ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: PERPETUATING CONFLICT: POSTCOLONIAL INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN DURING THE COLD WAR

Edward George Dauphin III, University of Maryland,
Master of Arts, 2023

Thesis Directed By: Dr. Patrick Chung, History Department

Argument

This thesis argues that during the postcolonial era, Cold War hegemons – The United States of America and the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan's modernization to ensure their methods of modernization – capitalism and communism – remained the only options for developing nations to modernize. While most believe that American and Soviet intervention into Afghanistan was the result of Cold War geopolitics, I argue that questions of statehood and nation-making were the central factors in superpower involvement in the country. Amid a

resurgence of traditional Islamic values, Afghanistan sought to modernize outside of the realm of bi-polar developmental paths imposed by American nation-state capitalism and Soviet communism. Largely founded on Orientalist beliefs, the hegemons refused to recognize the legitimacy of a modern Afghan nation built on Islamism. The hegemons believed that without First World influence, Afghan "tribalism" and "Islamism" were too primitive to possess the capability of progressing towards a modern state, one which they defined using western-orthodox models. Statehood, according to American and Soviet concepts of *high modernism* posited that a developing nations' path to modernity adhered to a linear model centered on a market-based economy. According to the hegemons, once the developing nation established a market-based economy, the developing nation would adapt to either a communist or capitalist modes.

Method

This research for this thesis was conducted using recently declassified primary source material from the CIA's CREST database, the Wilson Center Online for recently declassified KGB documents, and select memoirs from key individuals. Secondary source material was used to frame the historiographical context of my argument – focusing on how many historians degrade the Afghan peoples' own agency in their modernization. When necessary, secondary source material was also used in order to fill the gaps left by redacted primary source material. Key concepts used for framing both the USG and KGB's reasons for intervention included postcolonial modernization, High Modernism and Orientalism, and Traditional Islam.

Major Findings

Major Findings included: 1) Though they "officially" supported self-determination, the Soviet Politburo and USG found new methods to control developing nations; 2) Despite their Orientalist beliefs and hesitancy to support the PDPA, the Soviet Politburo seized the initiative in Afghanistan by planting KGB agents in PDPA; 3) The Soviet Politburo legitimized the PDPA's modernization as high modernism by claiming that Afghanistan's tribalism created a market system, and the civil war was merely the next step in revolution towards socialism. 4) Realizing they could no longer control the PDPA, the Politburo was compelled to commit military forces to support the PDPA and maintain their influence; 5) The USG refused to recognized Afghanistan's modernization according to their own concepts of high modernism; 6) The USG sought to undermine the PDPA, the Soviet Politburo's support of the PDPA, and Islamism as a means to modernization. De-legitimizing all three would prove American capitalism as the only viable means to modernization; 7) With no intention of establishing a long-term solution, and with no desire to threaten détente, the USG relied on the CIA and clandestine operations to perpetuate the Afghan Civil War; and 8) By perpetuating the Civil War to drive Afghanistan to become a failed state, the USG gained credibility over the Soviet Politburo.

Conclusion

Western definitions of statehood and nationmaking were the driving factors behind USG and KGB intervention in Afghanistan. Afghanistan did not merely serve as the next battleground for hegemonic proxy war, instead the Afghan people sought to pursue a third method of modernization, one which conflicted with western views of high modernism. Due to preconceived notions of Orientalism, the USG and Soviet Politburo were compelled to prevent an alternative method of nationmaking to maintain their bipolar control of the world.

PERPETUATING CONFLICT:
POSTCOLONIAL INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN DURING THE COLD WAR

By

Edward George Dauphin III

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2023

Advisory Committee:
Dr. Patrick Chung, Co-Chair
Dr. Colleen Woods, Co-Chair
Dr. Peter Wein

Acknowledgements

I would like to deeply thank those who have helped me in the development of my thesis and my development as a candidate for the Master of Arts program at the University of Maryland. This work would not have been possible without the help of Dr. Patrick Chung and Dr. Colleen Woods. Dr. Chung – I appreciate your willingness to work with me while dealing with an already demanding schedule, and throughout your period of leave while welcoming a new member to your family. Dr. Woods – thank you for not only teaching me new approaches to history, but for providing an example of how to teach history to others. I would also like to thank Dr. Wien for your insight and much needed expertise on the Middle East – both of which enabled me to approach my thesis from a global perspective. Finally, I would also like to thank all of my professors and the History Department at the University of Maryland for helping me succeed in an environment that has remained foreign to me for some time – academia. Hopefully the world will continue to recognize the vital connection between the military, academia, and policy – a relationship that can prevent future conflicts like the one I discuss below.

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Abbreviations

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

USG – United States Government

PDPA – People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan

US – United States

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

OSS – Office of Strategic Services

NSDD – National Security Decision Directive

KGB - Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for the State Security)

DRA – Democratic Republic of Afghanistan

SSR – Soviet Socialist Republic

NSC – National Security Council

SALT – Strategic Arms Limitations Talks

DCI – Director of Central Intelligence

SCC – Special Coordination Committee

Introduction

Three bearded men awoke in the early morning of September 26th, 1986 on a brisk morning near the base of the Hindu Kush Mountains. Even as the summer months waned, the elevation of the snow-capped mountains would have produced temperatures near freezing through the early morning hours. The men had spent the previous night in an abandoned village outside of Jalalabad, braving the elements in their traditional Afghan robes and open-toed sandals. Wrapped in their Patu (blanket), which doubled as a prayer mat five times a day, the team likely shared some stale naan bread and cold chai tea for breakfast. After making the trek down the mountains, and settling into a field outside of Jalalabad Airport – recently transformed into a military airfield by the Soviet Union– the men paused, faced towards Mecca, and recited their Asr (afternoon) prayers. Then they waited, hidden amongst the crops as the evening's cold air crept in around them. Multiple other Mujahid hid behind the three-man team, one of whom was carried a video camera. Around 3:00pm, they heard it, a faint whirring of a rotor in the distance. As the whirring grew in intensity, the unmistakable silhouette of Mi-24 "Hind" gunships appeared on the horizon. The three men looked nervously at each other and began their preparations.[1]

Their month-long training in a secret camp near Rawalpindi, Pakistan had prepared them for this moment.[2] As multiple Soviet-made Hind helicopters screamed overhead and made their final approach to the airfield, the team leader Abdul Ghaffar, known by many as "Engineer Ghaffar," shouldered the olive-drab, American-made, shoulder-fired, $38,000, heat-seeking

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[1] Mohammed Youssaf & Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan, The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower* (Havertown: Casemate, 1992), 174-177.
[2] Michael Phillips, "Launching the Missile That Made History: Three former Mujahideen recall the day when they started to beat the Soviets." *Wall Street Journal*, October 1, 2001, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000142405297020413820457659885110944678O

Stinger Missile system and switched its lever to "ARMED." Ghaffar tracked one of the Hind helicopters, confirmed the targeting system had locked-on, and pulled the trigger. The missile released from the tube, momentarily hanging in suspense, then fell to the ground a few meters from the team, failing to arm.[3] The men took cover and awaited an explosion. It never came. After a few chaotic seconds, second team member Abdul Wahab Quanat, shouldered his missile system and tracked his target. He pulled the trigger, his missile released from the tube, its propellent system ignited, and the missile scored a direct hit on the tail-rotor of one of the Hinds. The Hind exploded into a fireball sending it crashing into the ground. The third team member, Zalmai Ghaffar followed suit and scored a hit on a second helicopter. Abdul Ghaffar, unsatisfied with his first weapon's malfunction, shouldered a back-up system and destroyed a third helicopter. The men cheered "Allah o Akbar" and sprinted back into the mountains knowing full-well Soviet tanks and helicopters would soon be in pursuit. The three bearded Mujahideen, the name when translated to English means "Soldiers of God," had just altered the course of their struggle against the Soviet Union.[4]

The first Stinger attack, news of which reverberated throughout the world, changed the course of the conflict between the Mujahideen and Soviet Military Forces in Afghanistan. Before the Stinger, Soviet air-support had created an asymmetric advantage in favor of the Soviet military, hindering the success of the Mujahideen's hit-and-run tactics. With the introduction of the Stinger on the battlefield, the scales tipped back to even. Soviet pilots were no longer willing

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[3] Christopher Woody, "A Fighting War with the Main Enemy: How the CIA helped land a mortal blow to the Soviets in Afghanistan 32 Years Ago." *Business Insider,* October 2, 2018, https://www.businessinsider.com/32-year-anniversary-of-first-stinger-missile-use-in-afghanistan-2018-9

[4] To avoid confusion, I have chosen to use only one form of spelling for Arabic words such as Mujahideen, Allahu o Akbar, and Jihad. The numerous spellings found throughout source material have been standardized as such to avoid confusion. I have chosen these specific forms because they were the most common forms found throughout the source material.

to fly low-altitude bombing missions with their fixed-wing aircraft, nor were they willing to fly Hinds to execute close-air-support missions to support their troops on the ground.[5]

The American Stinger Missile system with its state-of-the-art, infrared targeting and heat-seeking guidance system would become an icon of the US proxy war in Afghanistan following its introduction to the battlefield in 1986. The weapons represented the merging of centuries-old traditional Afghan culture and the technologically advanced capabilities provided by the United States Government (USG) to the Mujahideen in their struggle against the Soviet Union. The Stinger was also a "symbol of status" to the Mujahideen – the best fighters were given the honor of employing the weapon to destroy Soviet aircraft. To the Mujahideen as a whole, the USG's willingness to provide the Mujahideen with the sophisticated weapon system was a sign that the tides were turning.[6] Finally, it was a symbol that the gloves were off for the USG; government officials no longer cared whether or not the Politburo knew they were behind funding the Mujahideen insurgency. The introduction of the Stinger marked the high point of Operation Cyclone, the name given to the CIA's covert military aid program to the Mujahideen. The operation had come a long way since its beginning in 1979, when the program consisted of a mere $500,000 and some basic communications equipment. At its onset, the CIA had only hoped to distract the Soviet Union and force the Politburo to commit funding to fight the insurgency. However, with the introduction of the Stinger in 1986, the operation had attained a new, loftier objective – the complete defeat of the Soviet Union forces in Afghanistan. Operation

How did Afghanistan, seen by both the United States and the Soviet Union as a Third World country, one of limited means and influence, gain such a prominent role in the Great

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[5] Jeanette Voas, "Soviet Intervention into Afghanistan: Never Again?" Center for Naval Analysis Sea Power Forum Briefing Paper, 1990, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA569882.pdf

[6] Mohammed Youssaf & Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan, The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower* (Havertown: Casemate, 1992), 174-177.

Power Competition between the world's superpowers?[7] Prior to the invasion, there was noticeable hesitancy on both sides to intervene in any official capacity. Both superpowers largely "relied on British colonial tropes that regarded Afghanistan as fundamentally 'tribal' and therefore backward."[8]

On the one side, the Soviet Politburo saw little benefit in intervening as the they viewed Afghanistan as insignificant, much too chaotic, and far too unstable. In 1974, years before the invasion, Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, demonstrated these feelings as he sent a classified document to the Afghan socialist groups. He warned them that their "internal strife [redacted] and its prolonged nature was leading to a weakening of both [sides], and is introducing a split in the ranks of the progressive forces and the democratic [movement] as a whole."[9] The Politburo was concerned that even if the revolutionary socialist faction came into power, that they would not align with Soviet Communist values.[10] The Politburo's decision to invade Afghanistan was debated for months, resulting in a split decision, which was only overruled by a small piece of paper which authorized the invasion, initialed by the leader of the Communist Party, Leonid Breznev.[11] The Soviet Union's invasion and subsequent occupation remained a topic of debate within the Politburo for the next decade. Some

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[7] Odd Arne Westad, *Global Cold War,* 91 offers the most detailed analysis on the term "Third World." Westad explains the term as the belief held by both First World leaders and new postcolonial leaders that "underdevelopment – an economic and social situation under which countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were less productive and therefore had less to offer their citizens in material terms."

[8] Elisabeth Leake. *Afghan Crucible: The Soviet Invasion and the Making of Modern Afghanistan*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2022), Pg 40

[9] Leonid Brezhnev. "Decree of the Secretariat of the CC CPSU – An Appeal to the Leaders of the PDPA Groups 'Parcham' and Khalq,'" Wilson Center Digital Archive, January 8, 1974, RGANI (formerly TsKhSD), f. 89, op. 46, d. 103, ll. 31

[10] Elisabeth Leake. *Afghan Crucible: The Soviet Invasion and the Making of Modern Afghanistan*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2022), Pg 38-40

[11] For the handwritten note, see "CC CPSU Politburo Resolution # 176/125, Concerning the Situation in "A," Wilson Center Digital Archive, December 12, 1979, op. 14, d. 31, ll. 1, handwritten original, special file]. The Archive contains a number of documents containing the Politburo debates in the months leading up to the invasion. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113675

historians argue that each succeeding General Secretary sought a way to withdraw forces while saving face.[12] Unable to find an honorable method to withdraw, each General Secretary surged operations in Afghanistan, resulting in more death and destruction.

Meanwhile, the CIA seemed wholly uninterested in Afghanistan. The Agency's indifference was described in intelligence documents dated as early as 1955. CIA analysts recognized that while Afghanistan may "gradual[ly] drift…towards the Soviet orbit" but they concluded that the Soviet Union would be "content to have Afghanistan remain nominally independent." The same assessment characterized Afghanistan as an underdeveloped nation that is likely "continuing the effort to play the great powers off against each other to Afghanistan's advantage."[13] Even after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, many agents in the CIA and officials in the State Department and Department of Defense, believed Afghanistan was already a lost cause. Reflecting on his experience during a 1997 interview, Frank Anderson, a lead agent of the CIA's Near East Division during the invasion, stated that "[the CIA Afghan Team] believed a superpower had conquered yet another third-world nation and that was an irreversible fact. We had no hope that [the Mujahideen] could expel the Soviets."[14] Robert Gates, who during the Soviet occupation served as Director of the Strategic Evaluation Center, Director of the CIA Staff, and Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, echoed this feeling when he recalled that many in the CIA believed, "If the Soviets introduced troops into the country there

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[12] Diego Cordovez, and Selig Harrison's *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995)

[13] Sherman Kent, "Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence – Subject: The Outlook for Afghanistan" CIA Memorandum, November 30, 1955, CREST database CIA-RDP79R01012A008000010018-5

[14] Bruce Riedel in *What We Won: America's Secret War in Afghanistan in 1979-1989* (Washington D.C. : Brookings Institute, 2014) quoting Frank Anderson from "Cold War Interviews" National Security Archive, George Washington University, August 1997.

was no practical way to stop them."[15] Mohammed Yousaf, head of the Afghan Bureau in Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), and the individual who would eventually oversee of funneling the arms and money into Afghanistan through Pakistan was initially surprised at the USG's lack of action, but corroborated Anderson's point. Yousaf noted "advice from the Pentagon and the CIA was that, with or without Pakistan's backing, Afghanistan was a lost cause. Why, therefore, get involved? Why throw good money after the bad?"[16]

Although the US and USSR had, in 1972, signed the historic Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) and agreed to conduct diplomatic relations based on the principles of "sovereignty, equality, non-interference in one another's internal affairs, and mutual advantage," the period from 1975-80 is characterized by, as historian Melvyn Leffler puts it, an "erosion of détente."[17] President Carter's condemnation of the Soviet Union on human rights violations and Soviet military interventions in Angola and the Middle East contributed, among other things, to an overwhelming sense in both American and Soviet administrations that détente was quickly becoming a façade. Why then, did the USG and Soviet Politburo decide to intervene in Afghanistan? If the Politburo was so hesitant to intervene in the Third World, why did they decide to execute a full-fledged military invasion and decade-long occupation? And, if the USG believed Afghanistan was a lost cause, why did they conduct the most expensive covert aid operation in history?

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[15] Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996) 144

[16] Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap* , 25-26

[17] Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War,* (New York : Hill and Wang, 2008) 243. For Leffler's explanation on the erosion of Détente see his chapter "The Erosion of Détente" 234-337. See also Harry Gelman's "The Rise and Fall of Détente: Cause and Consequences" (RAND/UCLA January 1985) Gelman also places the beginning of the erosion of détente in the mid 1970s and attributes its erosion to Soviet intervention in Africa, Soviet-American involvement in the Yom-Kippur War, Soviet Renunciation of the Trade Agreement with America, and the Jackson-Vanik Amendment; Also, Vladislav Zubok's *A Failed Empire*, (North Carolina : North Carolina Press, 2007) Ebook Chapter 8, "Détente's Decline and Soviet Overreach"

While most believe that American and Soviet intervention into Afghanistan was the result of Cold War geopolitics, I argue that questions of statehood and nation-making were the central factors in superpower involvement in the country. Amid a resurgence of traditional Islamic values, Afghanistan sought to modernize outside of the realm of bi-polar developmental paths imposed by American nation-state capitalism and Soviet communism.[18] Largely founded on Orientalist beliefs, the hegemons refused to recognize the legitimacy of a modern Afghan nation built on Islamism. The hegemons believed that without First World influence, Afghan "tribalism" and "Islamism" were too primitive to possess the capability of progressing towards a modern state, one which they defined using western-orthodox models.[19] Statehood, according to American and Soviet concepts of *high modernism* posited that a developing nations' path to modernity adhered to a linear model centered on a market-based economy. According to the hegemons, once the developing nation established a market-based economy, the developing nation would adapt to either a communist or capitalist modes.[20]

The USG and Politburo believed if developing nations were able to modernize outside the realm of the bi-polar world order, they would lose their ability to influence and control these nations. Unwilling to lose influence in the region the USG and Soviet Politburo attempted to

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[18] Elizabeth Leake, *Afghan Crucible* argues that Afghan intellectuals' visions of Islamism "were rooted in broader twentieth-century movements that saw these socio-religious-political models as *alternatives* to the European empires that had dominated the globe.

[19] The terms "tribalism" and "Islamism" derive from CIA and KGB intelligence documents and therefore are used when describing how the United States Government and Soviet Politburo classified the Mujahideen groups. "Tribalism" is a western term often used by hegemonic societies to describe underdeveloped societies they fail to understand.

[20] Westad, *Global Cold War,* cites anthropologists James C. Scott and David Hervey's definition of *high modernism* as "the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of ideal social orders under standardized conditions of knowledge and production…The 'modernization' of European economies proceeded apace, while the whole thrust of international politics and trade was justified as bringing a benevolent and progressive 'modernization process' to a backward Third World." For Orientalist views, see, Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (New York : Norton, 1979). Elisabeth Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 40 corroborates the viewpoint that the USG placed Afghanistan's tribalism center to their framework while intervening in Afghanistan.

implement concepts of *high modernism* into Afghanistan's modernization.[21] The Politburo chose to support the socialist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), hoping it could influence the group to create a new Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR) in their image. Meanwhile the USG covertly funded the Mujahideen insurgency to undermine the socialist PDPA and its Politburo supporter. While it supported the Mujahideen, the USG believed Afghanistan's countless diverse groups would wage war on each other and drive the country into a failed state, rendering credibility to American capitalism as the only viable means to modernization.

Methodology: Behind the Curtain

Writing a history on clandestine operations unsurprisingly leads to a great deal of obstacles. Andrew Hammond's commentary on the difficulties of analyzing the CIA's covert operations writ large perfectly describes the experience.[22] First and foremost, the most obvious problem is that the purpose of covert operations is of course, to remain covert. The mandatory 25-year waiting period for classified, secret, and top-secret documents to be reviewed and released as part of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) prevents any sort of accurate commentary to be produced for the first quarter of a century after an event occurs. When the documents are finally reviewed and released, public versions are often highly redacted to maintain the anonymity of those involved; or to ensure any second and third order effects of the operation, which could be ongoing today, remain secret. Hammond suggests that to fill these

[21] Westad, *Global Cold War,* cites anthropologists James C. Scott and David Hervey's definition of *high modernism* as "the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of ideal social orders under standardized conditions of knowledge and production…The 'modernization' of European economies proceeded apace, while the whole thrust of international politics and trade was justified as bringing a benevolent and progressive 'modernization process' to a backward Third World." For Orientalist views, see, Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (New York : Norton, 1979). Elisabeth Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 40 corroborates the viewpoint that the USG placed Afghanistan's tribalism center to their framework while intervening in Afghanistan.

[22] Andrew Hammond, "Through a Glass, Darkly: The CIA and Oral History" History 100, no. 2 (340) (2015)

gaps, historians examine the linkages between the intelligence reports and other source histories to generate accurate historical analysis. Hammond emphasizes the need for historians to tread carefully through "informant" accounts – memoirs written by the actors involved that often rely on the prominence of the positions they held for legitimacy. Such accounts are often riddled with the writers' assumptions, lacking legitimate evidence to support their arguments. These accounts garner interest with their clever titles, often using catchwords like "ghosts," "secret," and "shadows," to increase their appeal.[23] I have attempted to avoid the majority of these sources and have only relied on primary sources written by those who had significant influence on the operation. To verify the validity of their claims, I have paired any memoir source material with official correspondence that has only recently been declassified and released to the public.

The previously classified American documents for my analysis come from three main sources – the Department of State's Freedom of Information Act Virtual (FOIA) Reading Room, the CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), and the Department of State's Office of the Historian Database. For Soviet documents regarding the KGB's and Politburo's decision-making process, I searched the impressive Wilson Digital Archive, which specializes in KGB operations. All of these databases contain primary source material dealing with past clandestine operations. Their search engines are rudimentary, highly disorganized, and as I already mentioned - redacted. To fill the gaps, I have searched the digitized libraries of Presidents Carter, Reagan, and other government officials for official documentation corroborating the recently declassified

[23] Hammond, Andrew, "Through a Glass, Darkly: The CIA and Oral History" History 100, no. 2 (340) (2015).371. In fact many of the sources used in this paper illustrate Hammond's point – Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison's *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York, 1995), Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001,* (London 2005); *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987,* Robert Gates' *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York : Simon & Schuster 2007)*;* Bruce Reidel's *What We Won: America's Secret War in Afghanistan* (Washington D.C. : Brookings Institute, 2014);

documents. To fill in, to the best extent possible, the remaining gaps, I have examined oral histories, transcripts of congressional inquiries and confirmation hearings, which shed light on the perspectives of key actors involved in the operation. I have also used to the best of my ability multiple memoirs from an array of actors from Afghanistan, Pakistan, America, and the Soviet Union. These actors range from high-ranking government officials and policymakers who carried out policy, to individual Mujahideen and Soviet fighters who experienced frozen mountain nights, the deaths of their comrades, and the invisible scars of combat.

