the Panjshir. By the end of that year, the Soviet deputy defense minister visited the region to assess the situation and determine what was going awry (Reidel, 2014, p. 31).

As a consequence, the year 1982 witnessed even more extensive Soviet operations, featuring larger task forces. Additionally, significant endeavors were undertaken to secure the vicinity surrounding Kabul,

spanning Wardak, Parwan, and Logar provinces. A Soviet captain offered the following description of the situation:

Practically every operation in the war ended in the same way. Military operations began soldiers and officers died, Afghan soldiers died, the mujahedin and the peaceful population died, and when the operation was over, our forces would leave and everything would return to what it had been before (Kalinovsky, 2011, p. 130).

The year 1986 marked a pivotal juncture in the conflict. Pakistan's leader, General Zia, made the decision in 1985 to escalate the war and conveyed to President Reagan in January 1986 that he was willing to undertake greater risks in pursuit of victory. Concurrently, the Soviets opted to take more significant risks in a final attempt to secure victory on the battlefield. The introduction of new U.S. equipment, notably the Stinger missile, in 1986, along with a substantial increase in U.S. and Saudi funding for the war, exerted considerable pressure on the Red Army. Meanwhile, the political support for the war effort in Moscow eroded, and the leadership gradually came to the conclusion that the war was unwinnable (Reidel, 2014, p. 32).

Andropov, who assumed leadership after Brezhnev's passing in 1982, introduced fresh strategies. Among these tactics were initiatives like proposing a ceasefire with Massoud to potentially sow division among the mujahideen ranks. Additionally, he augmented the deployment of heliborne Special Forces units, employing more intelligent and strategic approaches to combat (Feifer, 2009). He also displayed greater vigor on the diplomatic front, actively working to revitalize UN-mediated discussions with Pakistan. However, his tenure was cut short by his passing in January 1984, leading to his replacement by Chernenko. Chernenko's rule lasted for a single year, concluding in March 1985. When Mikhail Gorbachev assumed office, his agenda diverged significantly from that of his three predecessors; he aimed to de-escalate the conflict rather than perpetuate it (Reidel, 2014, p. 35).

The Karmal regime faced further weakening due to the resurgence of the long-standing Parcham-Khalqi rivalry within the PDPA. The nationalist Khalqis, led by Sarwari, who had collaborated with Karmal to bring in the Red Army and remove Amin, remained steadfast in their allegiance to Taraki's legacy. The Khalqis held a dominant position within the officer corps of the Afghan armed forces and anticipated that Karmal's authority would wane once the Red Army departed, once its original mission had been fulfilled.

However, the Red Army did not withdraw, as it had its own objectives to fulfill. In October 1985, Gorbachev, who had not played a significant role in the Soviet invasion of 1979, informed Karmal in Moscow that the Red Army would be pulling out, and the PDPA would have to defend itself without Soviet combat troops. A year later, Moscow removed Karmal from power and appointed Najibullah as his successor (Braithwaite, 2011, pp. 272-273).

D. The Road to Withdrawal

Karmal's attempts to implement new policies had minimal influence on the evolving fortunes of the warring factions. By the mid-1980s, millions of Afghan citizens found themselves residing in refugee camps located in Pakistan and Iran, under the authority of staunchly anti-Soviet mujahideen leaders. The Soviet leadership perceived Karmal as ineffective and closely linked to the regime's shortcomings. On May 4, 1986, Najibullah, known for his ruthless but efficient leadership of KHAD, assumed control of the PDPA with the backing of the Soviets and ascended to the presidency of Afghanistan.

In the early months of 1987, Najibullah declared a unilateral ceasefire lasting for six months, which was subsequently extended for an additional six months. As part of a reconciliation effort, National Reconciliation Commission committees were established throughout the country with the directive to engage with resistance groups, exiles, and refugees. In November 1987, Najibullah convened a loya jirga, which sanctioned a new constitution that outlined provisions for a multiparty democracy. During this process, the jirga renamed the country as the Republic of Afghanistan, omitting the term "Democratic" from its name, and appointed Najibullah as the president of the new republic. Subsequently, elections were organized in the following year (Wahab & Yongermen, 2007, pp. 168-169).

Najibullah was the individual selected by Gorbachev to execute his strategic vision. On January 1, 1987, Najibullah unveiled his "National Reconciliation" program, which encompassed three pivotal components: a six-month unilateral ceasefire, the establishment of a government of "National Unity," and the repatriation of over 7 million refugees from Pakistan and Iran (Areny, 1990, p. 195).