Still, while I attempt to highlight how historians often diminish the Afghan peoples' agency in their drive towards modernization, my analysis also misses that mark. I was largely limited to American and Soviet archives for primary and secondary sources. Analyzing primary sources from the Afghan perspective would have provided the third side of this triangular interaction between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan. If given the opportunity to further the discourse on postcolonial intervention into Afghanistan, primary sources from Afghanistan would be vital to fully understanding this story.

Current scholarship which targets the initial years of the program is lacking. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise because the program was still a highly covert operation when it officially began under the Carter Administration in 1979. American diplomatic analyst Bruce Riedel, in his work *What We Won: America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan,* explains that Carter, having published his own memoirs in 1981 rightfully kept his administration's involvement to himself as "the war was still in its earliest stages and was still a top-secret project."[24] However, as more declassified documents become available, it is possible to shed light on why the two superpowers' competition culminated in Afghanistan.

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[24] Bruce Riedel, *What We Won: America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan, 1979-1980* (Washington D.C. : Brookings Institution Press, 2014) 93

Notwithstanding, it is also necessary to realize that American and Soviet intelligence documents from the 1970s and 1980s were largely produced by individuals with Orientalist sentiment. Both the KGB and CIA often refer to the Mujahideen groups as "tribal" or refer to the complex interactions and rivalries between the groups as "tribalism." Unsurprisingly, this term is used by the hegemons to liken the Mujahideen groups to other underdeveloped groups they struggled to understand.[25] By resorting to this term, the CIA and KGB fail to truly understand or recognize the social dynamics and hierarchies that truly exist within the Mujahideen culture. Therefore, while the documents do shed light on the strategic decision-making processes of the USG, CIA, Soviet Politburo, and KGB, the sources are only "accurate" from a western perspective. These documents and personal accounts that are currently available, however, do make it possible to discern what influenced the USG and Soviet Politburo's decision to intervene and how Afghanistan's modernization was a crucial factor in how each hegemon determined their approach.

Organization

The purpose of this thesis is to explain why the USG and Politburo chose to intervene in Afghanistan's modernization, and how their intervention not only diminished the Afghan peoples' agency in their own modernization, but how it removed moderate Afghan groups and divided the country into two opposing factions – those who supported the PDPA and its socialist reforms and traditional Islamists who fought against them.[26] The resulting conflict had global implications and largely prevented Afghanistan from developing into a stable nation. The first

[25] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 40. For the USG, it is clear the CIA associated Mujahideen groups to Native American tribes due to their different way of life. For the KGB, although not explicitly stated in their source material, it is likely they liken the Mujahideen groups to the Siberian minority "tribes."
[26] Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 42

chapter provides a brief historical background to contextualize the state of Afghanistan as a developing nation during the post-colonial period. The chapter will cover key events which occurred in and around Afghanistan in the decade leading up to the Soviet Invasion in 1979. During this time period, the PDPA gained momentum as a political party in Afghanistan as the nation evolved from its status as a Kingdom, to a Republic, and eventually to a Democratic Republic under the PDPA. I place the PDPA's rise to power and its socialist reforms in juxtaposition to the Islamic Revolution and subsequent resurgence of traditional Islamic values which thrust the tribal factions to revolt. The revolt will set the stage for Afghanistan's Civil War and form the two sides the Cold War hegemons will look to exploit. Following this section, I will elaborate on how Afghanistan's modernization was unique by placing it in conversation with contemporary scholarship. Countering scholarship which eliminates the Afghan peoples' agency in their modernization, I argue that as post-colonial modernization was a global occurrence, so too was the Afghan peoples' quest for modernity. I will examine how traditional Islamism played a crucial role how the USG and Soviet Politburo viewed in Afghanistan's modernization. While the PDPA paid lip service to its respect of traditional Islamic tenets, neither the PDPA nor the Politburo was able to reconcile the differences between socialism and Islam. This section will also argue that Orientalism and western-orthodox concepts of *high modernism* led the USG and the Politburo to impose a linear model of nation-making, founded in capitalist and communist markets (respectively), as a requisite for legitimate modernity. This section will provide context for the following next two chapters which form the crux of my analysis.

Chapters 2 and 3 will explore the factors the Politburo and the USG considered as they decided how to intervene in Afghanistan. Here I will detail how détente, the CIA's intelligence estimates regarding Afghan tribalism, and covert operations influenced the Politburo and USG's

decision-making process. I argue that while the Politburo supported the PDPA and the USG used the CIA to support the tribal factions, both hegemons did so only to fulfill their own aspirations. Chapter 4 concludes the thesis by highlighting how both hegemons failed to achieve their primary aim of maintaining control over Afghanistan. I argue that while the Politburo's defeat came first, the USG failed to consider the long term strategic implications of their covert funding to the tribal factions. While the USG successfully undermined the PDPA and the Politburo with their clandestine operations, they failed to foresee a key outcome. By driving Afghanistan further into Civil War, and ceasing their support after the Soviet withdrawal, the tribal factions' fervent anti-colonialism developed into an equally-zealous anti-American sentiment. Unwilling to recognize the universality of Islam, especially through Jihad, the USG failed to identify the Mujahideen as a legitimate threat and suffered a eventually suffered defeat similar to the Soviet Union's. Finally, I argue that the intervention into Afghanistan resulted in a lose-lose-lose situation. The Soviet Union's decade-long occupation drove them into economic despair, and following their embarrassing withdrawal, the Soviet Union would fall apart. The USG funded tribal factions they did not understand or respect and found themselves caught in the same quagmire they fabricated for the Soviet Union decades prior. Their subsequent withdrawal was catastrophic and further damaged their reputation as a world superpower. After the Soviet withdrawal, the USG believed they had accomplished their mission and completely abandoned the Mujahideen. The Civil War continued resulting in countless deaths, millions of refugees, and unimaginable destruction – consequences which continue to grow worse today.

Chapter 1 – A Region Misunderstood, A People Underestimated

On Christmas Eve in 1979, seven years before the first Mujahideen Stinger attack, Soviet paramilitary and military forces launched a surprise invasion into Afghanistan to reinforce its puppet government and maintain control over the war-torn nation.[27] Assassinating Amin in the process, the Soviet military reinstated their preferred leader, Babrak Karmal, solidifying the impressionable PDPA's rule in Kabul. The Soviet military also reinforced major cities and supply routes throughout the rural countryside where the revolt was the most violent. The invasion posed significant threats to the United States regional interests – a potential threat to its oil-rich ally Saudi Arabia, and *access to* and *control of* the Persian Gulf.[28] The CIA believed that if Soviet aggression remained unchecked in Afghanistan they could continue their efforts all the way to the Persian Gulf.[29] While détente eroded, and with "the prospect of nuclear exchange with Soviet Union now appearing more theoretical than real – [US policymakers] were also learning that they could not live without oil…the hierarchy of national security priorities was beginning to shift."[30] In other words, while the threat of nuclear warfare ebbed and détente faded, the USG and the Politburo were not only willing, but assertively planning on gaining influence in oil rich nations. As détente eroded, The Soviet Union, feeling obliged to support the PDPA, took the stance that "Third World counties could jump straight from colonial holding to state of the

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[27] It is unclear whether or not the USG knew of the icoming Soviet invasion. Gates mentions Memorandums from Hoelick to Admiral Turner warn of impending Soviet military action, though it is unclear the extent which a full invasion was forseen (pg 134) . Zbigniew Brezezinski claims in his memoir, he warned President Carter that an attack was inevitable, but Carter still seemed shocked when the attack occurred.

[28] Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. 1st edn. (Washington DC: Hoover Institution Press, 2018). Ebook Available at: https://www.perlego.com/book/970607/afghanistan-the-soviet-invasion-in-perspective-pdf (Accessed: September 12, 2022). Preface See Also CIA, *National Intelligence Estimate, The Soviet Presence in Afghanistan: Implications for the Regional Powers and the United States,* 1985 NIE 11/37-85

[29] Andrew Bacevich in *America's War for the Greater Middle East* argues that the USG believed the Soviets desired access to a warm water port and therefore would aggressively pursue influence in the Greater Middle East. He states that the USG had been fixated on the possibility of a Soviet attack "through Germany's Fulda Gap…but now the United States needed to widen its gaze."

[30] Bacevich, *America's War*, 5

proletariat, and dismissed the need for states to undergo the intervening stages of capitalist development."[31] Undoubtedly such a notion posed a threat to American influence in post-colonial, Third World countries.

The initial Soviet invasion employed conventional ground forces and was able to limit the resistance movements for a short time. However, as the Soviets soon became known to the rural tribes as not only invaders, but occupiers who planned to maintain the implementation of the Khalqi reforms, the so-called Bear would find itself on the receiving end of an even more violent and concerted insurgency. The oft-divided Afghan people temporarily united, at least in cause, for Jihad, the "noble fight against the infidel."[32] The Mujahideen in 1979 were largely limited to the rural tribes inside of Afghanistan and Afghan fighters seeking refuge in the mountains of Pakistan. While the Mujahideen had declared Jihad, significant amounts of foreign fighters did not join the resistance until the 1980s. The CIA viewed the Mujahideen insurgency as an opportunity to continue to compete with, and weaken the Soviet Union, even as both nations recognized a period of détente.[33]

The Mujahideen proved especially advantageous to the USG because their previous efforts to curtail the spread of communism with a full-scale military force had already resulted in their involvement in two wars in Korea and Vietnam, neither of which resulted in a decisive American victory. Though US-led UN forces prevented the Democratic Republic of North Korea from taking over the south, the war, which never officially ended, concluded with the Korean peninsula still divided. The latter of the two conflicts, the Vietnam War, evolved into a disastrous

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[31] Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 37

[32] CIA, "Tribalism Versus Communism in Afghanistan: The Cultural Roots of Instability" An Intelligence Assessment (1980) Classified. Collection: Office of the Chief of Staff Files; Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files, Folder: Afghanistan, 1979-80; Container 33. Note: *Infidel* here refers to enemies of Islam

[33] For competition during Détente, see CIA, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Implications for Warning" (October 1980) NI IIM 80-10017JX

quagmire stemming from a mission creep over multiple administrations, resulting in the deaths of nearly 60,000 United States servicemen, and well over a million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians – all of which occurred without a formal declaration of war and resulted in North Vietnam's conquering of the southern state, which the USG tried so hard to save. The failure in Vietnam plays a role here as it had created both a public and political distaste for the USG's imperial conquests and wars of colonization, effectively limiting the USG's ability to overtly commit forces or resources to similar conflicts. The CIA had been looking for potential remedies to the situation months before the first Soviet paratrooper touched down in Kabul in 1979. By the time news of the Soviet invasion reached the international community, a covert funding and arming operation was already underway. Operation Cyclone, the CIA's covert program to support the Mujahideen's insurgency against the Soviet occupiers in Afghanistan, began in a limited capacity in 1979, but would continue to mature with annual increases in funding and the eventual expansion of the program to include the shipment of lethal arms. Midway through the conflict in 1985, President Ronald Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive-166, authorizing "any means necessary" to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan. The document and its supplemental Top-Secret annex completely changed the program's desired objective from a mere harassment campaign conducted by the Mujahideen, to a full-fledged effort to defeat the Soviet Union, dealing the regime a strategic defeat which could alter the course of the Cold War.

The Lead Up

Long before the Soviet invasion thrust Afghanistan into the spotlight as the focal point of the global Cold War, the country had seen its share of conflict. However, western historians often view Afghanistan as merely an arena for conflict, rather than a country with its own

agency.[34] This notion is most obvious in that even though Afghanistan has been the focal point of American foreign policy for the past two decades, most people know little about the nation or its people. In a world where Afghanistan and Iraq are inextricably linked because of two simultaneous wars in the 21st century, it may come as a surprise to some that Afghanistan is neither considered part of the Middle East, nor is it considered an Arab nation.

Geographically part of Central Asia, its location between the Middle East, the Indian Peninsula, and the rest of Asia, makes it no surprise that it has seen its share of conflict throughout history. While it is comprised of countless tribal factions, ethnicities, and cultures, none the groups in the country are considered Arab. To be sure, Afghanistan serves as a strategic lynchpin between Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Throughout history, multiple empires have crossed the region, claiming control of the land, and the Afghan people. The Afghan people have endured the violent incursions, foreign occupations, and undue influence on its internal affairs for centuries.[35] The Afghan people have fought when necessary; maneuvered politically when able; and managed to successfully maintain their way of life.[36] Yet, despite their ability to endure and break free from imperial control, rarely have industrialized nations given the Afghan people agency on the world stage. Throughout the 20th century, the Afghan people

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[34] Afghanistan as the "Graveyard of Nations" is a term commonly referring to the fact that Afghanistan has been the arena for numerous conflicts between world powers. Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan,* (Norton: New York, 2010); David Isby, *Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires* (Pegasus: Cambridge, 2011)

[35] See Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 9-23; and Ali Ahmad Jalali, "A Military History of Afghanistan: From the Great Game to the Global War on Terror" (University Press of Kansas, 2017) http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1p6qpc3.Afghanistan before the establishment of its independent state fell under Greek and Persian rule until it was conquered by Alexander the Great. Mongols, and Muslim Arabs briefly ruled the region until Afghanistan fell under control of Great Britain as part of the Anglo-Afghan Agreement in 1879. While not officially a part of the British Empire, the British Mission controlled all domestic and foreign affairs for Afghanistan until the conclusion of the third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919.

[36] This point specifically refers to the three Anglo-Afghan Wars where the Afghan people fought for their independence. Regarding "maneuvering politically" this largely refers to Afghanistan's neutrality during the Second World War in an effort to maintain its independence.

were dismissed by imperialists as inconsequential bystanders – simple people of simple means. Commonly, 20th century characterizations by intelligence officials and diplomats were more Orientalist – commonly referring to the Afghan people disparagingly as "uncivilized" or "archaic" or as "uneducated."[37] A CIA memorandum published in 1980 referred to the country as "a stomping ground for conquerors on their way to other places."[38] This belief resonated through the latter half of the century as Cold War expanded outside of Europe.

In the 1970s, the two global hegemons, the United States, and the Soviet Union, focused their imperial efforts throughout the so-called Third World and its developing nations.[39] Afghanistan in the1970s remained, in all *official* capacities, unaligned to either the United States or the Soviet Union. However, the Middle East's oil reserves and access to warm water ports attracted the attention of the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States gained a foothold in the region by implementing a puppet government in Iran and allying with Pakistan. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union consolidated control in their satellite nations and entered into a diplomatic relationship with India. Standing between the Soviet Union and the Middle East was Afghanistan, the country which had endured imperial regimes for centuries.

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[37] Elisabeth Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 40-41 Leake cites both Soviet and American intelligence and diplomatic documents when describing how both empires viewed the Afghan people. American diplomats often compared the Afghans to "American Indian war parties" likening Afghan leaders like Muhammad Daoud to Sitting Bull. Both Soviet and American documents promulgated the idea that Afghan politics were less functional, less advanced, than those in Western states…or even the Soviet Union"

[38] CIA, "Tribalism Versus Communism in Afghanistan: The Cultural Roots of Instability" Intelligence Assessment (1980), Collection Office of the Chief of Staff Files; Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files, Folder: Afghanistan, 1979-80; Container 33

[39] The term "third world" is found in multiple CIA documents and refers to the Near East and Middle East. Andrew Bacevich in his work *America's War for the Greater Middle East* introduces the notion of the "Greater" Middle East in which he is referring to a shift in American and Soviet focus during the cold War from Europe and the Far East to the Middle East. Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004) aligns with Bacevich, as it discusses the Middle East as the "pinnacle" of confrontation in the Cold War and analyzes the shift from Marxist-inspired revolutions to fundamentalist Islamic revolutions.

Dating back to the 18th century, Afghanistan has served as a key terrain for European and Asian imperialism. The landlocked nation is surrounded by historic empires – Iran to the west, China and Pakistan to the east and south, and during the Cold War, the Soviet Union with its satellite states loomed to the north. Its unique geographical location produces a diverse landscape. It is home to some of the most arid, unforgiving, desert regions. Meanwhile, the Hindu Kush Mountains, which run through its center, provide a natural barrier between the Soviet Union and Pakistan, creating some of the most lush and vegetative landscapes in the region.

Even more diverse than Afghanistan's geography and climate is its cultural and political landscape. The Afghan people have long identified and aligned with their tribal belonging rather than any sort of Afghan nationalism.[40] A CIA intelligence assessment in 1980, for instance, described that the "principal ethnic groups tend to live apart from each other under the hegemony of Pashtun tribesmen, who share martial values…and a distrust of authority…The *ideological unity of the country* is provided by a theologically unsophisticated version of Islam."[41] CIA analysts determined that the Afghan people maintained a somewhat pleasant indifference to the laws and legislations from Kabul and instead deferred to fundamental Islamic tradition to govern

[40] The notion that the Afghan people are more closely ties to their tribal roots, rather than the nationalist notion of a belief in a united Afghanistan is found in numerous sources. For a sample see CIA, "Tribalism Versus Communism in Afghanistan: The Cultural Roots of Instability" Intelligence Assessment (1980), Collection Office of the Chief of Staff Files; Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files, Folder: Afghanistan, 1979-80; Container 33. Another CIA source dedicated to the inability and unwillingness of the divided resistance bands to unite see CIA, "Afghanistan: The Politics of the Resistance Movement" An Intelligence Assessment 15 September 1981 CIA-RPD06T00412R000200520001-1

[41] CIA, "Tribalism Versus Communism in Afghanistan: The Cultural Roots of Instability" An Intelligence Assessment (1980) Classified. Collection: Office of the Chief of Staff Files; Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files, Folder: Afghanistan, 1979-80; Container 33. 2-3 *Emphasis added.* It is important to note that the CIA's use of the term "unsophisticated" in its description of Afghani Islam requires further analysis. Although it may seem as if it holds xenophobic intention, it is likely the CIA is describing Afghani Islam as basic and founded in Islam's most simple form compared to others like that of the Iranian Islamic Republic. The same document goes on to explain that the Afghan people were "passionately attached" to their religion, and were able to do so because of its simple form.

themselves.[42] This is especially evident in the rural areas of the country, which dominate the few urban centers like Kabul, Herat, or Jalalabad.[43] The two most "common" tribes – the Tajiks and the Pashtuns – mostly practice a more conservative Sunni Islam, as opposed to the Hazara who for the most part practice Shi'a Islam. Regardless of the sect, Islamism dominates the Afghan way of life and sets the foundations for their traditional beliefs.[44]

The USG did not focus foreign policies on Afghanistan much in the 1950's mainly due the lack of a robust intelligence community. In the wake of World War II, the USG intelligence community largely revolved around the OSS, whose primary mission focused the war in Europe and the Pacific, and minor Naval and signals intelligence organizations. There for the USG did not begin significant intelligence collection on Afghanistan until the 1950s, while it was still a Kingdom under Amanullah Khan.[45] The American CIA's intelligence collection started because of Afghanistan's geographic proximity to the Soviet Union and intelligence agents largely focused on and analyzed the cultural makeup of the country. Afghanistan may have been a blip on the CIA's radar at this time, but the CIA lacked any significant concern or interest with the country.[46] Concern increased, however, in the early 1970s when Muhammed Daoud seized

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[42]CIA "Tribalism Versus Communism in Afghanistan: The Cultural Roots of Instability" Intelligence Assessment (1980) Classified. Collection: Office of the Chief of Staff Files; Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files, Folder: Afghanistan, 1979-80; Container 33. 1-9

[43] For a more in-depth analysis of Afghan tribalism, see Robert Crews' *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation* (Boston : Belknap Press, 2015) and Darryl Li's *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity*, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2021)

[44] Afghanistan has multiple different tribes, all of which played a crucial role in its history. To simplify the tribal dynamics pertinent to this paper, for brevity's sake, I will focus largely on the Tajiks and Pashtuns who were the key actors in the resistance movement. Similar is done by Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars*: *The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004) 113-117

[45] Prior to this time, Elisabeth Leake contends that "American officials largely left Afghanistan alone, relying on their British allies to monitor the region and prevent it from influencing international politics." Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 36

[46] Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 37

power. The CIA began to look at Afghanistan more closely, mainly because of the Soviet influence in the Afghan military and Daoud's advisors.

Did Daoud's rise to power signal the beginning of Afghanistan's official alignment to the Soviet Union? The CIA likely believed this was the case, as did the Politburo. Surprisingly, Daoud's rhetoric and reforms seemed to frustrate the Soviet Politburo, as they were slow-moving and seemed to lack the socialist fervor the Politburo was hoping for. Daoud spoke more fervently about Islam than he did about socialism or Marxism, which generally inhibited socialist reform in Afghanistan.[47] Daoud's reluctance to enact significant socialist change kept Afghanistan on the back burner for the CIA…at least for a while. Unfortunately for Daoud, the lack of progress under his watch not only frustrated Moscow, it enraged the PDPA, who aided Daoud in his coup. By 1978 the PDPA, backed by a dominant middle class seeking to be the vanguard of change, had enough.

The PDPA desired to enact social reform and remain relevant in international affairs, both had stalled under Daoud's Republic. The PDPA also sought an alternative to the western model of nation-state modernization – a socialist society reconciled with the tenets of Islam. The PDPA's modernization method, however, was not unanimously favored by the people of Afghanistan[48] The PDPA seized power from, and assassinated Muhammed Daoud in 1978, in

[47] Alam Payind. "Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation." International Journal of Middle East Studies 21, no. 1 (1989): 107–28. http://www.jstor.org/stable/163642. Accessed January 19, 2023

[48] The term "people of Afghanistan" requires further clarification. For the purposes of this paper, the phrase refers to the two main factions which arose during the Afghan Civil Wars in the 1970s. Elisabeth Leake, in her work *Afghan Crucible: The Soviet Invasion and the Making of Modern Afghanistan* argues that although multiple factions arose during Afghanistan's modernization, American and Soviet intervention allowed only the most extreme factions to survive. The Soviet-supported Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan held power following the Saur Revolution. The other faction – traditional Islamist tribes made up the other faction. This is not to say the tribal groups united to form any sort of coalition. Instead, their repudiation or in some cases indifference and dismissal of the government in Kabul made the tribal groups a faction – even if they did not officially align.

what they referred to as the Saur Revolution.[49] Almost immediately, The PDPA pushed for a socialist society, "to provide political, economic, and social uplift."[50] The PDPA's revolution, much like Daoud's previous coup, brought Afghanistan to the CIA's attention once again. Some intelligence agents believed the coup was possibly orchestrated by the Soviet clandestine service, the KGB, a claim which remains a matter of debate.[51] Regardless, the PDPA successfully seized control of the government and started to implement various socialist reforms.[52] The party's leader, General Secretary Muhammed Taraki had spent time in both the Soviet Union and the United States during his early professional years and was influenced by socialist ideology.[53] Taraki's cousin, Hafzullah Amin served as Taraki's Foreign minister. While members of the PDPA rarely referred to themselves as "communists" their self-proclaimed socialist principles predictably resulted in the USG as labeling the regime as a communist threat.[54]

After renewing the Treaty of Friendship, the Soviet Union and PDPA solidified Afghanistan's status as officially *aligned* to the Soviet Union.[55] Though the Politburo was not

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[49] Arnold, *Afghanistan*. Chapter 7 mentions how Taraki and Amin criticized Daoud for "moving too slow towards socialism."

[50] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* Pg 4

[51] This question is raised by Gates, Coll, Cordovez and multiple other works mention this debate but avoid claiming one way or the other. Arnold's *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, suggests the Soviet Union did in fact oversee the revolt as they officially recognized the new Afghanistan on March 30th, a day before the government itself did so. For more see Gates, *From the Shadows* Chapter 7.

[52] For analysis on the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, its socialist reforms, and Soviet influence, see Diego Cordovez, and Selig Harrison's *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995) 14-21; Coll's *Ghost Wars*, 38-52. Feroz Ahmed and Jim Paul's "'The Khalq Failed to Comprehend the Contradictions of the Rural Sector': Interview with Feroz Ahmed." MERIP Reports, no. 89 (1980): 13–20. https://doi.org/10.2307/3011832.

[53] Bruce Riedel, *What We Won: America's Secret War in Afghanistan from 1979-1989* mentions Taraki was recruited by the Communist Party of India while he lived in Bombay, India in the 1930s. He went on to live in the Soviet Union working as a translator in the 1960s. After forming the PDPA in 1965, he worked as a press attaché at the Afghan Embassy in Washington.

[54] CIA, "Afghanistan: Factions in the Ruling Party" Intelligence Memorandum, 1980, CREST Database CIA-RDP81B00401R000600170003-8, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP81B00401R000600170003-8.pdf

[55] Kevin Klose, "Soviets Sign Peace Treaty With Afghanistan" *The Washington Post,* Dec 6, 1978, Accessed online https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/12/06/soviets-sign-treaty-with-afghanistan/20bf658b-a229-44e7-a08b-70e92fd488c0/

entirely convinced the PDPA's values aligned with theirs, it decided it was best to support the PDPA, believing that with their influence, Afghanistan would ultimately gravitate away from Islamic influence and align wholly with Communist bloc.[56] However, while the two nations quickly strengthened their bond, the PDPA rapidly lost support inside its own borders as its socialist reforms countered traditional Islamic beliefs.

After Taraki and Amin imposed the progressive "Khalqi" reforms in Afghanistan, traditional Muslims and large swaths of the countryside aided by a number of Afghan National Army defectors revolted in what became known as the Herat Uprising in March of 1979.[57] The PDPA's extreme socialist reforms simply could not coalesce with the traditional Islamic beliefs held by the Pashtun Muslims in the countryside. Similar beliefs were also maintained by the Parcham party of the PDPA, a party which Taraki and his Khalq faction generally despised and disrespected. Taraki's alienation and expulsion of the Parcham party, paired with his radical social reforms produced multiple enemies. Of the numerous factions which arose in opposition to Taraki and the PDPA, Pashtun and Parcham tribal factions dominated. This faction was made up of traditional Afghan Islamists, who not only constituted a large portion of Afghanistan's Army, but the majority of them inhabited the vast rural areas of the country, centuries before the PDPA existed. To be sure, this faction did not arise as a result of the PDPA's modernization, as it had always existed. It had simply been consistently overlooked because it was typically populated by tribal factions who maintained an indifference to the government in Kabul. It was not until the

[56] CC CPSU, "Top Secret Attachment, by KGB cipher Kabul", June 2, 1974, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg

[57] For more on the Herat Uprising see Cordovez, *Leaving Afghanistan* Pg 35-39. For Khalqi Reforms see Cordovez *Leaving Afghanistan,* Pg 31-32; CIA, *Tribalism Pg 8*; and Arnold, *Afghanistan* Ebook Chat 8. The reforms included allowing redistribution of rural lands which had been owned by tribes for years, allowing women to drive and vote and requiring consent from the woman to be married. According to Taraki/Amin, one of the most controversial reforms was government's limiting of "haq mehr" or "bride money" which is paid to the father for his daughter.

Khalqi reforms that the diverse groups united (though did not necessarily ally) and thrust themselves into opposition to the PDPA and their desire to modernize into a socialist nation. Their so-called unification was solely founded in their traditional Islamic-based opposition to the PDPA, as many of the factions maintained past rivalries, grudges, and other antipathies against each other. Leake described how "these individuals root[ed] their conception of modernity in the belief that Islam and its tenets provided a means to create a new alternative national and state structure."[58] Thus, in less than a year following Taraki and the PDPA's seizure of power, Afghanistan and its modernization had rendered a prominent split between two extreme points of view on the future of the country. In a battle of the old way versus the new, the conflict between the centuries-old tribal factions and the new-age socialist PDPA presented a complex situation to the Cold War's hegemons. To maintain the bi-hegemonic world order, both the USG and the Politburo were unwilling to allow Afghanistan's modernization into an Islamic State, and therefore sought means to intervene.

Historiography

The Cold War has long been described as a conflict between two hegemons – The United States of America and the Soviet Union. The two superpowers, previously allied to destroy the Axis powers, emerged from the rubble of World War II as enemies. Scholars have produced a litany works on the nuclear arms race, communism versus capitalism, the space race, and multiple crises around the globe which drove humanity closer to World War III and impending doom.[59] While Cold War crises and events in Europe and East Asia have been the subject of

[58] Elisabeth Leake. *Afghan Crucible: The Soviet Invasion and the Making of Modern Afghanistan*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2022) Pg 4-5

[59] Cold War History is extensive. For specific works regarding competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. For further reading see: Odd Arne Westad's *The Cold War: A World History*, (Basic Books: New York,

volumes of academic work, the Cold War also found the United States and the Soviet Union pitted against each other in a perhaps lesser discussed, but equally influential, arena – an area which Andrew Bacevich refers to as the *Greater Middle East,* a region which extends beyond the Arab world and includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey.[60] While Bacevich did not coin the moniker, his inclusion of Afghanistan into this region emphasizes the immense influence the country played in the region. The Western phrase is often held in negative regards by the people of the region as its groups together very different nations and cultures, sacrificing their individuality and self-determination and to fit a Western model. Bacevich, however, uses the phrase to describe how he believes Islamism transcended the ethnic differences across the region in the post-colonial period, and how it the foundation for Islam's continued fight today. Bacevich's model is important as it emphasizes the fact that was largely overlooked by the USG and Politburo during the Cold War. In the *Greater Middle East*, Bacevich contends that Islamism provided what Benedict Anderson would classify as an imagined community and did so more than any other social or political structure in Afghanistan.[61] In contrast to Andersonian concepts of nationalism, however, the universalism of Islam transcended borders. Thus, in the post-colonial period, the USG and Soviet Politburo viewed Islamism as a threat to their bi-polar world order, and executed operations to try to maintain their control in the Greater Middle East.

2017); Richard Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race,* (Vintage: New York, 2008); and Deborah Cadbury, *The Space Race: The Epic Battle Between America and the Soviet Union for Dominion of Space,* (Harper Perennial: New York, 2007)

[60] The term "Greater Middle East" was introduced in 2004 under the Bush administration in a paper authored by one of his international strategy officials for a project known as the "Greater Middle East Initiative." The term referred to nations in the Middle East, Northern Africa, and included Afghanistan, Iran, Israel, and Turkey. In this paper I use the term only for its brevity when describing the Middle East with the addition of Afghanistan and Iran. The source for the origination of the term is as follows: "The Greater Middle East Initiative," *Al Jazeera*. Online Edition, May 20, 2004. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2004/5/20/the-greater-middle-east-initiative. Bacevich defines the Greater Middle East in this way.

[61] For more on imagined communities and the definition of nationalism used here, see Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London: Verso, 1983)

The History of Operation Cyclone and Operation Storm-333

The Soviet invasion began when specially trained Spetznaz forces seized the PDPA's headquarters, the Tajbeg Palace, in an operation codenamed Operation Storm-333. Months earlier, President Carter approved Operation Cyclone, the CIA's covert funding mission to the Mujahideen tribal factions. Together, these operations resulted in a decade-long Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and an equally long proxy war funded by the CIA. The opposing operations are often only known by the results – the Soviet Union's embarrassing withdrawal, and the successful of the Mujahideen's insurgency. The hegemons' motivations for executing their respective operations are often reduced to a mere extension of Soviet communism and American capitalism. While this thesis aims to argue the Politburo's and USG's true motivations that compelled them undertake their respective operations, it is useful to dispel some common misconceptions about the conflict.

The most readily accepted and undoubtedly the most famous narrative of the operation highlights Texas Democratic Congressman Charlie Wilson for his leading role in securing hundreds of millions of dollars for the operation. Wilson's involvement in the program gained notoriety through George Crile's *Charlie Wilson's War*: *The Extraordinary Story of how the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed History* published in 2003, and the subsequent Hollywood feature film, released in 2007.[62] While the film and the book contain some accurate and notable portrayals, the narrative is largely driven by Hollywood's need to appeal to consumers desires for stories animated by scandal, sex, drugs, and shady political maneuvering. Because of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that the film presents an exceedingly

[62] George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of how the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed* History (New York: Grove Press, 2003) and *Charlie Wilson's War*. Directed by Mike Nichols, Universal Pictures, 2007.

exaggerated narrative. More importantly, both the book and the film seem to suggest that Charlie Wilson was responsible for not only the expansion of the operation, but that he was also its originator. While Congressman Wilson certainly deserves significant credit for his ability to bring the Mujahideen's trials and tribulations and the Afghanistan refugee's suffering to Congress, it is equally important to recognize the initial obstacles the program faced to better understand Wilson's contribution to its expansion. Additionally, major actors like Congressman Charlie Wilson, CIA operative Howard Hart, and Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) Chief Mohammad Yousef, who were responsible for the program's notable expansion beginning in 1984 were not actually involved at the outset of the USG's intervention and, in fact, only become involved with the program years after it began.[63]

Others attribute the operation's success to Ronald Reagan and his aggressively hawkish stance towards the Soviet Union.[64] While Reagan's approach can surely be characterized as bellicose towards the Soviet Union, to better understand why Reagan was able to aggressively expand the program, requires a deeper consideration of why the program was limited when it began under President Carter. In fact, it was not until Reagan had nearly completed his first term that he actively expanded the program. While Reagan's presidential findings (authoritative orders given by the President) were key to the expansion of the program, they manifested from several factors that were significantly different under the Carter Administration. First, by the

[63] Congressman Wilson, first heard of the program in 1980 but did not significantly impact the program until after his trip to Afghanistan in 1982. CIA operative Howard Hart did not take his position as Pakistan Station Chief until 1981 and did not expand the program until Wilson supported its expansion in 1982. ISI Chief Mohammed Yousaf did not take his position until 1983.

[64] For those who favor Ronald Reagan as the driver behind defeating the Soviets see Peter Schweitzer's *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, (New York Atlantic Press, 1996); Lewis Fretz, "Ronald Reagan's Foreign Policy: An Overview." New Zealand International Review 14, no. 4 (1989): 18–22; Andrew Buch's "Ronald Reagan and the Defeat of the Soviet Empire." Presidential Studies Quarterly 27, no. 3 (1997): 451–66;

time NSDD-166 was signed, the Mujahideen had proven to be passionate fighters, dedicated to defeating the Soviet Union, and limited only by the amount of aid provided by the United States. In fact, when Congressman Wilson was addressing a group of fighters in 1983 during one of his numerous visits, he promised the quick delivery of humanitarian aid and medical supplies. Wilson recalled how a Mujahideen fighter told him he could keep his aid, they just wanted guns. Additionally, by the time Reagan considered expanding the program, tens-of-thousands of foreign fighters had dedicated themselves to Jihad and traveled to Afghanistan to join the Mujahideen.[65] Considering both the USG and Politburo underestimated the universality of the Jihad phenomena, it is no surprise that they overlooked the significance of the thousands of fighters who had traveled to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. The significant increase of combat power for the Mujahideen likely contributed equally if not more than American support.[66] often Next, the CIA had undergone nearly a complete turnover in personnel which had created a sort of resurgence in the organization's operational fervor compared to previous years. The CIA's resurgence was amplified by Reagan's willingness to expand the organization's operational boundaries, enabling the organization to dedicate an impressive amount of funds and assets to the operation.[67]

On the other side of the conflict, and in this case the losing side, which rarely gets it say, stands the ailing Soviet Politburo and an old-guard Soviet leadership cadre, who as Robert Gates describes, were literally dying as their regime fought for its survival.[68] While most of the existing literature on Operation Cyclone analyzes the operation through an American lens, it is equally

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[65] Crile, George. *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of how the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed* History (New York: Grove Press, 2003) 111
[66] Li, *The Universal Enemy*
[67] Gates, Robert M. *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996). 208-225
[68] Gates, Robert M. *From the Shadows*, 185

important to consider the Soviet Union's decision-making and policies in the years leading up to the invasion and their subsequent occupation and counterinsurgency operation. Historian Vladislav Zubok approaches the decision to invade from a Soviet perspective and argues that the Soviet Union had no intention of reaching the Persian Gulf – one of the major reasons the USG was compelled to act. Instead, Zubok claims the Soviet's decision to invade was likely an overreaction caused by a misunderstanding of Afghanistan's cultural dynamics.[69] According to US diplomat Diego Cordovez, there are two enduring arguments which explain the Soviet intervention and subsequent withdrawal through the Soviet Politburo lens. The first maintains that the Soviet Politburo recognized the initial invasion into Afghanistan as a mistake, and sought an honorable way to withdraw, as early as 1980. However, to assume the Politburo was united in its decision to invade or withdraw understates the intense debates which occurred within the Politburo. The politburo decision to invade Afghanistan divided the Politburo and, though the archival sources aren't conclusive as this aspect, likely divided the decision to withdraw as well. Further, considering the fact Soviet leadership changed three times during the Soviet occupation with the deaths of the Soviet General Secretaries – Leonid Breznev in 1982, Yuri Andropov in 1984, and Konstantin Cherneko in 1985 – it is unlikely to assume all three individuals desired a Soviet withdrawal. [70] Due to the constant turnover in leadership, the Politburo was in a state of disarray and the Soviet strategy in Afghanistan was inconsistent. Politburo records describe how the official decision to invade Afghanistan resulted from a secret

[69] Vladislav Zubok's *A Failed Empire*, (North Carolina : North Carolina Press, 2007) Ebook Chapter 8, "Détente's Decline and Soviet Overreach"

[70] Gates, *From the Shadows*, Gates discusses each General Secretary's initial thoughts and strategies on Afghanistan when they entered office, and how they evolved during their tenure. For Gates on Breznev see 37-38, 90, 132-134, 234-236, Gates on Andropov see 102, 189-190, Cherneko 318-319, 328-330

meeting outside the purview of the Politburo.[71] Recently declassified Politburo documents from the occupation years display a lack of confidence in the Soviet Union's protracted involvement in Afghanistan.[72] Meanwhile, the Soviets launched upwards of ten major operations, known as the Panjshir Offensives in Afghanistan between 1980 and 1985.[73] The Soviet's inconsistent strategy in Afghanistan eerily mirrored that of the United States in Vietnam. Soviet leaders either increased military pressure in attempts to deal a decisive blow to the insurgency, decreased military pressure in efforts to seek a diplomatic solution, or executed a combination of both.

The second argument, according to Cordovez, is referred to as the "Kennan Position" which maintains that the Soviets were militarily in a position of relative advantage throughout the conflict and therefore had the capability to withdraw under their own auspices. This claim, however, fails to consider the effectiveness of the Mujahideen's irregular warfare methods.[74] While the Soviets often experienced success in set-piece battles and during their major offensives, the Mujahideen's guerilla tactics did not seek victory in deliberate engagements. Instead, the Mujahideen's "death by a thousand cuts" strategy sought to protract the struggle long enough for Soviet costs to exceed the benefits.[75] To claim a Soviet military success based on Mujahideen casualty counts, inherently discredits the Mujahideen's military successful insurgency operations.[76]

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[71] "CC CPSU Politburo Resolution # 176/125, Concerning the Situation in "A" [Afghanistan]", December 12, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI (formerly TsKhSD), f. 89, per. 14, dok. 31 [cited by Archive-Information Bulletin, 1993 as RGANI, op. 14, d. 31, ll. 1, handwritten original, special file, CC] https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113675

[72] "Excerpts from several reports about the situation in the PDPA compiled by the KGB", January 26, 1983, Wilson Center Digital Archive, A. A. Lyakhovskiy, p. 264. Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.

[73] Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap* 162-166 and Lester Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, (Washington D.C. : National Defense University Press, 1998) 48-71, 134-145, 194

[74] Yousaf, *The Bear Trap*, Preface and CIA, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, 1980, CREST Database, Doc RPD81B00401R000600230013-0https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP81B00401R000600230013-0.pdf

[75] Youssaf and Adkin, *The Bear*, 1

[76] See Cordovez, Diego and Selig Harrison's *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal.* Cordovez claims there are two competing arguments regarding the end of Soviet Aggression in Afghanistan. Cordovez

Afghanistan's Civil War following the Saur Revolution had global impacts in that it motivated the USG and Soviet Politburo to more obtrusively intervene in the Third World to assert their dominance and maintain bi-hegemonic world order. The Politburo chose to respond with a deliberate military intervention and occupation, while CIA covertly funded Mujahideen "freedom fighters" with weapons and funding to wage an insurgency against Soviet military forces. American and Soviet intervention, while commonly regarded as the *cause* of Afghan modernization, was in fact the *reaction* to Afghanistan's Islamist self-determination. Seeking to gain and maintain influence in the oil-rich region, the United States and Soviet Union opted to intervene. The hegemons' desire to dictate Afghan modernization, compounded by their reliance on oil resulted in a significant global development – the noticeable shift in Cold War competition to the Muslim world. To be sure, Cold War conflict remained perceptible across the globe, but in terms of funding and resources, the decade-long intervention into Afghanistan remained at the apex of post-détente Cold War conflict.

Post-Colonialism, High Modernism, and Orientalism

Too often American intervention into Afghanistan is told through an American lens, one which focuses primarily on the Global War on Terror. The scope of this lens is commonly limited and begins in concert with the initial American invasion in 2001. This parameter is extremely too narrow. Not only does it discount an entire side of the conflict – Afghanistan and its people – it isolates Afghanistan's significance to a single American conflict. In Robert Crews' words, "Afghanistan can no longer be viewed as "a desolate, inward-looking, and isolated

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supports what he refers to as the "Kennan Position" which claims Mikhail Gorbachev's policies were the driving factor behind the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. Cordovez also maintains the Soviet military consistently defeated Mujahideen rebels in the majority of set-piece battle. However, this does not take into account goal of the Mujahideen to avoid direct conflict and instead pursue a protracted campaign.

place…. [with] ostensibly primitive inhabitants…immobilized in time and space…Afghanistan can no longer be understood as isolated from the global circulation of modern politics…The national lens is imperfect everywhere. But in the case of Afghanistan, it has obscured diverse interconnections that linked Afghans to a wider modernity."[77] As Crews argues, it is necessary to expand the depth of the analysis and reach back to Afghanistan's modernization in the post-colonial period. Afghanistan's global impact during the Cold War is best illustrated by placing it at the center of the Cold War and analyzing how the USG and Soviet Politburo were influenced by the Afghan peoples' pursuit of modernity. To best understand Afghanistan's modernization, writers must consider numerous factors like Darryl Li's analysis on Jihad, Andrew Bacevich and Odd Arne Westad's work on Afghanistan's globalism in the Cold War, and Crews' work which breaks the boundaries of artificially imposed time and space constraints by illustrating that Afghanistan has engaged with the global world and modernity.