Regrettably, Najibullah's proposals were met with disbelief and disdain by the members of the seven-party alliance based in Peshawar. These parties had been brought together into an alliance under the influence of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), acting on the directive of General Zia, to support the jihad against the Soviet Union. It had become evident that these parties, which claimed to represent the mujahideen resistance, had evolved into vested interests that were unresponsive to power-sharing arrangements. In collaboration with their Pakistani sponsors, who had access to ample funds and weapons generously contributed by the international community, these parties developed their own agendas for the future of post-Soviet Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, Najibullah remained committed to a reconciliation program that effectively dismantled the monolithic communist state that the Soviet Union had initially intervened to protect. In July, a draft constitution was released, and the opposition was invited to propose revisions. The new constitution was officially adopted by a loya jirga in November 1987. This constitution established Islam as the state religion and, in theory, transformed Afghanistan into a multi-party parliamentary democracy. In October, Najibullah extended an invitation to the Peshawar parties, urging them to participate in a coalition government. He also announced that they would be permitted to open offices in Kabul and publish newspapers if they ceased their resistance efforts (Rasanayagam, 2011, pp. 120-121).

The Geneva Accords which held in 1988 in Geneva, Switzerland, with the objective of ending the conflict in Afghanistan. These agreements were negotiated among Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and the United States, aiming for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the establishment of a transitional government within the country. The decision by the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan was a pivotal event during the Cold War era. Soviet leadership had come to realize that the war was an expensive and unwinnable conflict, and they were eager to bring it to a conclusion. The withdrawal of Soviet troops commenced in May 1988 and concluded by February 1989.

On February 8, 1988, Gorbachev made a public announcement that Soviet troops would commence their withdrawal on May 15 and complete it within ten months. When a Soviet envoy, Yuri Vorontsov, conveyed this message in Islamabad, Zia emphatically stated that he would never sign an agreement with the Najibullah government. This stance effectively undermined the central objective of Cordovez's mediation efforts. In response, Vorontsov argued that the formation of a coalition government in Kabul was a matter solely for the Afghans themselves to decide (Areny, 1990, p. 214).

By mid-February 1989, the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan had been completed in an orderly manner, with General Boris Gromov, the Soviet commander, being the last to leave as he walked across a bridge on the Amu Darya on the 15th of that month. Many within the U.S. and Pakistani political and military circles anticipated that the Afghan government would collapse within a few weeks. They expected triumphant mujahedin to sweep across the country and claim victory for the jihad in Kabul. However, events did not unfold as anticipated.

As the Russian troop withdrawal neared its conclusion, there was a growing urgency among the Peshawar parties and their Pakistani sponsors to establish a mujahedin-led government, preferably inside Afghanistan. This became imperative for several reasons. Firstly, if the Kabul regime fell rapidly, such a government would be necessary to prevent a potentially bloody power struggle among various mujahedin factions vying for control. Secondly, if Najibullah's regime managed to survive, there was a concern that it could secure international recognition by default, claim Afghanistan's seat in the UN and other international organizations, and access the funds from the proposed \$1.6 billion international aid project under the UN's "Operation Salaam." This project had been established after the Geneva Accords to provide post-war relief and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan (Areny, 1990, p. 126).

The Geneva Accord was perceived as a triumph for the Afghan Mujahedin, who had waged a guerrilla war against Soviet forces for nearly a decade. Nevertheless, the withdrawal of Soviet troops did not signal the conclusion of the conflict in Afghanistan. Instead, the nation plunged into a brutal civil war pitting the mujahedin against the Afghan government. Simultaneously, while the Geneva Accord and the Soviet Union's retreat from Afghanistan held significance in the context of the Cold War and the Afghan conflict, the strife

in Afghanistan persisted for numerous years following the Soviet withdrawal, and the country grappled with ongoing challenges up to the present day.

VI. FINDINGS

- The findings of this study reveal a complex and tumultuous period in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, characterized by the shadow of communism and the lasting impact of ideological conflicts. The Soviet intervention and subsequent establishment of a communist government triggered widespread resistance, leaving the nation scarred with immense human suffering and contributing to regional destabilization. The enduring legacy of this era emphasizes the consequences of imposing political ideologies on diverse societies.
- Afghanistan's historical role as a battleground for global powers, from the "Great Game" to Cold War rivalries, shaped its destiny. The Soviet Union's 1979 invasion, influenced by regional instability and geopolitical considerations, marked a pivotal moment. The study delves into Daoud's leadership, the pursuit of centralized power, and the shift towards Soviet influence, setting the stage for the eventual invasion.
- The Soviet decision to intervene in 1979 was a complex response to evolving circumstances, underestimated initially by intelligence communities. Concerns about a U.S. foothold and suspicions of Amin's CIA connections fueled the intervention, aiming to preserve Soviet influence in Afghanistan. The aftermath saw Afghanistan losing sovereignty, turning the conflict into a superpower proxy war with global repercussions.
- Efforts to bolster the communist regime post-invasion proved futile, leading to parallels with the American experience in Vietnam. The study highlights Karmal's puppet leadership, facing resistance, and the turning point in 1986 with increased U.S. and Pakistan involvement. Gorbachev's strategy shift aimed to de-escalate the conflict, leading to Najibullah's ascent in 1986 and the proposal of a multiparty democracy.
- The Geneva Accords in 1988 aimed to end the conflict, resulting in the Soviet Union's withdrawal by February 1989. Contrary to expectations, the Afghan government didn't collapse immediately, and the Accord, a triumph for the mujahideen, failed to bring peace, plunging Afghanistan into a protracted civil war that persists today.