Afghanistan was much more than the next battlefield in which the United States and Soviet Union would compete. Instead, Afghanistan became the epicenter of an ideological conflict over modernization. During the post-colonial period, Westad argues, the Afghan people were "search[ing] for alternatives both to capitalism and Communism, a 'third way" for newly liberated states…The United States and the Soviet Union were driven to intervene in the Third World by the ideologies inherent in their politics. Locked in conflict over the very concept of European modernity…Washington and Moscow *needed* to change the world in order to prove the universal applicability of their ideologies."[78] In other words, the USG and the Politburo were

[77] Crews, *Afghan Modern*, Pg 16

[78] Westad, *Global Cold War*, Pg 4, emphasis added. Westad also mentions how new leaders in Third World countries faced a problem – [the[sense that the empires had not only been oppressive and unjust, but that they had failed in bringing in the kind of modernity to the Third World that local elites aspired to. Wested attributes this failure to intervention by "First World" nations.

induced to intervene in Afghanistan because Afghanistan desired to modernize independent of American and Soviet methods. If Afghanistan was able to prove this was possible, it would discredit the bi-polar system set forth by the world powers during the post-colonial period, and consequently the two hegemons could lose their grasp of control.

While most of the recent scholarship places American and Soviet Cold War competition at the center of their involvement in the Third World, their involvement is in-fact rooted in the question of nation-making and statehood that influenced why and how the superpowers chose to intervene. Afghanistan was not merely the next military battlefield for Cold War conflict. Instead, Afghanistan's modernization, which had resulted in a Civil War between the PDPA and tribal factions, threatened hegemonic and imperial ideology. On one hand, the PDPA's values and radical reforms did not align with typical Marxist values the Politburo believed were necessary for modernization. On the other hand, the tribal factions' desire to modernize into an Islamic State did not adhere to American or Soviet concepts of *high* modernism founded in market economies. Anthropologists James C. Scott and David Hervey's defined high modernism as "the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of ideal social orders under standardized conditions of knowledge and production." Built on a foundation of Orientalist beliefs, the USG and Politburo did not believe Third World Afghanistan could reach modernity. Therefore, as Scott and Hervey claim, "the 'modernization' of European economies proceeded apace, while the whole thrust of international politics and trade was justified as bringing a benevolent and progressive 'modernization process' to a backward Third World." In other words, both superpowers applied their own concepts of modernization to Afghanistan, while either trying to challenge or altogether eliminate the Afghan peoples' own agency.

In the aftermath of the turbulence of the Second World War, and amid postwar American and Soviet imperialism, several previously colonized civilizations sought their independence and self-determination. American and Soviet doctrines forced their respective influence on the post-colonial nations, and throughout this period of post-colonial modernization, new governments found themselves unduly forced to portray themselves in the light of one of the imposing powers.[79] More often than not, the nations would align with one hegemon while leveraging aid from the other, thus hegemonic intervention was the main driver of instability in Third World nations. While this bipolar method predisposed most post-colonial nations in Europe and Asia to American capitalism or Soviet communism, a different sort of modernization was taking place across Central and Southwest Asia in the Greater Middle East. The region, consisting of nations viewed by hegemons as Third World, served as a major theatre of operations during the Second World War. For most of the Second World War and the subsequent Cold War conflict, the Middle Eastern countries' governments generally remained neutral and on the periphery. However, while the number of vulnerable, unaligned nations in Europe waned in the early decades of the Cold War, American and Soviet attention shifted towards this new arena. Intensified by their realization of their reliance on oil, a majority of which was contained in reserves below the crust of the Persian Gulf, the United States Government (USG) and the Soviet Politburo sought to impose their will on what they believed were nations ripe for exploitation.[80]

Afghanistan is commonly referred by political scientists and international relations scholars, like Seth Jones, as "The Graveyard of Empires."[81] Jones' work is representative of

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[79] Westad, *Global Cold War*, 89, also notes that "the Cold War was bipolar to the point of exclusivity, meaning that if one's enemies were supported by *one* superpower, there was always the chance of getting aid from the other." This more often than not led to rebellions and insurgency.
[80] Bacevich, *Greater Middle East,* 3-7
[81] Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan,* (Norton: New York, 2010); David Isby, *Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires* (Pegasus: Cambridge, 2011)

most of the recent writing on Afghanistan – it's political and/or international relations studies framework is aimed at understanding or explaining the roots of American failure in Afghanistan and the quagmire which has ravaged the country for the last two decades as well as the Global War in Terror.[82] Those that fit Jones' characterization, more often than not, are as guilty as western states during the Cold War of using *high modernism* as a framework to conceptualize statehood, nation-making, and modernity.[83] The authors who apply a western-orthodox approach to explain current events in Afghanistan often overlook Afghan modernization in the 20th century. Their omission results in a failure to properly contextualize Afghanistan, and neglects to recognize the connection between the events of the 20th century to the events in the 21st century, and fails to acknowledge Afghanistan's global impact. In fact, multiple works tend to omit, or only briefly mention, the USG's own contribution to the Mujahideen's rise to power. It is likely this conspicuous omission will continue until the United States has come to terms with its utter failure in Afghanistan against the insurgency they previously funded.[84] Jones, like several other political scientists and international relations scholars, tends to study the events in Afghanistan in

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[82] Title includes but are not limited to: Carter Malkasian. *War Comes to Garmser: Thirty Years of Conflict on the Afghan Frontier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); David Loyn. *The Long War: The Inside Story of America and Afghanistan Since 9/11*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021); The assertion that most of the recent writing regarding Afghanistan focuses on The Global War on Terror and American involvement in the region since 2000 is corroborated by numerous authors who argue that it is necessary to link America's current involvement to that of the Soviets in the 1970s and 1980s. Robert Crews in *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation*, corroborates this point win his introduction to *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation,* 28 noting, "since 2001, nearly all American research on the [Middle East] has been addressed, if sometimes only directly, to U.S. and NATO war policy making.";

[83] Scott and Hervey's idea of *high modernism* is used by Westad to refer to a mentality which characterizes western states' belief in a linear process to statehood, characterized by the evolution of markets into a capitalist society. Authors today, like Jones and others who fail to recognize Afghanistan's modernization during the Cold War, apply the same antiquated concept which often results in their work focusing only on an American view of the world.

[84] Jones' work serves as a prime example. While Jones' briefly mentions the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and even more pithily mentions the USG's subsequent CIA operation, Jones does so only as an anecdote in his particularly abridged history of Afghanistan. To be sure, Jones' aim is to attribute American failure in Afghanistan to a bifurcated American political system. Nevertheless, Jones fails to, or chooses not to, link America's failure to the USG's actions during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s.

the 21st century in isolation, or does so in a manner which discredits Afghanistan's role in its own modernization, discrediting the notion that Afghanistan and its people were proactive actors in the global arena.

Robert Crews, who specifically refutes the *Graveyard* notion, implies that writers characterize Afghanistan as a state which has been solely determined by failed foreign interventions.[85] Crews believes that due to the manifold tribal factions, and the international community's inability to understand them, many have come to believe that there has never been a sense of nationalism among the Afghan people strong enough to produce any sort of self-determination.[86] Again, the Crews approach follows a western-orthodox mindset where the only path to modernization is through the nation-state. Only when writers are able to step back and avoid applying western ideology to Afghanistan can they realize that while Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan appear wholly compartmentalized, *holistically,* Islamism in Afghanistan transcended these ethnic boundaries and provide the necessary means for Afghanistan to modernize and self-determine.

Elisabeth Leake emphasizes Afghanistan's nationalism, despite its tribal factions in her recent work *Afghan Crucible: The Soviet Invasion and the Making of Modern Afghanistan.* Leake argues that local community, or *Qwam*, is the basis which provided the means necessary to form a traditional Islamic faction. Leake's assertion is key to understanding how influential Afghanistan has been in global history. According to Leake and her contemporaries, historians, policymakers, and political scientists continually discounted and overlooked Afghanistan's

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[85] Crews, *Afghan Modern,* Pg 15-16

[86] A sample of books which discuss Afghan tribalism and the CIA's efforts to fund the Mujahideen see Bruce Riedel in *What We Won: America's Secret War in Afghanistan in 1979-1989* (Washington D.C. : Brookings Institute, 2014); Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996); Mohammed Youssaf & Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan, The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower* (Havertown: Casemate, 1992)

identity as an Islamic State. This oversight is perhaps the most obvious when analyzing the CIA's clandestine funding of the Mujahideen. The CIA's funding remained limited during the onset of the program, because they, too, had inhibitions regarding the progress the tribal groups could make against the Soviet military. Undoubtedly, the CIA's mindset aligns with the aforementioned belief in the western-orthodox, nation-state model of modernization. Unlike Leake, the CIA and writers who relied on a western-orthodox model, underestimated the global implications of the Afghan peoples' actions, made clear by the fact that the insurgency successfully ousted Soviet military forces, which contributed to the fall of the Soviet Union.[87]

To expand on the global implications of Afghanistan's modernization through Islam, historians must also consider what Darryl Li aptly describes as the universality of Jihad. In his compelling work *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity*, Li chronicles Jihad, which he defines as, "participating in armed forms of solidarity without the permission of any nation-state" specifically by "mujahids."[88] Aligning with Bacevich and Leake's idea that Afghanistan sought to modernize through an atypical method, namely Islamism vs. capitalism, Li argues, while it "is treated as suspect in a world order that favors the model of the citizen-soldier as the paradigm for legitimate violence" Jihad "can help us understand how universalist claims are made and enacted, especially by people who are not ordinarily associated with the ideas of the universal."[89] Li undoubtedly places his work in opposition to those who do not believe Afghanistan's push towards modernity had global impacts. Li's analysis on Jihad

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[87] Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash, "The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union." Review of International Studies 25, no. 4 (1999): 693–708. This article argues that Mujahideen insurgency forced Soviet military forces to withdraw, which emboldened other SSRs to seek their own self-determination. The Soviet Union, facing severe economic pressure from their occupation of Afghanistan were unwilling and unable to commit further resourced to maintain control over these nations.

[88] Darryl Li. *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity*, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2019) 14-16

[89] Li, *Universal Enemy*, Pg 4

sheds light on the why the Soviets and the United States failed in their endeavors in Afghanistan. Both the Soviet Union and the USG underestimated the potential universality of an Islamic State. Afghanistan's pursuit of modernity through Islam ignited what we might call a challenge to Cold War universalism – that is a challenge to the competing universalist models put forth by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. – which continued for decades, obscuring the enemy, adding further complexity to the conflicts, and complicating each country's ability to achieve victory. Still today, strategy makers, political scientists, writers, and historians often fail to realize Odd Arne Westad's notion that "the most important aspects of the Cold War were neither military nor strategic, nor Europe-centered, but connected to the political and social development in the Third World.[90]

Underlying the USG and Politburo's Cold War strategy in the Third World are overwhelming notions racialism and of Orientalism.[91] As Westad explains, "Even though both Washington and Moscow remained opposed to formal colonialism throughout the Cold War, the methods they used in imposing their version of modernity on Third World countries were very similar to those of the European empires that had gone before them." Simply put, The USG and Politburo, while perpetuating a façade of support for self-determination, continued to control developing nations by disguising their imperial colonial agendas as "giant social and economic projects, bringing promises of modernity to their supporters and mostly death to their opponents." Westad does not exonerate the governments of the developing nations, claiming that they often "played a key role…in abetting and facilitating these superpower interventions…A few of them set agendas…that they knew could only be fulfilled through American or Soviet intervention."[92] Afghanistan's modernization is the epitome of Westad's concept. The PDPA,

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[90] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
[91] Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (New York : Norton, 1979)
[92] Westad, *Global Cold War,* 396-399

seeking a socialist modernization appealed for help from the Soviet Union. The tribal factions, while opposed to colonialism, accepted help from the USG under the auspice of anti-communism. The Politburo and USG, believing that their respective factions were too underdeveloped to modernize on their own, sought to impose their will for their own gains. The relationships rendered were mutually destructive.

The USG and Politburo did not view Afghanistan the next arena in which they would compete militarily, the hegemons saw it as an opportunity to prove their own ideologies as the rightful path to modernity. In fact, the USG wanted to avoid any sort of overt military confrontation with the Soviet Union, and instead opted for a clandestine counteraction with Operation Cyclone.[93] Westad's analysis further underscores Afghanistan's prominence in international relations as he argues that Afghanistan was the most influential Third World country in the realm of Cold War Competition between the Soviets and the USG during the post-colonial period. Westad highlights the fact that Afghan's desire to modernize based on the tenets of Islam "helped destroy the modernization enterprises of the regimes, and how the Soviet Union decided to intervene in order to recreate a modernizing, socialist regime in Kabul."[94] While the Soviet Union attempted to recreate a socialist regime in Kabul, they were unsuccessful in creating one which could endure the tribal Islamic insurgency. Westad concludes his work with a brief but compelling analysis regarding how the conflict in Afghanistan not only led to the fall of the Soviet Union, but also led to the bedeviling of American and European foreign policy.[95] It is

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[93] Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1978* (January 17, 1977). In his report, Rumsfeld wrote that the DOD would not commit forces or "any substantial part of the Pentagon's budget" to the region.
[94] Westad, Global Cold War, 6-8
[95] Westad concludes his work by stating that …the dual processes of decolonization and Third World radicalization…were influenced by [the Cold War]…together they formed a pattern that had disastrous consequences for today's relationship between the pan-European states and other parts of the world." Westad contends the Cold War brought forth a new form of colonialism centered on ideological control and domination." "Even though both Washington and Moscow remained opposed to formal colonialism throughout the Cold War,

this last section, from which contemporary writers should begin their studies on the implications of the recently concluded conflict in Afghanistan. Failure to do omits the very roots of USG involvement in Afghanistan.

Traditional Islam

The next key concept for this thesis is traditional Islam, specifically the difference between what Westad and Leake refer to as "traditional Islam" compared to the Islam that inspired the Iranian Revolution. Leake and Westad analyze traditional Islam in contrast to what they refer to as "fundamental Islam," or what religious scholar Shireen Hunter refers to as "revolutionary Islam."[96] The difference between the two contextualizes the important conceptual framework for Afghan Islam upon which the United States and Soviet Union based their decision to intervene and is therefore central to this thesis.

The resurgence of the tribal factions' traditional Islamic fundamentals in response to the PDPA's socialist reforms further split the Afghan people. The Islamic Revolution in Iran inspired other Muslim cultures to develop anti-colonial resentment towards the world's hegemonic powers.[97] As one of the most prominent religions in the world, Islam has countless different sects which vary in their ways of practicing their faith according to their holy scripture – The Quran.[98] Though the Islamic Revolution reinvigorated traditional Islamic tenets,

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the methods they used in imposing their version of modernity on the third world countries were very similar to those of the European empires that had gone before them…These methods were centered on introducing cultural, demographic, and ecological change in Third World societies, while using military power to defeat those who resisted.

[96] Shireen Hunter, "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam." Third World Quarterly 10, no. 2 (1988): 730–49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3992664. 732

[97] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 144. Leake argues that although the tribal factions still shared many disagreements, there was an overwhelming agreement among the Peshawar factions that centered on anti-colonialism, anti-Soviet intervention, and anti-Marxism while advocating for an independent, self-determined, Islamic State.

[98] Two of the most prominent sects are Sunni and Shi'a Islam. Others include Ahmadiyya, Ibadi, and Surfism

traditional Islam like that practiced by most of the tribal factions, was unique.[99] Westad and Leake both discussed how Afghani Islam in the 1970s was notably less complex compared to that which sparked the Iranian Revolution. Rather than attempting to blend Islamic fundamentals with governance, the tribal factions viewed it more as a code by which to live their lives.[100]

Following the deposition of the Iranian Shah in 1979, the revolutionary groups, largely made up of devout religious scholars and pious academic elites, were able to establish an Islamic State based on sophisticated version of Islam in which the religion vests sovereignty of the state. In Shireen Hunter's words, "in Iran's case, the tension between the demands of ideological purity and the requirements of pragmatism are still strong."[101] The combination of Islamic ideology and utility as a means of governance forms the crux of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary Islamic platform. While the overall idea of an Islamic State reverberated through the Muslim world, some Muslim groups believed in the principal of the formation of an Islamic State but regarded Khomeini's goals as too radical.[102]

Thus was the case in Afghanistan where two factions arose – the "traditionalists" and the "fundamentalists." Leake explains that fundamentalists "positioned religious figures as political, as well as spiritual, leaders in a post-withdrawal Afghanistan, a position that moved far beyond Islam as merely 'uniting a country that was historically divided by ethnic, tribal, linguistic, and regional differences,' the view taken by traditionalists."[103] In other words, traditionalists believed Islam in itself was enough to transcend tribal differences to unite and create an Islamic State,

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[99] CIA, "Afghan Communism versus Tribalism," 5
[100] Shireen Hunter, "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam."
[101] Shireen Hunter, "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam." Third World Quarterly 10, no. 2 (1988): 730–49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3992664. 732
[102] This was largely the case in Afghanistan as neither the PDPA nor the tribal factions desired to join Iran in the formation of a single Islamic State. Instead varying factions arose which differed in the extent to which they desired to reconcile Islamism and governance. See Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 144-146
[103] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 144-146

whereas the fundamentalists desired a more Iranian model which imbued Islam in the sovereignty of the state. Although there were few official alliances between the traditionalist Muslim tribes, there were some common beliefs. First and foremost, traditionalists did not believe socialism, Marxism, and atheism were irreconcilable with Islam.[104]

The CIA, while they searched for a way to counter Soviet influence in Afghanistan recognized that not only did tribal factions tend to align to the traditionalist model, but they vehemently opposed the PDPA and the Soviet Union. In early CIA intelligence estimates, analysts described tribal Afghan Islam as "a peculiar blend of orthodoxy and tribal mores…Afghanistan has been isolated from the great centers of Islamic learning and has produced neither great schools nor profound religious philosophers. The majority of religious leaders are local mullahs, haphazardly trained, who approach their religion in a simple way."[105] Due to their pervasive mindset which refused to recognize the potential for, what they referred to as, "tribal Islamism" to lead to modernity, the CIA believed it was in their best interest to support the traditionalist tribes. Moreover, given that Soviet relations with the Muslim world had declined over the course of the 20th century through Soviet subjugation of Muslim populations across Asia, the CIA believed they could further inflame anti-Soviet sentiment throughout the Muslim world.[106] The Agency believed that if they could facilitate a victory for the traditionalists – those who lacked further political aspirations – post-withdrawal Afghanistan would degrade into a failed state, effectively undermining the PDPA, the Soviet Union, and socialism and Islamism as means to modernity.

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[104] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 112-113; Leake, *Afghan Crucible 144-146*
[105] CIA, "Afghan Tribalism versus Communism," 4
[106] CIA, "Afghan Communism versus Tribalism," 5-6 specifically mentions "the Soviet subjugation of the Muslim Khanates to the north in the 1920s, and King Amanullah's use of Soviet aircraft in putting down the Khost Rebellion. Gates in *From the Shadows* mentions the idea of inflaming Muslim opinion of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the Muslim world.

Chapter 2: The Politburo supports the State…if it's a Soviet one.

Faqir Mohammed Faqir was President Amin's Interior Minister. Having already returned home for the evening, Officials at the Tajbeg Palace, President Amin's residence, frantically called Faqir and ordered to return to the palace. Faqir sprinted up the stairs between the palace's Parthenon-inspired columns and entered the main atrium. As soon as Faqir entered, he realized something was wrong. Everyone who had attended dinner with President Amin had become violently ill. Faqir quickly climbed the winding staircase to the top where President Amin's personal quarters were located. As Faqir burst through the door, he saw President Amin, pale in color, drenched in sweat, with tubes running into his mouth and down to his stomach. Soviet doctors, likely the advisors to the President on medical infrastructure, were working desperately to save Amin's life. KGB operatives, in an attempt to assassinate Amin, poisoned the soup which had been prepared for dinner that evening. Soviet doctors and government officials spent the next hours saving Amin's life, seemingly unaware that it was their own government who wanted the President dead. By midnight, it seemed as though Amin was going to make a full recovery. However, as staffers in the Tajbeg Palace worked their way through the chaotic assassination attempt, Soviet tanks, armored vehicles, and paratroopers had surrounded the palace. Specially trained Spetsnaz troops entered the palace and killed anyone who refused to surrender. As the Spetsnaz made their way up from the ground floor, President Amin attempted to defend himself. Amin and his family were executed later that evening.[107] The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had begun.

The Politburo first planted their seeds of influence into Afghanistan's government immediately following the First World War. Throughout the Second World War and during the

[107] Frud Bezhan, "Operation Storm-333: The Secret Soviet Plot to Assassinate the Afghan President" Documentary, Radio Free Europe, https://youtu.be/hYgERMygHXE

succeeding decades, the Politburo – mainly through the use of their clandestine service, the KGB – continued to groom the developing Afghan government to maintain and eventually increase their tilt towards communism. By the start of the Second World War, SSRs stretched across Asia, bordering most of Southwest Asia, and encroached upon the Middle East. The Politburo believed they had successfully planted their claws in the PDPA and were willing to support the group, as long as they aligned with their communist ideals. However, despite Soviet treaties with Afghanistan and decades of working with the Afghan government, the Politburo was hesitant to fully trust the PDPA and their supposed intent to move towards a new SSR.

Unlike the CIA, the KGB had performed exceptionally well during the initial decades of the Cold War. The Soviet Union maintained their control over Poland and supported communist takeovers in Cuba, Vietnam, and Korea.[108] After the catastrophic failure of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Soviet Union had undertaken "the largest military buildup on history over a twenty-five year period." The Soviet Union was able to gain parity and eventually surpass the United States in strategic missile capability. [109] In the battle between the hegemon's clandestine organizations, the KGB and CIA, the KGB successfully broke millions of coded CIA messages through the use of U.S. Navy Warrant Officer, and defector John Walker.[110] The KGB extended their operations as they installed government officials in Afghanistan.[111] By the 1970s, the KGB's operations had been effective and the organization flourished in the Politburo's single-party system.

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[108] Gates, *From the* Shadows, 26-30; Richard Thorton, "Soviet Strategy and the Vietnam War." Asian Affairs 1, no. 4 (1974): 205–28. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30171310.
[109] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 29
[110] For more See Gates sections in *From the Shadows* on the competition between the CIA and KGB, pg 16-30 and 302-306
[111] 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, Wilson Center Digital Archive.

While the KGB was solidifying its influence throughout numerous factions of the Afghan government, the CIA was too caught up dealing with congressional inquiries to keep up the KGB. The CIA's ability to execute operations abroad had just been significantly degraded in the wake of the fallout from the Church and Pike Committees. After having been accused of spying on their own citizens, the Church and Pike Committees scrutinize the legality of the CIA's covert operations. The committees ultimately concluded that the CIA was operating with minimal oversight. After increasing congressional and executive oversight on the CIA, the agency subsequently experienced a loss of funding and operational freedom.[112] Thus, the KGB's efforts during Daoud's regime went largely executed unopposed. However, after the KGB had secured an obvious advantage over the CIA in Afghanistan, their control over the country would experience turbulence as the PDPA gained momentum and seized control of the Afghan government.

The KGB did its best to influence the Daoud regime and continued their efforts after the PDPA seized power. Through numerous recently declassified ciphers and telegrams, it is clear the Politburo believed they a puppet master, pulling the strings of both Daoud and Taraki. Vasili Mitrokhin, a KGB defector provided over 178 pages of classified material dealing the Soviet-Afghan relations leading up to the Soviet Invasion. The documents detailed KGB involvement in the Daoud and Taraki regimes and described numerous secret operations which were ongoing prior to the invasion. The documents detail, by number, the amount of KGB agents installed in the Daoud regime and mention, among others, operations codenamed "TOKSIK," "TORKHAM," and "GVADAR" which targeted rival factions that posed threats to Daoud's sovereignty. The documents also described lines of effort for future influence in Afghanistan to

[112] Dafydd Townley's *The Year of Intelligence in the United States: Public Opinion, National Security, and the 1975 Church Committee*, (Palgrave Madmillan : London, 2021).

ensure its alignment to communist ideals.[113] Additional KGB documents refer to the Taraki administration's "unofficial contact with the CC CPSU via the USSR Council of Ministers KGB Rezident in Kabul."[114] Taken together, these documents prove the Politburo's extensive measures to maintain their influence and guide the Afghan government towards their establishment of a new SSR.

The Politburo praised Muhammed Daoud when he seized power from his cousin in 1973, largely due to his willingness to partner with the left-leaning, Soviet-favored, PDPA. In a Top-Secret cipher from the KGB sent to Kabul following Daoud's coup, the KGB celebrated Daoud's visit to the Soviet Union and mentioned that "the visit will make a great contribution to strengthening the relations of friendship and fruitful cooperation between [their] countries."[115] The Politburo believed Daoud's inclusion of the PDPA in his governing body would plant the seeds of a "soviet tilt," which had the potential to bloom Afghanistan into another SSR.[116] However, during his rule, Daoud failed to enact significant socialist reforms. While Daoud's indolence disappointed the Soviet Union, it enraged the PDPA who expected a more aggressive pursuit of socialist change.[117] The PDPA was in constant communication with the Politburo and

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[113] Vasili Mitrokhin, "KGB Active Measures in Southwest Asia in 1980-82", April 2004, Wilson Center Digital Archive, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110013

[114] 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, Wilson Center Digital Archive. "Rezident" is often used in KGB documents to allude to a secret KBG office. The existence of the supposed "KGB Rezident" is corroborated in Gates, *From the Shadows*, 22-24; and Bearden and Risen's *The Main Enemy*, 78-83

[115] KGB, "Top Secret Attachment, by KGB cipher Kabul", June 2, 1974, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112503

[116] The "Soviet tilt" is mentioned in both Leake, *Afghan Crucible* 39 and Cordovez and Harrison's *Out of Afghanistan*, 15-16. CIA intelligence assessments on Afghanistan also recognize the PDPA's likely alignment with the Soviet Union. See Sherman Kent, "Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence – Subject: The Outlook for Afghanistan" CIA Memorandum, November 30, 1955, CREST database CIA-RDP79R01012A008000010018-5

[117] Daoud has been characterized as more concerned with . The PDPA was perhaps most critical of his ratification of the Helmand Treaty, as he had initially gained their support by refuting the treaty. He further enraged the PDPA by denying refuge for Pashtun tribesman fighting the Pakistan Government. By the end of his Rule Daoud isolated himself and was suspicious of nearly everyone around him. See Cordovez, *Out of Afghanistan,* 17.

worked closely with the KGB agents installed throughout Daoud's regime.[118] While the Politburo urged the PDPA to compromise with Daoud, the PDPA decided Daoud was a non-starter and chose to seize power in 1979. The PDPA's seizure of power, at least in the eyes of the CIA, appeared to benefit the Soviets.[119]

Though the Politburo believed the revolution was merely the next step to forming a socialist state, Politburo officials undoubtedly maintained reservations regarding the PDPA's future.[120] A high ranking member of the KGB described the PDPA's beliefs as "a strange mixture of nationalism with some elements of Marxism, [and] of Communist ideology."[121] Following the PDPA's Khlaqi reforms, the tribal factions erupted and civil war ravaged country. The Politburo was unwilling to intervene or provide Soviet troops to put down the rebellion, largely because they did not want to alienate the tribal factions. The KGB had been pushing the PDPA to work with tribal factions for years and recognized that the tribal factions could make or break Afghanistan's progress towards a socialist state. The KGB advised the PDPA, with noticeable Marxist language, that "the consolidation of the new forces joined in 'Parcham' and 'Khalq'…to defend the interests of *workers, peasants*, and all the *working sections* of Afghan society…would be well in accord with the interests of strengthening the national independence of the county."[122] The PDPA under Taraki was unable to reconcile their desire for a socialist

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[118] 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, Wilson Center Digital Archive.
[119] Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 99. Leake explains how the PDPA's coup was viewed by the Soviets as a part of the natural progression towards a socialism and a communist state. Leake explains the coup "provide[d] a key rational for the Politburo's acceptance of the PDPA's 1978 rise to power and their willingness to frame it as more than a coup."
[120] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 40-41. Leake provides a useful explanation on the divergence of Soviet and American prospectives regarding state-making. Leake explains that Soviet scholars believed Afghanistan had created a national market through a system of local markets, a sign they evolved through feudal stages of economic development into a somewhat capitalist society. Because of this, Afghanistan was "ripe for revolution, and to turn socialist.
[121] Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 39
[122]KGB, "Top Secret Attachment, by KGB cipher Kabul" Emphasis Added

state with the beliefs shared by the tribal factions, and the civil war raged on. It was not until Hafizullah Amin assassinated Taraki, that the Politburo feared they wore losing control of Afghanistan. Amin's more aggressive reforms drove the country deeper into violence. Even more concerning on behalf of the Politburo was the potential that Amin could be working as an agent for the CIA, attempting to undermine Soviet influence on the PDPA.[123] No longer willing to risk Afghanistan's instability, the PDPA's defeat at the hands of the tribal factions – who had declared a Jihad in an effort to ensure modernization of Afghanistan into an Islamic State, the Politburo was compelled to act.

The Politburo's decision to invade Afghanistan in 1979 was not merely an opportunity for the Soviet Union to create another SSR, in fact it stemmed from uncertainty regarding Afghanistan's modernization, and the foundation upon which it would occur. As the prospect of the Afghanistan becoming an SSR was threatened by civil war and the emergence of Hafizullah Amin, the Soviet Union intervened on behalf of the PDPA in an effort to legitimize Afghanistan's nationhood by supporting the state, one which they knew was unstable. Aware that their overt military operation would face backlash from world leaders around the globe, the Politburo still felt it necessary to intervene.[124] Their invasion was a sign that they had lost control of the situation in Afghanistan and that their clandestine operations had failed. It was also a sign that the Politburo believed more explicit means of influence were necessary to respond to the PDPA's modernization efforts. The PDPA's fusion of Islamism with socialism resulted in the Politburo's hesitancy to support the group as a rising communist nation. The Politburo's overall

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[123] Bearden and Risen, *The Main Enemy*, 215 is one of numerous sources which discusses potential that Amin worked for the CIA. This accusation has never been confirmed and according to some sources, the CIA was surprised to learn of this idea. Most of the suspicion surrounding Amin stemmed from the fact that he attended Columbia University for four years.

[124] CC CPSU, "Excerpt from Politburo Meeting on Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan", March 18, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive,

distrust of the PDPA, combined with their inability to convince the PDPA to mitigate the civil war, which had reached a boiling point under Taraki's regime ultimately resulted in a failure of the Politburo's clandestine efforts to control Afghanistan's modernization, and subsequently compelled the Politburo to commit Soviet military to forces to invade Afghanistan.

Are they Really Communist?

The Politburo's intervention into Afghanistan predated that of the USG. Soviet ratification of Friendship Treaties with Afghanistan established a foundation of cooperation upon which the Politburo could incrementally increase their influence on the developing nation of Afghanistan. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, David Newsom urged President Carter to act and "reverse the current Soviet Trend and presence in Afghanistan."[125] As the period of détente emerged in the late 1960s, the USG and the Politburo continued to press forward with increasing their influence in emerging nations, but both did so through more clandestine means to maintain the façade of détente. While there was no formal agreement recognized between the United States and the Soviet Union, the rhetoric produced during countless diplomatic meetings and correspondence between the two hegemons resulted in the establishment of a new status quo for newly independent nations in the post-colonial period. Both the USG and Politburo agreed, albeit unofficially, to allow emerging nations to choose their own path to modernization.[126]

Of course, the USG and Politburo understood the choice as bi-polar – they believed each nation had the choice to conform to either socialism or capitalism and would naturally align to its

[125] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 144
[126] "Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe Final Act" (Helsinki, 1975) https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf

appropriate hegemon. Since the beginning of the post-colonial era, Afghanistan had played both sides and gained a superfluous amount of aid from both the USG and the Politburo. As the Kingdom of Afghanistan transitioned into the Republic of Afghanistan, and the PDPA's socialist influence became more prominent, it seemed likely to both hegemons that Afghanistan would eventually align more towards the Soviet Union. However, although the Politburo had gained the initiative, the rise of the PDPA and their seizure of power in 1978 shook the Politburo's confidence and complicated the Politburo's advantage.

One of the major problems with covert relationships, like the one shared between the KGB and the PDPA, is that nothing legally binds either party to act in the interest of the other party. Though the Politburo had established influence on Taraki and the PDPA, they lacked the authority to dictate their actions.[127] While PDPA aligned more towards communism and the Soviet Union, Taraki was technically free to act as he pleased. The Politburo soon realized that while they attempted to balance détente with their desire to gain influence in Afghanistan, their clandestine operations rendered limited success because of their lack of authority.

This realization first materialized when the PDPA executed its coup without informing the Politburo.[128] Soviet officials, hoping to maintain their close ties with the Afghan government, immediately congratulated the PDPA on their rise to power, and reaffirmed their intent to guide

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[127] Even though Afghanistan and the Soviet Union entered into two friendship treaties, both the Daoud and Taraki Regimes continued to leverage its official unalignment to receive aid from both the United States and the Soviet Union. See Alexander Puzanov, "About the Domestic Political Situation in the DRA," Political Letter from USSR Ambassador to Afghanistan to Soviet Foreign Ministry, May 31, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/political-letter-ussr-ambassador-afghanistan-puzanov-soviet-foreign-ministry-about

[128] Whther or not the Politburo was aware of the exact timing of the PDPA's coup is unclear. Arnold's *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, suggests that based on dated correspondence, the Politburo officially recognized the new Afghanistan on March 30th, a day before the PDPA, itself, officially declared its institution. Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 39 argues that the PDPA did not inform the Politburo of the exact date of the coup. It is likely KGB agents within the PDPA were going to aid the coup, but the coup was executed early because Daoud imprisoned Amin and Taraki.

the PDPA in governing their people. During Taraki's first visit to Moscow, Breznev praised the PDPA's revolution and claimed in his official statement that the politburo was "sincerely happy that the Afghan people have succeeded in defending the revolution and the revolutionary achievements from all internal and international predators within such a short period."[129] In a letter from the Soviet Ambassador to the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, the ambassador suggested the Politburo blame Daoud and remarked that it was important to speak of the PDPA's coup favorably. The ambassador wrote: "Daoud's departure from the programmatic declaration of 1973, which led to a constant growth in the dissatisfaction of broad strata of the population…led to an abrupt sharpening of the contradictions between the Daoud regime and its class supporters and the fundamental interests of the working masses, the voice of which is the PDPA." The ambassador went on to explain his conversation with the new Afghan leader: "Taraki said that Afghanistan, following Marxism-Leninism, will set off on the path of building socialism and will belong to the socialist camp."[130] The ambassador clearly believed PDPA's rise to power would benefit the Soviet Union. The ambassador, however, also expressed caution in fully embracing the PDPA as a potential SSR due to the Islamic undertones in Taraki's rhetoric.[131]

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[129] CC CPSU, "Information about the visit of the Afghan party and state delegation, headed by Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Nur Mohamed Taraki to the USSR", December 4, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Diplomatic Archive, Sofia, Opis 35, File 335. Translated by Assistant Professor Kalina Bratanova; Edited by Dr. Jordan Baev. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group.

[130] CC CPSU "Political Letter from USSR Ambassador to Afghanistan A. Puzanov to Soviet Foreign Ministry, "About the Domestic Political Situation in the DRA," (notes)", May 31, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Based on notes taken by Odd Arne Westad on materials at the Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD), fond (f.) 5, opis (op.) 75, delo (d.) 1179, listy (ll.) 2-17
https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113255

[131] Puzanov mentions in the telegram how Taraki and Amin claim there is no major violence stemming from the Khalq reforms. Puzanov, having reliable intelligence that violence is growing, expresses his distrust of both Taraki and Amin

Taraki's undeniable Islamic influence likely worried the Politburo for two reasons. First, the Soviet Union failed to maintain positive relationships with the Muslim world in the decades following the Second World War.[132] Second, the Islamic Revolution instilled fear in both the USG and the Politburo that there would emerge a single Islamic State, a notion which threatened American and Soviet hegemony in the region.[133] In a letter from the Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan, Alexander Puzanov to the Soviet Ministry in 1978, Puzanov expressed his concern that, "The Afghan leadership is not showing haste in concluding economic agreements with the west." Puzanov's letter went on to suggest the Ministry send "a large group of advisors and consultants" to develop plans to expedite the severing of Afghanistan's ties with the west.[134] Despite the Politburo's efforts, Taraki and the PDPA continued to play both sides, accruing aid from both the USG and the Politburo.

When the PDPA seized power during the Saur Revolution, the Politburo started to doubt the success of their clandestine operations to influence the government. While the PDPA's socialist tendencies seemed a promising indication of Afghanistan's movement towards an official alignment to the Soviet Union, their unwillingness to immediately sever ties with the West, and their seemingly cavalier approach to seizing power from Daoud, the Politburo started to realize that controlling the PDPA would require aggressive means. Nevertheless, the Politburo was unwilling to risk détente by explicitly intervening in Afghanistan's unaligned status. Additionally, the Politburo was willing to work with what they believed was an impressionable administration – a gross misunderstanding which would rapidly materialize in the months following the PDPA's rise to power.

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[132] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 144
[133] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 30-41, 144-146
[134] CC CPSU, "About the Domestic Political Situation in the DRA"

Their Own Agenda

Taraki and the rest of the PDPA decided to overthrow Daoud and the government of the Republic of Afghanistan because they were unsatisfied with Daoud's inability to enact the reforms that had gained him support leading up to his seizure of power in 1973. Daoud had been characterized by the PDPA as a leader who had failed to live up to their expectations, while his administration preferred the perks of their position rather than using their position to enact change. Taraki, in his first speech to the masses following the PDPA's coup referred to Daoud as "anti-democratic and anti-national."[135] U.S. foreign correspondent Selig Harrison, who maintained a close relationship with Taraki, interviewed multiple members of the PDPA who noted that "while Daoud himself lived an austere life, corruption charges against his intimates, some of them related to aid transactions, cast a pall over his regime."[136]

The bloody coup ousted Daoud, assassinating him and multiple government officials in the process. Taraki emerged from the revolution as the new leader of Afghanistan. Close by his side was his cousin, Hafizullah Amin. Together, Taraki and Amin headed the one-party, autocratic government in the newly established Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). The DRA initially held support in most of the urban centers in Afghanistan, especially through their public assertion that they did not desire to institute a communist regime in the country. Taraki ensured the masses that his government would rid Afghanistan of its past colonial aggressors and remain non-aligned, while pursuing "positive and active neutrality."[137] Amin reiterated this sentiment in one of his first speeches as Foreign Minister he claimed, "The position of the

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[135] Kabul Times, "Remnants of Monarchy Wiped," Vol. XVII, No. 32, May 4th, 1978. Photo of article taken from Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 47.
[136] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 22-23
[137] Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 44-45. Leake explains the PDPA "was a party of contradictions" in that it "promised to transform Afghan politics, economics, and society…but lacked the mechanisms to do so."

socialist countries is identical to that of the nonaligned countries on many issues…The socialist countries support the position of the nonaligned nations." While maintaining that the "socialist countries," did not include Afghanistan, Amin went as far as to claim that the PDPA desire to "encourage private enterprise and has no plans to collectivize agriculture."[138] However, Amin's message was likely crafted to provide the illusion of non-alignment. In Taraki's first radio broadcast, the new leader outlined his plan which included, "economic reform, including fixed prices, land reform and reclamation…state control of natural resources…free health services."[139] While it was clear that Taraki hoped to instill tenets of socialism into his push towards a new age of Afghan modernity, his speech was full of contradictions which worried the Politburo. Politburo officials, who in retrospect found themselves wholly uneducated on Islam, found themselves wondering if Taraki would be able to reconcile Islam with his new socialist reforms.[140] Yuri Andropov, who in 1982 succeeded Breznev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, expressed his reservations in a Politburo meeting in 1979 stating, "It is completely clear to us that Afghanistan is not ready at this time to resolve all of the issues it faces through socialism. The Economy is backward, the Islamic religion predominates, and nearly all of the rural population is illiterate."[141] Taraki's most radical reforms soon answered the Politburo's questions, but it was not the answer they had hoped for.

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[138] Thomas Lippman, "Leftist Afghan Regime Seen Trying to Obscure Soviet Tie," *Washington Post,* February 23, 1979. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/02/23/leftist-afghan-regime-seen-trying-to-obscure-soviet-tie/8a0f09e5-eb07-4b56-8335-4c8b1dbb62ae/
[139] Taraki cited by Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 46.
[140] Gates, *Ghost Wars*, 41
[141] CC CPSU "Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," March 17, 1979, National Security Archivwe, Washington, DC.

In the rural areas of the country, most of the tribal factions remained indifferent to the regime change, as was typical throughout the previous regime turnovers.[142] The placid environment, however, did not last. After purging the administration of their Parcham rivals, Taraki and Amin consolidated their control over the PDPA, enabling the cousins to institute radical socialist reform across the country. Though Taraki had promised to build his reforms maintaining the "utmost respect of the Holy Islamic Religion," some of his promised social reforms went against the traditional Islamic values. In the same radio speech, Taraki noted his intent for the "democratisation of social life…equal rights for women, universal education, a progressive national cultural system."[143] Though Amin had reassured Afghans the PDPA had no intent on collectivizing agriculture, multiple land reforms indirectly contributed towards collectivization.[144] Rural landowners and Mullahs (many of which were one in the same) were able to largely circumvent these reforms by claiming adherence to the reforms as a cardinal sin, but the PDPA's slight towards the rural tribes did not go unnoticed. Leaders across the tribal factions began to spread the news of the "godless" PDPA government which they believed was a Soviet puppet no better than previous colonial powers who had attempted to control the Muslim people.[145] Eventually, the PDPA enacted full-fledged land reclamation and redistribution, effectively undermining any sort of feudal power the tribal landowners maintained in the countryside. The PDPA's political reforms were just the beginning of a deepening rift between

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[142] CIA, "Communism versus Tribalism." The intelligence estimate mentions that the tribal factions in Afghanistan have consistently shown a distrust of a central authority and have commonly viewed any type of central authority as illegitimate. When necessary, the tribal factions have taken up arms to combat such authorities, but have only done so until they have been permitted to return to their previous way of life.
[143] Taraki cited by Leake, *Afghan Crucible*, 46.
[144] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan,* 31. *The* first reforms limited land holdings to five acres and "enabled tenant farmers to escape from the vicious circle of ever-compounding mortgage debt on their land."
[145] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan,* 31 mentions the Mullahs characterization of the PDPA has Godless. Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 59-61, mentions the tribal elders' understanding of the PDPA as a Soviet puppet.

the tribal factions and the new government, a rift which would quickly evolve into a perceptible hatred.

Though the PDPA's political and economic reforms were an inconvenience to the tribal factions, it was the PDPA's social reforms that enflamed tensions into a violent Civil War. Known as the Khalqi reforms, Taraki's radical changes resulted in widespread violence and rebellion by the tribal factions outside of Kabul. The most radical reforms were those which sought to provide women equal rights to men. Taraki declared the sexes equal and placed stringent regulations on marriage processes. The reforms limited the "bride's dowry" and declared it to be paid to the bride, rather than her father. Divorce was legalized, and the PDPA set a minimum age for marriage in an attempt to give women more choices. Taraki also advocated for increasing the literacy amongst women, enabling more women to attend university and to hold higher positions in the government.[146] The reforms had varying degrees of success as the PDPA largely lacked the mechanisms to follow-through on many of their promises. However, the effectiveness of the reforms was irrelevant. Instead, it was the tribal faction's unwillingness to reconcile these "sinful" changes with their traditional beliefs.[147]

The Politburo immediately recognized the correlation between Taraki's reforms and the spread of violence in the countryside. Politburo appeals to Taraki and Amin are found consistently throughout previously classified and secret Politburo documents. As early as 1974, shortly after the PDPA endorsed Daoud for their leader following his coup, General Secretary

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[146] See Riedel, *What We Won,* 16-17; Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 30-33,39; and Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 56-60. The "bride's dowry" was a fee paid by the husband to the bride's father. Traditionally, the dowry had come to symbolize the purity and status of the bride (a higher dowry meant a higher status and more spirituality). The Khalqi reforms limited the dowry to give women more choices. Interestingly, Leake contends that although the PDPA was attempting to elevate women to an equal footing to men, the reforms largely had the opposite effect. Leake mentions the reforms were lauded by women's groups in the city, but opposed by both men and women in the countryside.