In conclusion, this study illuminates Afghanistan's tumultuous journey, emphasizing the enduring impact of ideological conflicts on its destiny. The scars of the civil war, influenced by external forces and geopolitical rivalries, continue to shape the country's trajectory. The findings urge a profound understanding of Afghanistan's complex historical context, emphasizing the challenges of imposing political ideologies on diverse societies in navigating its present and future.

VII. CONCLUSION

The period from 1979 to 1989 in Afghanistan was marked by the ominous shadow of communism, thrusting the nation into a convoluted and tumultuous struggle. The Soviet intervention and subsequent establishment of a communist government sparked widespread resistance across various factions within Afghan society. This decade-long conflict left an indelible mark on the nation, inflicting immense human suffering and contributing to the destabilization of the region. The enduring legacy of communism in Afghanistan serves as a stark reminder of the profound consequences of ideological conflicts, cautioning against attempts to impose political ideologies on diverse and historically rich societies. The scars from this tumultuous era continue to shape Afghanistan's trajectory, underscoring the importance of understanding historical context to navigate the complexities of the nation's present and future.

Afghanistan's history, shaped by its strategic geographical location, has made it a historical battleground for various global powers. The "Great Game" between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire, followed by the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, transformed Afghanistan into a pivotal arena for geopolitical struggles. The Soviet Union's 1979 invasion was influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including regional instability, concerns about a potential Beijing-Washington alliance, and the evolving dynamics of the Cold War.

During Daoud's leadership in the 1950s, Afghanistan pursued centralized power, economic and social transformation, and the promotion of Pashtunistan as a symbol of Afghan nationalism. Despite initial attempts to seek support from the United States, Daoud's rejection led Afghanistan to turn to the Soviet Union, setting the stage for the eventual Soviet invasion more than two decades later. This period saw a significant increase in Soviet influence in Afghanistan, affecting various sectors such as the military, education, and economic infrastructure.

The Soviet intervention in 1979 was a complex decision rooted in evolving circumstances and geopolitical considerations. Initially underestimated by the United States intelligence community and Soviet Politburo members, the deteriorating security situation and fear of losing influence prompted a strategic shift in Soviet policy. Concerns about a potential U.S. foothold in Afghanistan, combined with suspicions of Amin's connections to the CIA, fueled the decision to intervene, aiming to preserve Soviet influence and prevent Afghanistan from aligning with the West.

The removal of Amin and the installment of Karmal marked a significant turning point, as Afghanistan lost its sovereignty and became a puppet of the Soviet Union. The internationalization of the crisis turned the Afghan conflict into a proxy war between superpowers, straining relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The invasion resulted in economic dependency, disruption of Afghan society, and extensive global denunciation.

Despite efforts to bolster the communist regime, including aid programs and developmental initiatives, the Soviet invasion proved to be a significant defeat, drawing parallels with the American experience in Vietnam. The aftermath witnessed the installment of Karmal as a puppet leader, attempting to create a façade of national unity but facing escalating resistance. The turning point in 1986, with increased U.S. and Pakistan involvement, marked the realization that the war was unwinnable, leading to Gorbachev's strategy shift to de-escalate the conflict.

Najibullah's ascent to power in 1986 brought about a transition in Soviet-Afghan relations, as he initiated a National Reconciliation program, declared a ceasefire, and proposed a multiparty democracy. However, skepticism from the Peshawar-based seven-party alliance hindered progress. The Geneva Accords in 1988 aimed to end the conflict, resulting in the Soviet Union's withdrawal by February 1989. Contrary to expectations, the Afghan government did not immediately collapse, and the Accord, a triumph for the mujahideen, failed to bring peace, plunging Afghanistan into a protracted and brutal civil war that persists to the present day.

As a final note, the article illuminates the intricate tapestry of Afghanistan's tumultuous journey during a critical historical period. From the Soviet intervention to the enduring consequences of the Geneva Accords, the article underscores the enduring impact of ideological conflicts on a nation's destiny. The scars of the Afghan civil war, intensified by external influences and geopolitical rivalries, continue to shape the country's trajectory. This analytical study serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges inherent in imposing political ideologies on diverse societies, urging us to navigate Afghanistan's present and future with a profound understanding of its complex historical context. Through meticulous examination, the article unveils the layers of Afghanistan's struggle, revealing a narrative that extends beyond borders and resonates in the broader tapestry of global power dynamics.

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