[147] Coll, *Ghost Wars,* 40

Breznev sent a telegram to the leaders of the PDPA – Taraki and Amin – imploring "all progressive forces guided by the interests of the country and the people should throw aside [illegible] and combine their efforts…only joint [illegible] of all progressive and patriotic forces can bring success in this crucial period for Afghanistan."[148] In the wake of the Saur Revolution, the Soviet Ambassador expressed his concerns to the Politburo, explaining that, "The coming to power of the PDPA and its actions were met with approval by the peoples' masses… At the same time the internal reaction, while so far not deciding on an open demonstration, is activating underground efforts…the friction between the Khalq and Parcham factions is having a negative influence."[149] When the Ambassador approached Taraki and Amin directly on the infighting, both individuals refuted the claim. Taraki ensured the ambassador, "The Party is united, and its unity is becoming ever stronger," then provided a small caveat, "but as to those who will demonstrate against unity, we will crush them as if with a steamroller. Such measures will only strengthen the Party."[150] Concern was growing among the ranks of the Politburo, but even more so in the ranks of the KGB officials who had worked in Afghanistan for years. Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB in 1979, recognized the violence as a threat to Afghanistan's post-revolution stability. The Politburo considered the option of a Soviet invasion off the table, and therefore the KGB carried the full burden of responsibility for the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. Andropov warned the Politburo during a secret meeting that "under no circumstances can we lose Afghanistan."[151]

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[148] CC CPSU, "An Appeal to the Leaders of the PDPA Groups 'Parcham' and 'Khalq'", January 8, 1974, Wilson Center Digital Archive, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/decree-secretariat-cc-cpsu-appeal-leaders-pdpa-groups-parcham-and-khalq

[149] Alexander Puzanov, "About the Domestic Political Situation in the DRA,:

[150] CC CPSU, "Record of Conversation, Soviet Ambassador A.M. Puzanov and Taraki", June 18, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Notes of O.A. Westad.

[151] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 40-41

Taraki and Amin continued to pushback on Politburo and KGB appeals to end the mass repressions. In numerous meetings Taraki justified his reforms by alleging Parcham groups were responsible for anti-government activities and were supporting the tribal rebellion in the countryside. Taraki showed no remorse, in a meeting with Politburo officials, Taraki revealed, "Even before the revolution we did not trust "Parcham…the union with the Parchamists was strictly a formality."[152] Taraki claimed the Parcham faction had little to no role in the PDPA's rise to power. In a surprise move, Taraki ejected Babrak Karmal from his position as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. After relegating Karmal to a lowly post as the Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Taraki eventually relieved him of all duties, a move which the Politburo criticized.[153] After Taraki's dismissal of Karmal, whom the Politburo favored because of his moderate views on the Parcham/Khalq rivalry, the Politburo started to think Taraki and Amin may not be the impressionable duo they had once believed, a fact which became undeniable as Taraki continued his cavalier actions.

Rather than adhere to the Soviet appeals, the PDPA Taraki and Amin responded with widespread violence of their own. Foreign correspondent Selig Harrison described how Taraki used his secret police force headed by his nephew, Assadullah Amin to "launch a ruthless campaign of repression against his suspected opponents." Taking advantage of his one-party autocratic system, Taraki subjected his opponents to unfair trials resulting in widespread executions or imprisonment in the notorious Pul-i-charki prison.[154] Using the army, Taraki enforced his agricultural collectivization efforts by deploying the army into rural towns to seize

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[152] CC CPSU, "Information from CC CPSU to GDR leader Erich Honecker", October 13, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive,

[153] CC CPSU "Record of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan A.M. Puzanov and Taraki", July 18, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive; and CC CPSU, "Minutes from Conversation between Babrak Karmal and the Head of the Diplomatic Protocol Tucek", September 12, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive.

[154] Cordovez and Harrison, *Our Of Afghanistan,* 31

the lands owned by tribal elders and Mullahs.[155] When soldiers entered villages and could not discern who was in charge, they punished the entire village. Taraki's soldiers burnt crops and destroyed livestock. Taraki claimed to his administration that he was "following Lenin's example," and that "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."[156] In one particular instance, and surely it was not the only example, Taraki's men "massacred a thousand unarmed men in the village of Kerala in the Kunar Valley in retribution for resistance."[157] News of the Kerala Massacre and other atrocities spread throughout Afghanistan and the PDPA quickly became the target of not only the tribal factions in Afghanistan, but the enemy of a global Islamic community.

In response, the tribal factions ramped up their insurgency. Having inhabited the lands that Taraki's troops seldom explored, the men fighting for their freedom from Taraki's oppression, the Mujahideen attacked logistical chokepoints and small units who were unaccustomed to operating in the austere environment provided by the Hindu Kush Mountains. Armed with World War I era weapons and some small, improvised explosives, the Mujahideen launched quick hit-and-run attacks before disappearing into the mountains.[158] Though their initial attacks inflicted minimal damage, they enraged Taraki and cast more doubt amongst members of the Politburo regarding the PDPA's ability to control the country. More importantly, the attacks instigated even more severe attacks by Taraki's army to the point where the PDPA and the Soviet Union were identified by the Mujahideen as enemy of Islam.

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[155] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 40
[156] Gates, *From the Shadows,* 41
[157] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 64. The Soviet Union denied the allegations but eye witness accounts emerged over the next decade.
[158] For an analysis on Mujahideen tactics and the Soviet response, see Lester Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, (Washington D.C. : National Defense University Press, 1998

Ismail Khan, a prominent figure in the uprising in the city of Herat declared Jihad against the PDPA and the "communist usurpers" in early 1979.[159] Khan's call to Jihad was but one of numerous similar calls by factional leaders in the countryside. The martial culture imbedded in traditional Islamic culture transcended Afghanistan's borders. Soon, freedom fighters began pouring into the mountainous regions of Afghanistan, or settled in the remote mountains across the border in Pakistan. Many of these fighters not only blended in with the hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees, but many were in-fact recruited , and joined from, the refugee groups.[160] Before long, Taraki and the PDPA were facing a much larger, more passionate enemy – one seeking retribution in the name of their God. The violence was impressive. CIA reports detail stories of rebel fighters hunting down PDPA members *and* their Russian counterpart political advisors. According to the reports, Khan and his followers "hunted down and hacked to death more than a dozen Russian communist political advisers, as well as their wives and children. The rebels displayed the Russian corpses on pikes along shaded city streets."[161] The Soviets, who were reluctant to support the PDPA's atrocities, sought retribution for the attack on their men. Russian bombers flew out of Kabul and subsequently killed upwards of 20,000 Afghan civilians in the city of Herat.

The situation in Afghanistan had spiraled into pure chaos. Taraki and Amin were unwilling to compromise with the Parcham factions and despite repeated calls from the Politburo to do so, they refused to repeal the reforms. Afghanistan was being torn apart and the PDPA was unable to quell the increasing violence. The Politburo sought the help of former Soviet official Alexei Kosygin to try to convince Taraki to end the violence, but it was too late. Taraki admitted,

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[159] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 40
[160] Darryl Li, *Universal Enemy*, 14-16
[161] Coll quoting Gates' unpublished version of *From the Shadows*, 40

"the situation is bad and getting worse, [Herat] was almost wholly under the influence of Shiite Slogans."[162] As the PDPA lost its power and control over Afghanistan, so too did the Politburo. Though the Politburo had been correct to refrain from investing their full trust and confidence in the PDPA, they had established themselves in the eyes of the Mujahideen as collaborators, and became the target of not only their insurgency, but also the target of a global Jihad.

The Final Straw

While Taraki and the PDPA rapidly lost control of the country, his cousin Hafizullah Amin had been quietly consolidating his power as his second-in-command. Afghanistan's deteriorating situation had not only resulted in the Politburo's diminishing confidence in the PDPA, but it also instilled in Amin an overwhelming feeling of uneasiness regarding his cousin's ability to rule the country. The Politburo, having disproved of Taraki's reforms and questioned his inconsistent rhetoric regarding socialism, still believed Taraki could emerge as a viable figurehead, one they could influence to create a socialist state. Unfortunately for the Politburo, Amin had had enough. On September 14th, 1979 Amin seized power from his cousin, imprisoned him, and subsequently executed him less than a month later. The Politburo, unwilling to place the future of Afghanistan in the wildcard Amin's hands, viewed Amin's actions as the final straw, it decided it was time to intervene to ensure they could continue to control the country.

In the months leading up to the Soviet invasion, Taraki remained in Kabul where he received daily reports detailing the growing insurgency and his dwindling forces who were defecting in significant numbers to support the tribal factions' insurgency. He spent most of his time on the phone as he constantly appealed to the Politburo for help dealing with the violent

[162] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 40

Civil War.[163] The situation in Herat, one of the largest cities in Afghanistan and where the revolution began, was exceptionally telling of the situation throughout the country. In a phone conversation between Taraki and Politburo member Alexei Kosygin, Taraki stated that he believed the city was likely to fall without Soviet intervention. Kosygin suggested Taraki rally the workers and others willing to support the PDPA, but Taraki responded that there were very few workers in Herat and claimed "There is no active support on the part of the population. It is almost wholly under the influence of Shiite slogans."[164] The situation in Herat was indicative of a much larger problem – the PDPA was not supported by enough people in the country to maintain control. The majority of the population preferred to side with the traditional Islamists instead of the PDPA and the Soviet Union. The conversation between Kosygin and Taraki then took an even darker, more desperate tone. Taraki demanded that the Politburo "extend practical and technical assistance, involving people and arms." Kosygin, unwilling commit Soviet military forces to fight on behalf of the PDPA offered to send weapons and tanks instead. Taraki informed Kosygin that the PDPA would have to recruit and train "pupils and eleventh and twelfth grade secondary school students." Seeking an alternative, Taraki suggested the Politburo send in ununiformed troops using unmarked vehicles, a request Kosygin also denied.[165] The Politburo, at this juncture, refused to send conventional Soviet military forces in to the country for a number of reasons. First, they believed overt military intervention on behalf of the PDPA

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[163] CC CPSU, "Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Discussions on Afghanistan", March 17, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD, f. 89, per. 25 dok.1, ll. 1, 12-25. The notes from the meeting discuss Afghan Army defections, specifically that of an entire artillery regiment, entire infantry regiment, and enough troops from the Afghan Army's 17th Division to result in its entire collapse. Defection ran rampant in the Afghan Army, especially considering a large portion of the army was made up of the lower and middle class Parcham factions.
[164] CC CPSU, "Telephone Conversation between Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin and Afghan Premier Nur Mohammed Taraki", March 18, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive,
[165] CC CPSU, "Telephone Conversation between Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin and Afghan Premier Nur Mohammed Taraki",

would threaten détente and their credibility in the international community writ large. In Alexander Puzanov notes of a conversation with Taraki, Puzanov highlighted Taraki's account of a conversation he had with Deputy Secretary of State of the USG, David Newsom. Taraki mentioned to Puzanov that Newsom was "concern[ed] about the one-sided orientation in the foreign policy of the DRA."[166] continued dealing with a growing Civil War, Hafizullah Amin had been secretly consolidating his power and authority , Amin modified some of the Khalqi reforms to try and quell the rebellion, but did so to no avail.[167] Seeking help, Amin solicited aid offers from both the United States and the Soviet Union, leading both sides to label Amin as an agent of the opposing side.[168] As the revolt spread and the situation deteriorated, the Soviets were no longer willing to risk losing control of the Soviet-leaning government to the wildcard Amin. The Soviets finally decided to act and in a top-secret meeting between Soviet leadership in December of 1979, producing the document authorizing the use of military force to secure Afghanistan.[169] The Politburo's decision to intervene manifested on Christmas Eve in 1979 when they authorized military forces to intervene into Afghanistan – a decision which ignited a decade-long conflict between the Soviet military and the CIA-backed Mujahideen freedom fighters.

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[166] CC CPSU, "Record of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan A.M. Puzanov and Taraki", July 18, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Notes of O.A. Westad, TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 75, d. 1181, ll. 36-40
[167] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan* Pg 31-33.
[168] Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 42-44; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 46-50;
[169] "Transcript of CPSU CC Politburo Discussions on Afghanistan" December 12, 1979 and "Directive No 312/12/001 of December 24, 1979" (Wilson Center Digital Archive: March 17, 1979) Record Number 113675 and 11784. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113260

Conclusion

The Politburo wrestled with the decision to invade Afghanistan for months. While the Politburo promulgated the façade of détente, they largely did so while executing clandestine operations in support of the battle between capitalism and communism. Meanwhile, Afghanistan's modernization in the post-colonial era presented a new dilemma to the hegemons – a possible third method of modernization – one founded in Islam. The PDPA, while it proclaimed respect towards traditional Islamic tenets, gained the Politburo's preference because of their socialist tendencies. When the PDPA rose to power in the 1970s and seized control of the government from Daoud, the Politburo continued to support the group under the auspice that their influence could guide the nation towards forming an SSR. It is through Afghanistan's modernization that the Politburo found itself compelled to take the side of the state. Further, Politburo officials justified their support of the PDPA as the state authority by using their own modernization template and applying it to the PDPA's revolution and rise to power. As Civil War raged and made it seem as though the state was heading towards failure, the Politburo decided it was necessary to support the state through direct military intervention. Their decision would remain the topic of Politburo debate for the next decade as the Politburo tried to balance the immense costs of their intervention with their flailing economy and international criticism for their military action.

The Politburo's intervention into Afghanistan was indicative of global imperialism and ongoing colonialism during the so-called post-colonial era. Though the United States and the Soviet Union officially recognized developing nations' right to self-determine, both hegemons continued to influence these nations through aid in the form of funding, equipment, and personnel. These contributions were likely not the result of a general selflessness or eagerness to

help, but more efforts to establish the developing nations' dependence on the hegemon in an attempt to gain control. While multiple nations adhered to the bi-polar world order and opted for capitalism or communism, the Afghan people sought their own way. It is clear that the Politburo believed they would be able exploit the Third World nation to their benefit. It was only when they realized they would be unable to do through their covert methods, that they felt compelled to invade.

The Politburo used both conventional and special military forces during their military intervention into Afghanistan. Conventional units of infantry, tanks, and supporting aircraft were deployed to fight the insurgency in the countryside, while special forces Spetznaz units seized government and administration buildings, executed Amin and his team, and installed their preferred leader, Babrak Karmal as the new leader of the PDPA. Unable to discern enemy insurgents from civilians, the Soviet military forces often killed civilians and destroyed civilians' homes. Over the course of the next decade, Soviet forces would ebb and flow in response to insurgent activity. As frustration grew, so did the level of violence and indiscriminate killing. The Politburo found itself on the receiving end of a universal enemy, the Mujahideen. As Jihad forces continued to pour into the countryside, Soviet casualties continued to accumulate. Unwilling to capitulate, the Politburo resorted to widescale bombing, killing both Mujahideen and countless civilians. This continued until the first Stinger attack occurred in 1986. The introduction of the Stinger to the battlefield eliminated the Soviet Military advantage, ultimately compelling the Politburo to determine that the juice in Afghanistan was not worth the squeeze. The Politburo eventually abandoned the PDPA as they withdrew over the ironically named Friendship Bridge towards the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the Politburo's decision was made after millions of individuals, both combatant and non-combatant, were killed, wounded, or made

refugees. The Mujahideen, a force of impoverished tribal fighters living in mud huts, brought arguably one of the most powerful militaries in the world to its knees. How was this possible? The Mujahideen found support from the USG – the world's other hegemon – who also sought to control Afghanistan's modernization and did so by compounding casualties and costs to both the Mujahideen and the Soviet Union.

The Politburo's comprehensive undertaking to gain influence in the Afghan government was rooted in Orientalist notions which characterized Third World Afghanistan as too underdeveloped and primitive to reach modernity. However, the Politburo believed they could better maintain their grasp on Afghanistan's future by supporting the PDPA. Therefore, the Politburo justified their support of the PDPA and Afghanistan's modernity by claiming the diversity of the rural Afghan groups created a legitimate form of competition to justify a market-economy. The Politburo, already weary of the PDPA, flexed some of the concepts of high modernism to make them fit the Afghan model in hopes that their support would render the country as a future SSR. In the process of supporting the volatile PDPA, the Politburo found itself unable to maintain control of the extreme Parchamite leadership. As the PDPA's reforms drove the country deeper into civil war, the Politburo intervened claiming they were doing so at the request of the PDPA. Considering the Politburo's execution of Amin, it is likely the Politburo's decision to intervene was in fact a means to maintain stability in the country and justify their own claims that Afghanistan was a modern state.

Chapter 3: The USG supports a Capitalist State…or a failed one.

"I warned them, Mr. President, that when the press comes, it will seem like an invasion, and not to worry about it," an unknown voice quipped. President Reagan, wearing a brown suit and sitting cross-legged on the Victorian-style chair in the Oval Office let out an awkward laugh and joked, "without Ak-47s." Seemingly short on translators, the Mujahideen leaders uncomfortably laughed, likely not knowing what was said or why it was funny. The President went on to explain to the Freedom Fighter sitting beside him, Burhanuddin Rabbani, that they had to wait to begin the meeting until all of the press had arrived. Rabbani, paired with what looks like the only translator in the room, stoically nods his head and acknowledges the joke, he did not laugh. The sound of camera shutters filled the room for the next three to four minutes, but they were still not enough to prevent the uneasiness and awkwardness the meeting between the leader of one of the wealthiest countries in the world and the leaders of so-called Third World tribal leaders.[170]

The meeting took place in 1986, the same year the USG agreed to allow the CIA to arm the Mujahideen with Stinger Missiles. By now the conflict in Afghanistan was seven years old. The Mujahideen started as an under-armed, ill-equipped insurgency, but had swelled to tens of thousands of Islamic fighters from all over the Muslim world. During the short meeting which lasted only minutes, President Reagan assured the Mujahideen leaders of the USG's solidarity and support for their right for self-determination.[171] Though the USG intended to expand the program which funded the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union, the President's claims were not

[170] "Photo Op. President Reagan Meeting with Freedom Fighters from Afghanistan" (Mujahideen) Oval Office. Reaganlibrary.gov, Tape number 536, collection reference WHTV 1981-1989, Washington DC
[171] "Photo Op. President Reagan Meeting with Freedom Fighters from Afghanistan"

entirely genuine. In less than three years later, after the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, the USG ended the program, having accomplished their mission of undermining the Soviet Military, communism, and perpetuating the Afghan Civil War to try and prove to the world that only the United States and nation-state capitalism could provide a legitimate means to modernity.

While the PDPA and the Politburo continued to lose their grasp on the country and the civil war threatened to turn Afghanistan into a failed state, the USG and the CIA were considering their options to respond to Afghanistan's Soviet tilt. Like the Politburo, the USG wanted to avoid the formation of an Islamic State as it threatened their ability to influence the region. The United States' dependency on oil, made especially clear during the 1979 Oil Crisis, meant that losing their access to the region was, in the USG's opinion, simply not an option.[172]

Unlike the Politburo, the USG did not have to compromise concepts of high modernism to justify their intervention. In fact, not only did the USG refuse to recognize a communist Afghanistan a legitimate modern nation, but they also had no intention of recognizing any sort of modern Afghanistan, unless of course it adhered to western-capitalist methods. Therefore, their initial plans likely sought to perpetuate conflict and ultimately render a destabilized state – one which they could control after the Soviet withdrawal. However, there were a number of factors which complicated the USG's decision to intervene. First, despite the fact that détente was becoming more of an illusion than an actual easing of tensions between the USG and the Politburo, the USG still wanted to avoid any action that could further stoke tensions with the Soviet Union. Second, while the PDPA solicited aid from both the USG and the Politburo, the

[172] Bacevich, *War for the Greater Middle East*, 1-14. For 1979 Oil Crisis see Philip Verleger, Arthur Okun, Robert Lawrence, Christopher Sims, Robert Hall, and William Nordhaus "The U.S. Petroleum Crisis of 1979." Brookings Papers on Economic Activity 1979, no. 2 (1979): 463–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/2534392.

Politburo had already nested itself comfortably in the PDPA's administration, which left only the tribal factions as an option for the USG to support. Third, while the KGB had been working diligently for decades to gain influence in Afghanistan, the CIA had recently felt the wrath of congressional inquiries, leaving them severely weakened in their ability to execute clandestine operations.[173]

The Civil War raging throughout the Afghan countryside provided the USG with what they believed was a unique opportunity to undermine the PDPA, the Politburo and any notion of modernization founded on Islam, a means that the CIA believed was too primitive. The CIA believed they could leverage the tribal factions to accomplish this trifecta, and do so clandestinely as to not provoke any retributive acts by the Politburo. While the Politburo was consumed by dealing with the uncontrollable PDPA led by Taraki, and further consumed with the fact that their own officials were being rounded up and hacked to death by warring tribesman, the CIA started to support the tribal factions. Labeling the Mujahideen as "freedom fighters," the CIA believed not only that their support could suck the Soviet Union into a Vietnam-style quagmire, but that if the Mujahideen were somehow successful, their inability to unite would prove that Islam was not a viable means to unify the country. It is likely that the CIA, with total indifference to the Afghan suffering that would result, simply desired to create havoc and instability in Afghanistan to undermine all the parties involved, thereby legitimizing US capitalism and the nation-state as the only credible means to modernization in the post-colonial era. The USG selected Operation Cyclone, the CIA's covert funding mission to the

[173] For more on the external criticism the CIA faced in the 1970s, see Dafydd Townley's *The Year of Intelligence in the United States: Public Opinion, National Security, and the 1975 Church Committee*, (Palgrave Madmillan : London, 2021). Townley provides an in-depth analysis on the 16-month period known as "the year of intelligence." This period thrust the intelligence community into the pubic-sphere, and how the committees resulted in a significant loss of confidence in the community. Subsequently, the Carter administration tightened oversight on the intelligence community.

Mujahideen, as means by which they would intervene in Afghanistan The operations capitalized on the secular tribal factions' ongoing insurgency, while taking into consideration détente and a weakened CIA.

Can They Fight?

At its onset, Operation Cyclone – the CIA's covert funding and arms program to the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan – had extremely limited objectives, stemming from the fact that "American officials, for their part, struggled to comprehend Afghanistan and its political and social dynamics."[174] The limited objectives resulted from a gross underestimate of the Mujahideen's fighting capability stemming from the USG's innate misunderstanding of non-western culture, specifically Orientalist views regarding the tribal factions in Afghanistan. The USG believed the tribal factions, and the rest of the Third World, were underdeveloped and primitive, lagging behind the rest of the world culturally, economically, and the technologically. Despite the fact that this belief was rooted in racial biases and western superiority, CIA intelligence estimates provided some validation to areas where Afghanistan trailed First World nations. One report found that the majority of the population in the 1980s, was "illiterate" and the tribal factions were described as "liv[ing] a hard life near subsistence level."[175] Even the most established tribes lived in networks of mud huts, commonly etched into the slope of a mountain. The report went on to describe Afghanistan as an "extremely poor, landlocked country that has never been effectively modernized…average annual per capita incomes [were] so low and from such primitive sources that they have not been calculated. The

[174] Leake, *Afghan Crucible,* 40
[175] CIA, "Tribalism Versus Communism in Afghanistan: The Cultural Roots of Instability" An Intelligence Assessment (1980) Classified. Collection: Office of the Chief of Staff Files; Series: Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files, Folder: Afghanistan, 1979-80; Container 33

mortality rate for the typical Afghan during the first five years of life is 40 percent…some 2 million…still are nomadic tribesman."[176] Afghanistan in the 1980s was by all *western* measures a desolate and barren landscape, populated by a passionate, pious people who needed very little to survive.

Though the same intelligence estimates made mention of the Afghan tribes' martial culture, they were still considered no match for any sort of modern force. The report reads, "each man is raised to take pride in his fighting ability. Indeed, the martial arts are taken so seriously that Pashtun boys do not play war games, but from a very early age are trained by their male elders in military skills such as stalking and the sue of arms…So engrained are these attitudes that today each generation still looks forward to major battle." However, the report goes on to claim that "they appear unable to come together without a strong figure having the political skill to contain their mutual competitiveness…The fighting men are joined not into a disciplined cohesive force but rather spontaneous formations of small, local lashkars (war parties)."[177] The assessment's allusion to war parties further illustrates how the CIA equated the Afghan tribal factions to Native American tribes in the 18th century. Though the CIA believed they had the ability and capacity to wage an insurgency, the CIA never believed the tribal factions had the potential, nor the desire, to put aside their differences and form an allied nation.

In the eyes of many in the USG and the CIA, the Mujahideen were a primitive fighting force who would only fight until they were left alone. Other CIA documents dated between 1978-1982 commonly referred to the Mujahideen as "loosely organized," "unreliable," and only capable of "harassing" the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.[178] One of the very first intelligence

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[176] CIA, "Tribalism Versus Communism in Afghanistan," Page 1
[177] CIA, "Tribalism Versus Communism," 6-10
[178] CIA, "The Soviet Presence in Afghanistan: Implications for the Regional Powers and the United States," National Intelligence Estimate, 1985, NIE11/37-85,

assessments produced on the Mujahideen's fighting capability in 1980 even compared the disorganized groups to mere "war parties" with "members motivated by…the exhilaration of the call to arms, the chance to even some old personal scores, and sheer banditry…the tribesman are far more likely to bring Afghanistan to anarchy, rather than to defeat or to impose their will upon Communist-controlled Kabul."[179] Thus, the CIA developed very limited goals for Operation Cyclone. Rather than pursuing a total Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the USG desired to "raise the costs to the Soviets and inflame Moslem opinion against them in many countries."[180] It was clear that the CIA was convinced the tribal factions would be incapable of filling the void in leadership if the Soviets were to withdraw. Seeing as though the CIA was willing to undertake funding and supporting the insurgency without any sort of long-term goal of elevating the Mujahideen to power, undoubtedly indicated the USG's sinister desire for Afghanistan, as an Islamic State, to fail. Even more telling indicators of this desire was found in the initial intelligence assessments which were produced after the civil war began. The reports continually mention the idea that the Mujahideen were unlikely to unite to form a larger coalition, one which could pose a legitimate contest to Soviet Military forces. One report claimed that despite the over 150,000 full time fighters present in Afghanistan, "the inevitable sluggishness and unevenness of the resistance logistic network, shortages in many needed items, food problems, and the fragmented nature of the war will probably cause these factors to increase resistance effectiveness only gradually. They will not confront the Soviets with a dramatic crisis or sharp deterioration of their military situation."[181] Even as tens of thousands of fighters had poured into

[179] CIA, *Tribalism*, 9
[180] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 145
[181] CIA, "Soviet Problems, Prospects, and Options in Afghanistan in the Next Year," Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, April, 1985, CREST Database, CIA-RDP09T00367R000300200001-3

Afghanistan to answer the call of Jihad, the CIA still maintained their doubts about the Mujahideen after years of insurgency.

The USG was reluctant in the early stages of the operation to provide what they believed was an unreliable and inconsistent resistance movement with an exorbitant number of arms and millions of dollars. Still, the intelligence community found the potential to distract the Soviets, by forcing them to deal with an insurgency, increasingly enticing. In a recently declassified memo from 1980, the CIA informed the Carter Administration that the Mujahideen had "achieved surprising success" and that "the Soviets were clearly concerned about the setbacks to the Afghan communist regime."[182] The operation was deemed worthwhile and began exclusively as "non-lethal and modest in size." During the first year, aid was capped somewhere in the range of $500,000 to $650,000 (all of which was spent in the first month) and an additional transfer of some basic communications equipment.[183] Funding for the program increased in 1980, increasing to roughly $30,000,000. Charles Cogan, chief of the CIA's Near East Division, maintained that even with the exponential expansion, his goal in 1979 and 1980 remained limited to "harassing the Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan."[184] When the Operation began to include arms shipments to the Mujahideen, hinting at a possible escalation in the program's objectives, it was clear there was no change in Cogan's desired outcome. Before the escalation, the USG compounded the obstacles faced by the disjointed fighting force with their reluctance to supply the Mujahideen with American-made weapons during the initial years of the operation. The USG made the deliberate decision to withhold American-made weapons in the case they would be found by Soviet troops. Rooted again in Orientalist thought, the CIA believed the

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[182] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 140
[183] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 149
[184] Charles Cogan. "Partners in Time: the CIA and Afghanistan since 1979," *World Policy Journal,* vol. 10, no. 2 (Summer 1993), 76

untrustworthy and violent tribal factions would abandon their insurgency and use the weapons against each other. In an effort to prevent any escalation of Cold War tensions with the Kremlin, the idea of supplying the Mujahideen with American weapons was initially off the table.

Unwilling to send the Mujahideen anything American made, the initial arms shipments contained British-made .303 Enfield Rifles.[185] These semi-automatic rifles were ancient compared to the current arms available to any modern army of the time, and especially less-capable compared to the Soviet Kalashnikov. It was abundantly clear during the first years of arms shipments (1980-1982) that the United States still did not believe the Mujahideen were capable of anything more than harassment. An intelligence report published in 1983 provided a detailed wrap-up of the first four years of the insurgency. Its conclusion, titled "Prospects for the Future" predicted, "the resistance probably will grow stronger in the next two or three years. Still, our assessment is that basic weaknesses preclude its moving beyond small unit guerrilla operations and raise questions about its long-term survival." The document assessed the insurgents were "effective guerrilla fighters, but… still unable to defeat main Soviet units."[186] This sentiment was echoed in a document of talking points produced for a meeting with Pakistan's President Mohammed Zia where Nicholas Veliotes, an agent in the CIA's Near-East Asia Division, recommended to the Secretary of State that he mention overall "satisfaction with the ability of the Afghan people to continue the resistance and to hold the Soviets to a standoff" but to voice "concern, however, that the absence of unity impedes further progress."[187] Even the most hawkish anti-Soviet supporter in Carter's cabinet, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski hesitated to believe the Soviets could be forced out of Afghanistan, writing to Carter

[185] Riedel, *What We Won*, 103
[186] CIA, "Afghanistan: Goals and Prospects for the Insurgents" An Intelligence assessment, May 1983
[187] CIA, "Your Meeting with President Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan" July 3, 1983, Doc No. C17627971, Pg 6

in a memo that "the Afghani resistance" would have to be "sustained for [a] sufficiently long period of time."[188]

During the first years of Reagan's presidency, "the CIA weapons and aid program [remained] a significant but circumscribed effort."[189] It remained circumscribed because there was little belief anything could be done to drive the Soviets out of the country. They believed the Soviets aggressive maneuver could not be countered. Another Near East Division officer, Frank Anderson, described the limited objectives of the program during the initial Reagan years in an interview. He said, "[the CIA Afghan Team] believed a superpower had conquered yet another third-world nation and that was an irreversible fact. We had no hope that they could expel the Soviets." In 1983, when the Mujahideen had made substantial progress hindering Soviet supply lines as the winter approached, potentially stranding Soviet troops in Afghanistan with insufficient supplies, the USG's outlook remained wary. An intelligence estimate noted that "continuing disunity within the resistance" had prevented any major victory for the resistance. The same report went on to claim that any significant increase in Soviet presence, "would cripple resistance operations."[190] Thus, the funding and the goal of "bleeding the Soviets," both remained consistent through 1984.[191] While CIA reports were likely correct in their assumption that the Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan were unlikely to form any sort of coalition, it is possible that if the USG was willing to increase the quantity and quality of weapons they provided to the Mujahideen sooner, the freedom fighters could have waged a more effective

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[188] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor 1977-1981*, (New York : Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1983) 43
[189] Harrison and Cordovez, *Leaving Afghanistan* 68
[190] Directorate of Intelligence, *Afghanistan: Goals and Prospects for the Insurgents,* An Intelligence Assessment, 1983, CIA-RDP84S00556R000200080004-3
[191] Riedel in *What We Won* quoting Frank Anderson from "Cold War Interviews" National Security Archive, George Washington University, August 1997.

insurgency earlier in the occupation. While this question remains hypothetical, there is no question that when the CIA did expand the program to authorize the shipment of more sophisticated weapons, the insurgency had the Soviets on their heels.

The intelligence community's claims that irreparable rivalries between the tribes inhibited their ability to attain decisive military victories did not lack foundation.[192] It was clear throughout the operation that tribal differences and grudges trumped any sort of temporary pact or alliance. As the insurgency expanded in the 1980s with the addition of foreign fighters, it was clear that the factions often fought each other or used political connections to undermine one another.[193] The disunity among the different factions also resulted in different levels of commitment to the Jihad. One of the most compelling rivalries between the factions existed between Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Massoud. Both Hekmatyar and Massoud were influenced by strong conservative, almost militaristic, Islamic upbringings. Their faiths stemmed from ideologies rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood which was founded in the 1920s. The Brotherhood's underlying belief held that, "the only way to return the Islamic world to its rightful place of economic and political power was through rigid adherence to core Islamic principles.[194] While both Massoud and Hekmatyar believed it was necessary to oust the Soviet occupiers from their country, both individuals displayed very different levels of fervor to achieve that end. Massoud executed countless successful and deadly raids on Soviet logistics trains for

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[192] CIA documents throughout the operation maintained that while there were some temporary truces, pacts, and alliances, there never developed a widespread coalition or alliance that could have resulted in a governing body. A sample of these documents include: CIA, "Soviet Problems, Prospects, and Options in Afghanistan in the Next Year, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, April 1985, CREST cia-rdp09t00367r00030020001-3, 23-27; Adkin and Yousaf, *The Bear Trap* 3-5

[193] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 129-131 mentions several Mujahideen leaders traveling to Washington D.C. to lobby for weapons and supplies. This is also discussed in Crile's *Charlie Wilson's War*, 237

[194] Coll, *Ghost Wars,* 112

years, earning him the nickname "the Lion of the Panjshir."[195] In 1983, however, Massoud shockingly negotiated a truce with the Soviets.[196] Hekmatyar never forgave Massoud's political maneuver and the rivalry continued for decades. No one, including the CIA could foresee whether factions would continue to fight or if they would defer to truces, much like Massoud. The inconsistency – and the willingness of Massoud to make a separate peace with the Soviets – undoubtedly limited the amount of aid and arms that the CIA was willing to funnel to the Mujahideen in the early years of the operation.

The CIA's accuracy in their assessments was perhaps most evident with the eventual collapse of the insurgency following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. While the CIA believed the withdrawal of the Soviet troops would result in an immediate collapse of the PDPA government in Kabul, it lasted another three years. Even when the government did collapse, none of Mujahideen groups were able to fill the power vacuum. Tribal factionalism resulted in years of bloody civil war. Wilson recalled, "with each Soviet battalion that crawled out of Afghanistan, it was as if the Mujahideen reverted further and further to type…In Pashtun, the word for *cousin* means *enemy*, and the clans started to tear each other up."[197]

The USG's lack of confidence in the Mujahideen in the years leading up to, and during the initial years of, the Soviet occupation was obvious. Some of it likely stemmed from a somewhat racialized view of the Third World evident through the CIA's consistent use of words like "illiterate," "primitive," and "primal" while referring to the resistance groups. The USG ultimately believed Third World countries or peoples were unable to compete with more developed and technologically advanced militaries of First World countries like themselves

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[195] Coll, *Ghost Wars,* 112-119
[196] Coll, *Ghost Wars,* 120-130; Adkin and Yousaf, *Bear Trap*, 129-130; Riedel, *What We Won*, 40-50
[197] Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War*, 502-506.

unless they were willing to unify under a nationalist cause. Further, the USG maintained that the rural Mujahideen groups were far to compartmentalized, and Afghanistan's weak government did not adhere to western concepts of high modernism. The USG was aware of this fact, but for their purposes of undermining socialist and Islamist means of modernization, neither tribal unification, nor Afghan modernism mattered. In fact, the USG likely preferred that the tribal factions remain separated. If the Soviets were to withdraw, the USG recognized that the tribal factions would likely do one of two things. First, those with no political aspirations to control the country, most of the fighters would return home, continue to live their old way of life, and do so until something else threatened that way of life. Similarly, those who had come to Afghanistan to answer the call of Jihad would likely cease their hostilities after Soviet forces withdrew. Second, any remaining factions who did desire to elevate themselves and seize power, would likely begin fighting each other, pushing Afghanistan closer to a failed state. A failed state would constitute a double victory for the USG, it would prove to the world that both modernization in the post-colonial world was best achieved through capitalism.

Do Not Wake the Bear

USG tensions with the Soviet Union in the years leading up to the invasion of Afghanistan were considered by both the USG and the Kremlin, at least in an official capacity, to be in a state of détente. Unofficially, however, this paradigm was not as clear. In fact, if détente was considered as a "thawing" of Cold War tensions, it is important to note that in the years leading up to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, tensions were indeed moving back towards

freezing.[198] The USG recognized that sentiments of détente were quickly flailing but did not desire to enflame tensions with the Soviet Union. Considering the Politburo had already committed Soviet forces on the ground in Afghanistan, if the USG wanted to continue avoiding direct hostilities with the Soviet Union, their options were limited to clandestine paramilitary operations.

The start of détente in the Cold War is often attributed to the end of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War (1973), the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (1968) and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) (1973). While the latter agreements indicated compromise by both the Soviet Union and the USG, it was unclear to the CIA and USG if the Soviet Union had genuinely conceded some of their aggression, or if they were simply using détente to their advantage to quietly expand their power in Europe and the Middle East. In a CIA intelligence memorandum released in 1974, amid the period of so-called détente, the CIA speculated on a very real split within the Politburo regarding their feelings on détente. According to the CIA, and regarding the Middle East specifically, pro-détente Soviets likely recognized the policy as, "the first time the US has publicly acknowledged that the USSR has a legitimate role to play in the Middle East. This acknowledgment…has considerable symbolic importance because the countries of the region will recognize the fact that the Soviet Union will continue to be a power to be reckoned with."[199]

The CIA's concern the Soviet Union was using détente to their advantage proved to be warranted. A ciphered telegram from 1974 addressed to "KGB Rezident" that was to be shared

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[198] CIA, "Soviet Intentions and Options in Southwest Asia: Near-Term Prospects," Interagency, Intelligence Memorandum, 13 March, 1980, CIA-RDP84M00390R000300050041-4 pg 3. CIA, "Détente: View from the Kremlin," *Intelligence Memorandum*, 1974, CREST CIA-RDP85T00353R000100040010-1, Pg 9-11

[199] CIA, "Détente: View from the Kremlin," *Intelligence Memorandum*, 1974, CREST CIA-RDP85T00353R000100040010-1, Pg 9-11

with the Soviet Ambassador read, "the expansion and strengthening of friendly Soviet-Afghan relations…will doubtless facilitate a further strengthening of the republican regime."[200] Détente, some of the Politburo argued, enabled the Soviets to gain more influence in the Middle East without the looming threat of escalating tensions with the United States, a situation that had occurred in 1967 during the Six-day War.[201]

Meanwhile, the Politburo had also developed a similar distrust (rightfully so) of the USG's intentions with détente. In a memorandum produced by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance for President Carter, Vance described to Carter how Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev believed the United States was still expanding their nuclear arsenal, attempting to undermine the Soviet Union internationally, and "was bent on ruling the world."[202] It was obvious that while the two nations projected an image of compromise and concession, neither side truly trusted the other.

As détente continued, mutual suspicion between the nations metastasized. A second round of SALT failed to yield any major agreements and both the Soviet Union, and the United States suspected the other of installing puppet governments in developing nations. In fact, the CIA suspected the PDPA's seizure of power of Afghanistan in 1978 to have been facilitated by their Soviet counterpart, the KGB – a notion that may have been entirely accurate.[203] While this accusation still lacks sufficient evidence, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which occurred less than two years later, provided a more obvious termination to détente. In an intelligence

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[200] CC CPSU "Top Secret Attachment, by KGB cipher Kabul", June 2, 1974, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112503
[201] CIA, "Détente: View from the Kremlin," Pg 9
[202] Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, "Your Meeting with Gromyko," Memorandum to the President, 1977, https://foia.state.gov/Search/Results.aspx?searchText=Soviet%20Union%20detente&beginDate=19770101&endDate=19800101&publishedBeginDate=&publishedEndDate=&caseNumber=
[203] Multiple primary and secondary sources allude to the fact that the Soviet KGB likely orchestrated the PDPA's coup and deposition of the Daoud Government. These include Coll's *Ghost Wars*, 38-40; Harrison and Cordovez, *Out of Afghanistan*, 18-20 and 27-28; Elizabeth Leake's *Afghan Crucible*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2022) *173.*

memorandum released by the CIA three months before the invasion, the intelligence community seemed to recognize the Soviet Union's intent to end any remaining notion of eased tensions. In the memorandum, the CIA surmised that after Amin's assassination of Taraki, subsequent rebellions would potentially result in a loss of control in Kabul. The assessment indicated, "that Moscow is deferring major new initiatives to expand the counterinsurgency effort."[204] Immediately following the invasion, Brzezinski wrote a memorandum for President Carter describing the Soviet actions as *deliberate*, not *defensive*, and characterized the situation as a "regional crisis." Brzezinski warned President Carter that he expected follow-on Soviet actions to be decisive in contrast to American actions in Vietnam. In another personal memorandum to President Carter, Brzezinski wrote, "I do believe the Soviet track record over the past five or six years indicates a definitely greater willingness to probe the limits of our tolerance."[205] Brzezinski's characterization of the Soviet action suggested that he noticed a deliberate shift in Soviet policy in the Middle East from reactive to proactive, something that would have certainly led to hesitancy on the part of the USG to counteract their actions. The CIA's intelligence estimates echoed Brzezinski's concern: "As it enters the 1980s, the current Soviet leadership sees the heavy military investment…paying off in the form of unprecedently favorable advances [in the Middle East and Asia]…This more assertive behavior is likely to persist."[206] Now that the CIA had informed President Carter on what they believed was a significant shift to assertive actions in pursuit of lofty goals, President Carter and his cabinet seemed even more cautious to counteract the Soviet invasion. In 1979, Department of Defense representative Walter Slocombe,

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[204] CIA, "Soviet Options in Afghanistan" Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, September 1978, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000278533.pdf
[205] Brzezinski to Carter, "Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan," Memorandum for the President, December 26, 1979. National Security Archive, George Washington University.
[206] Gates, *From the Shadows* quoting "Soviet Goals and Expectations in the Global Power Arena." 171

mentioned in a meeting with the Special Coordination Committee (SCC), a sub-committee within the National Security Council (NSC) that oversaw covert action, that, "while the USG should have every interest in "sucking the Soviets into a Vietnamese Quagmire…is the risk that we provoke the Soviets [was] too great?"[207] Operation Cyclone was hotly debated in the SCC meeting, something that may not have happened if the CIA were able to take actions themselves, a topic that will be further discussed below.

The direct intervention of Soviet troops in the country, Carter's NSC believed, precluded any type of direct intervention from the United States.[208] It was clear that the USG did not desire to engage the Soviet situation with a military solution due to concern that it could escalate into a direct conflict between the two hegemons. Therefore, the USG sought to counteract the Soviet invasion through clandestine operations, namely the covert funding program spearheaded by the CIA. However, even after the program was approved, the USG and CIA found other ways to limit the objectives of the program.

In an effort to maintain plausible deniability that the USG was funding the Mujahideen fighters, a fact that the Soviets already believed was occurring, the CIA had decided the best course of action was to funnel the materials through Afghanistan's neighbor, Pakistan.[209] The Hindu Kush mountains provided an austere passageway from Pakistan into Afghanistan, one which the Soviet troops would find nearly impossible to navigate.

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[207] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 145

[208] "Direct Intervention" in this case refers to the US introducing any type of combat forces into the theatre to engage in combat with Soviet military forces.

[209] Robert Gates, *From the Shadows, "*Pg 144. Gates mentions a classified memo sent from the CIA to the SCC regarding a list of options for the USG to counter the socialist leaning government in Afghanistan. Gates mentions that the Soviets believed the rebels fighting against the Khalqi reforms were being funded by the US, Pakistan, and Egypt.

Pakistan had, for numerous reasons, a vested interest in limiting the Soviet's success in Afghanistan. First, Pakistan was concerned that the Soviet Union, if successful in Afghanistan, would look to spread their influence, by force, if necessary, to Pakistan. The CIA concurred. An intelligence memorandum from 1984 stated, "President Zia and his closest advisors perceive the Soviet Union and potential Indo-Soviet collusion as major threats to Pakistan's security."[210] The CIA echoed these concerns in a memo produced after the invasion noting, "[the Soviet Union] do covet a larger sphere of influence in Southwest Asia and probably believe that the occupation improves their access to lucrative targets of opportunity." Pakistan's leadership had an even greater fear – the belief that India would align with the Soviet Union and launch an invasion into Pakistan.[211] Therefore, while the USG was compelled to limit their objectives in Afghanistan to maintain plausible deniability, the USG believed it was more important, strategically, to maintain a stable relationship with one of its few remaining allies in the Middle East.

As the CIA worked with President General Muhammed Zia-ul-Haq, both Zia and the USG shared their concerns regarding the backlash they could face if the program was exposed. The risks were shared by both parties, which reaffirmed the notion that the program had to remain secret. In Zia's words, the situation with the Soviets in Afghanistan had to "remain at a

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[210] For Pakistan's concern about Soviet, Indian, and Indo-Soviet aggression see CIA, "Afghanistan Situation Report" 1984, CIA-RPD85T00287R001301540001-9; Saudi Arabia, too, believed that Soviet intervention would eventually bleed into their country, if not by the Soviets themselves, then through the Soviet-supported Iranian aggression. There are numerous CIA documents which discuss Soviet-Saudi relations. Saudi was indeed attempting to "court" the Saudis, which is why they condemned the US sale of AWACs to them in 1981. CIA, "Soviet Attitude Toward Proposed Sale of AWACs to Saudi Arabia" Memorandum, 1981, CIA-RPD84B00049R001002560005-8; The Saudi Royal family largely viewed the US as its "ultimate protector against the Soviet Union" and discuss consequences of a potential Soviet attack. CIA," Saudi Arabia – United States: Complementary Foreign Policy Goals" 1983, CIA-RPD10C00522R000100660001-7, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP10C00522R000100660001-7.pdf

[211] CIA, "Soviet Intentions and Options in Southwest Asia: Near-Term Prospects, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, March 1980

boil, but the water must not get too hot."[212] Zia, and Pakistan did not want to provoke a direct confrontation with the Soviets either.

While channeling funding through Pakistan seemed like a viable option, the USG's relationship with Pakistan complicated the issue. The Islamic Revolution in Iran had ignited a resurgence of traditional Islamic values across the Middle East. As a result, Islamic protests erupted across the region and culminated with the deposition of the Shah in Iran, and Pakistani Islamic protestors' occupation and destruction of the American embassy in November of 1979.[213] The occupation in Pakistan, although officially condemned by Zia in a news broadcast, was one of two additional reasons the USG was cautious funneling massive amounts of aid through Pakistan. The second reason was the USG had an ongoing debate with Pakistan regarding their pursuit of nuclear weapons. Pakistan had begun its nuclear program in 1972, an action which numerous presidential administrations, and the international community denounced.[214] Presidents Carter and Reagan had concerns that if they entered any sort of aid program with Pakistan, it could promulgate an image of leniency towards Pakistan, despite Zia's outright refusal to end their nuclear program.[215] Unfortunately for the United States, the number of allies they had in the Middle East was quickly dwindling and they were left with few options upon which they could rely for help.

While on the surface it seemed as though President Zia had the upper hand in the agreement between Pakistan and the United States, it was not entirely one-sided. Zia understood that it was in his best interest to accept the risk of funneling aid through his country. According

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[212] Youssaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap,* 26. There are multiple translations on how *exactly* Zia made the reference to keeping the pot from boiling over. Here I chose Youssaf's because it is likely he was briefed directly by Zia.
[213] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 21-52
[214] CIA, "Your Meeting with President Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan" July 3, 1983, Doc No. C17627971
[215] CIA, "Your Meeting with President Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan" July 3, 1983, Doc No. C17627971

to CIA intelligence memorandums, Pakistan, having already suffered a defeat at the hands of India in 1973, knew that they would not fare well in another largescale conflict with India or in any new conflict with the Soviet Union. More importantly, Zia's "carefully nurtured Islamic image" appealed to the rebel groups in Afghanistan, a force which he believed could also be used against India.[216]

With limited options remaining, the USG determined that one of the only viable options remaining was to accept Pakistan as a conduit to funnel aid to the Mujahideen. While the USG realized they had gained a useful medium through which they could aid the Mujahideen, with this decision, they also assumed some additional risks. First, the USG's reliance on Pakistan likely resulted in a decrease of bargaining power in their attempt to limit Pakistan's nuclear program. Secondly, according to the CIA, the USG had accepted the fact that the President Zia would likely unevenly distribute the aid to groups they deemed favorable, and that some of the aid and funding would remain in Pakistani pockets.[217] Third, The USG had to respect Zia's desire to keep the goals of the program limited – a notion which the USG had already accepted. Thus, the added complexity of funneling the proceeds of the program through a country who maintained a necessary, albeit fragile, relationship with the United States, limited the USG and CIA's perception of the potential of the program in during its initial years.

After considering the risks, President Carter followed through with authorizing the program with his presidential finding, signed in 1973, which explicitly stated the program would "support insurgent propaganda and other psychological operations in Afghanistan; establish

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[216] CIA, "Soviet Intentions and Options in Southwest Asia: Near-Term Prospects," Interagency, Intelligence Memorandum, 13 March, 1980, CIA-RDP84M00390R000300050041-4; Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 243

[217] The idea that Pakistan would likely chose the groups they supported to receive the most aid is common throughout CIA documents and memoirs. For a specific example, see Coll, *Ghost War,* 12-23. Here the CIA realizes one of the most popular Mujahideen fighters, Massoud was not given a large share of funding because the Pakistani ISI did not trust him

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."*[218] President Carter's choice of words in his finding is significant and noteworthy as it highlights the limitations of the program. President Carter only authorized cash, communications equipment, non-military supplies, and psychological operations. Initial shipments were not authorized, under the purview of the finding, to contain lethal military supplies, the main item the Mujahideen requested. In fact, it would take years, even under the supervision of the Reagan Administration, to authorize the CIA to supply the Mujahideen with enough weapons to deal a significant blow to Soviet military operations.

Cold War tensions, especially the escalation of tensions during the "erosion of détente," reached a highpoint with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The flaring of tensions compelled the USG and the CIA to limit their overall objections due to fears that the program's exposure could result in additional Soviet aggression in the Middle East, or a potential direct confrontation between the United States and Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Furthermore, because the CIA had little choice but to rely on Pakistan to funnel the funds and arms to the Mujahideen, the USG was forced limit the program to avoid Soviet reprisal in the form of aggression towards Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. President Carter, informed by the CIA, considered these risks when drafting his presidential finding in 1979 which started the program. President Reagan continued to consider these issues which kept the program limited during the first half of his presidency. Meanwhile, the CIA sought to expand the funding for their operation but was constrained by the parameters set by yearly presidential findings, which dictated the limitations of the program. Operating

[218] Jimmy Carter, "Finding Pursuant to Section 662 of foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, Concerning Operations in Foreign Countries Other Than Those Intended Solely for the Purpose of Intelligence Collection." (Washington D.C. 1979) emphasis added.

within the bounds set by the executive and legislative branches was not necessarily the CIA's standard operating procedure, however, during the initial years of the operation, the CIA found itself in the midst of intense external scrutiny and inner turmoil, which further limited the operation.

Playing by the Rules

The CIA in the 1970s faced scrutiny from external sources, including congress and the American public, as well as turmoil within the agency that resulted in an identity crisis. Congressional inquiries took place in 1975 and 1976 to investigate the CIA's covert activities.[219] Prior to 1976 and the establishment of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees, there was little congressional oversight of the CIA's methods and operations. Through the inquires, legislators realized just how far the CIA had operated outside of the law and the parameters set of its founding charter. Meanwhile, the executive branch's investigation into the CIA, known as The Rockefeller Commission, also corroborated their findings. As a result, all three investigations recommended additional oversight organizations and stringent measures to ensure the CIA was abiding by the law. Carter and his administration immediately placed trusted individuals in key positions to ensure the CIA's compliance, which divided the organization. Both the USG's self-imposed, but necessary, restrictions on the CIA, and the internal turmoil resulting from congressional inquiries precluded the CIA from keeping pace with the KGB's influence on Afghanistan during the PDPA's rise to power. Considering the Politburo's obvious advantage and initiative in their involvement in Afghanistan's modernization, the USG chose to use the CIA to support the Mujahideen.

[219] For more details on the Church Committee, Pike Committee, and Rockefeller Commission, see Loch Johnson's *Inquiry Revisited*, (Lawrence : University of Kansas Press, 2015)

During the Cold War, The United States and Soviet Union fiercely competed through overt and covert operations.[220] Covert operations underscored some of the most famous events during the Cold War to include the Bay of Pigs Invasion, Operation Eagle Claw, and Operation Mongoose. Each of these operations resulted in very public, and very catastrophic failures. Additionally, events like the Watergate Scandal and failure in the Vietnam War led to an overall distrust of the government and its intelligence community.[221] Meanwhile, the Soviets had successfully established satellite states across Europe and installed Soviet agents in nations across the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.[222] Throughout the first few decades of the Cold War, the CIA had not fared well, and it seemed as if the Soviets had the advantage in the Cold War.

While the CIA lost credibility for their failures abroad, they experienced a more severe reprisal for their domestic operations. From 1975 to 1976, the House of Representatives and the Senate launched The Pike and Church Committees, investigative inquiries into the CIA's covert operations. Chairman of the Church Committee Frank Church characterized the CIA as "a rogue elephant on a rampage," and put some of the highest-ranking agents on the stand to testify.[223] Simultaneously, President Ford authorized the executive branch's investigation, which would become to be known as the Rockefeller Commission. Each of the investigations released damning findings regarding the CIA's activities to the public. The three investigations determined that not only was the CIA acting outside of its legal bounds, but it was doing so unchecked, and unsupervised. The Rockefeller Commission concluded that "none of [the

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[220] For secondary sources on the CIA's competition with the KGB, see Milt Beardsen and James Risen's *The Main Enemy: The Inside Story of the CIA's Final Showdown with the KGB*, (New York : Ballantine Books, 1993) and Bob Woodward's *Weil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987)
[221] Woodward, *Veil*, 26 and Gates *From the Shadows,* 142
[222] CIA, "The USSR Regional and Political Analysis," Memorandum, CREST, 1977, CIA-RDP79T00912A000100010027-9
[223] Woodward, *Veil*, 81

agencies who have oversight *authority* on the CIA had] the specific *responsibility* of overseeing the CIA to determine if its activities [were] proper."[224] Unchecked, the CIA had taken part in some very precarious activities both domestically and abroad.[225] As a result, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Executive branch surmised that the CIA needed more congressional and presidential oversight. The Pike Committee Report specifically stated that for any sort of covert action, "the President shall certify in writing to the committee that such covert action operation is required to protect the national security of the United States."[226] Thus, when Operation Cyclone began a few years after the conclusion of the committees, the CIA was forced to act within the bounds authorized by President Carter.

The extent to which President Carter impacted the CIA's capacity to carry out clandestine operations is debatable. It is clear, however, that "during the Carter years the CIA was also held under very strict control by the [National Security Council]. The Director of the CIA had relatively limited access to the President."[227] This claim is corroborated by Carter's National Security Advisor in his memoirs as he described how he, not the Director of Intelligence Stansfield Turner, briefed the President on daily intelligence updates.[228] On one end of the spectrum there are those who believe President Carter, Vice President Walter Mondale, and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance "debilitated" the CIA, "making it virtually impossible for the agency to conduct effective espionage."[229] Robert Gates, who attempts to give President Carter

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[224] Rockefeller Commission Report "Chapter 3: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations" (Washington D.C. 1975) 14. Emphasis added, Available online http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/contents/church/contents_church_reports_rockcomm.htm

[225] Both Committees and the Rockefeller Commission determined the CIA had been involved in domestic spying, political assassinations abroad, smear campaigns of elected officials, and other precarious activities.

[226] Report of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, "The Unexpurgated Pike Report "Section III : Committee Recommendations: Section C – Covert Action," (Washington D.C.: 1976), 173

[227] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoris of the National Security Advisor"* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983) 72-73

[228] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 63-66

[229] Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987*, (New York: Simon and Schuster) 24-25

reprieve, acknowledges this as he stated that the CIA's capabilities were "seriously weakened" as a result of "reduction of covert action infrastructure after Vietnam, Schlesinger's purge, the impact of the 1974-1975 congressional investigations…and broader agency-wide budgetary losses."[230] While these events occurred prior to Carter taking office, many individuals in the CIA believed Carter and his administration came to the White House with a noticeable feeling of distrust towards CIA.[231] CIA Agent Howard Hart, who headed operations in Pakistan for Operation Cyclone, believed, Carter "would probably have abolished the CIA if Congress allowed."[232] While Carter's personal beliefs regarding the CIA remain unclear, others in his cabinet made their disdain of the agency more than obvious.

Carter's Vice President, Walter Mondale co-chaired the Church Committee and had "[a strong inclination to impose very strict restrictions on CIA activities," which unsurprisingly, did not improve his popularity in the agency. Meanwhile, his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance was viewed by many in the CIA to have taken too soft of a stance on the Soviet Union, which threatened what many believed to be the CIA's main purpose.[233] During William Casey's confirmation hearing to replace Turner, Senator Wallop referred to the CIA as "a danger to national security." Senator Joe Biden called the agency "self-contradicting" and "disillusioned."[234] President Carter selected Admiral Stansfield Turner to serve as the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) in 1977. Carter's decision was received by the CIA as a not-so-subtle

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[230] Gates, *From the Shadows,* 142
[231] Gates, *From the Shadows,* 136
[232] Howard Hart, *A Life for a Life: A Memoir: My Career in Espionage Working for the Central Intelligence* Agency, (Self Published, 2015) 46
[233] Cyrus Vance's passive views on the Soviet Union stemmed from his desire to try and build positive relations. However, this led directly to his negative views on the CIA and their work against the Soviet Union. Vance's views are evident in Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars*, 28; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 36-44
[234] "Hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate Ninety-seventh Congress First Session on Nomination of William J. Casey, to be Director of Central Intelligence," January 1981, Available online https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/hearings/97casey.pdf"

message that he intended change the culture of the organization.[235] Turner brought with him several individuals whom he trusted to ensure the organization was moving in the right direction.[236] The introduction of Turner's team to the organization bifurcated the organization into an old-breed-vs-new-breed dilemma. Interviews with CIA agents serving under Carter revealed that individuals who had been with the agency since its days as the Office for Strategic Services made up this "old-breed." They were described as "the operators, the inner-agency, the band of brothers…dedicated secretive officers who did the dirty work."[237] Many of these individuals, like Howard Hart, Charles Cogan, and Richard Helms had served in the operational branch of the CIA and had spent most of their careers operating with limited oversight. Furthermore, they believed secrecy was necessary to ensure security. Many of these individuals felt as though they were betrayed during the Church and Pike Committees.[238] On the other hand, the old breed characterized Turner and his teammates as career politicians and academics. Agent William Casey, who would eventually replace Turner, referred to his team as "part of a bureaucratic shakeup."[239] Most of these individuals did not work for the CIA in the field during the previous decades.

The bifurcation in the agency was obvious. Bob Woodward, an investigative journalist for *The Washington Post,* interviewed over 250 CIA agents for his compelling work *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981*-1989, described the joy on the day President Reagan took over as "palpable…CIA people weren't quite hanging out the windows cheering, but many treated

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[235] Casey Confirmation Hearing, During his confirmation hearing, Casey is accused of referring to Carter's transition team as an "amoebalike group" meaning he believed it surrounded each individual and either got rid of them or made them a part of the new team. See also Woodward, *Veil*, 27-30 and 58-59; Hart, *A Life for a Life,* 46
[236] Woodward, *Veil* 58-59 quotes former DCI Richard Helms stating that because of Turner, "The CIA had had a rough time in the last decade…no one was willing to take chances anymore."
[237] Woodward, *Veil* 26-27
[238] Woodward, *Veil,* 43; Gates, *From the Shadows* 136-142
[239] Woodward, *Veil*, 80-81

Reagan's victory like Liberation Day in Paris.[240] When Reagan took office, Operation Cyclone had been underway for three years. While the program's funding steadily increased, like it had under Carter, its objectives remained limited.[241] Perhaps the fact that it took nearly a full term for Reagan to significantly expand the program indicate that some critics were indeed too harsh on Carter. Moreover, the CIA undoubtedly deserves their fair share of blame considering the damning findings of the congressional investigations. Regardless of where the blame lies, the CIA was clearly weakened and did not believe they were in a posture to try and deal a strategic blow to the Soviet Union through a covert operation.

While Carter's direct contribution to limiting the CIA's capacity is debatable, it is clear the CIA had lost funding, operational freedom, and a sense of themselves in the years leading up to and during the onset of the operation. To be sure, the CIA had brought this scrutiny upon themselves through years of pushing and surpassing boundaries and laws. Notwithstanding, following the investigations into the CIA by the legislative and executive branches, the CIA had lost its confidence, bias for action, and operating capacity.[242] Casey, as he faced his congressional confirmation hearing, described the CIA as "suffer[ing][from] institutional self-doubt." He went on, the morale of much of the agency is said to be low. Too many have worked to reduce the feeling of self-worth of intelligence officers." He was hell-bent on rebuilding the agency, regaining their freedom, and "setting them loose."[243] Though the CIA felt a though they had been gutted of their ability to conduct covert operations abroad, it was clear that William Casey hoped the new administration would provide them with the necessary freedoms and funding to make those operations possible again.

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[240] Woodward, *Veil*, 24-25
[241] Hart, *Life for a Life*, 46
[242] Woodward, *Veil*, 27, 29, 58-59, 80-84, 93, 107
[243] Casey Confirmation Hearing, 16

Conclusion

The CIA viewed the Mujahideen Freedom Fighters, their Civil War against the PDPA, and their call for Jihad against their Soviet oppressors, as the perfect opportunity to covertly compete with the Soviet Union. Not only would the CIA craft their clandestine operation in such a way as to maintain plausible deniability of their involvement, but it would enable a weakened CIA to experience a sort of resurgence as they could build the program from the ground up with limited resources. More importantly, the CIA believed they could exploit the Mujahideen to undermine not only the socialist PDPA backed by the Soviet Union, but to prove to the world that the best chance for modernization in the post-colonial era was through the formation of a nation-state built on the institutions of US capitalism.

Based on the limited documents that have been declassified and released to the public, it remains unclear what the USG believed would happen in the event the Mujahideen successfully forced Soviet Forces to withdraw. CIA intelligence estimates did indicate that the intelligence community believed that not only would the tribal factions never unite, but that they would continue fighting each other even after the Soviet military withdrew and drive the country towards anarchy.[244] It is likely that the USG did not plan for any sort of post-Soviet withdrawal solutions because they desired Afghanistan to devolve into a failed state. A failed state, according to the USG, would not only undermine socialism because of the failure of the Politburo to prop up the PDPA, but it would undermine Islam as a means to modernize or unify the Mujahideen groups, as the CIA believed the factions were unwilling to compromise. It is evident that the USG was unphased using the Afghan people as sacrificial lambs in their pursuit for a solo role as the world's hegemon. The CIA, while funding the Mujahideen, maintained a

[244] CIA, *Tribalism*, 9

delicate balance. On the one hand they ensured that the Mujahideen was capable of inflicting significant casualties on Soviet military forces, thereby drawing the Soviet Union into a Vietnam-style quagmire and driving the Politburo deeper into debt. On the other, the CIA ensured they used an incremental approach, giving the Mujahideen only what they needed to perpetuate the Civil War. Therefore, the longer the conflict lasted, the further they could keep the Soviet Union occupied, limiting their ability to spread their influence elsewhere, while also eroding their legitimacy as a hegemon in the international arena. If the Soviet Union could not successfully rout a disorganized group of ill-equipped tribal factions, how could they possibly compete with the United States?

Ultimately, the USG desired to eliminate any chance of a modernized Afghanistan unless it was done so according to their methods and beliefs. Their actions compounded widespread suffering and intensified an already grave refugee crisis. Their operation proved to be successful…at least for a while. Operation Cyclone, although limited during its initial years, set the foundation upon which the USG would build the costliest CIA operation in history. The operation reached its full potential following Ronald Reagan's endorsement of NSDD-166 in 1985, which granted full freedom of action for the CIA to fund and transfer arms in an effort to achieve the new "ultimate goal" of defeating the Soviet Union.[245] Operation Cyclone would eventually provide the Mujahideen freedom fighters with the necessary funds and state-of-the-art weaponry to deal a strategic blow to the Soviet Union. Once the Mujahideen achieved this aim, the USG believed they, too, had accomplished their objectives, and quickly abandoned the country, the Mujahideen, and the Afghan people.

[245] Ronald Reagan, "National Security Decision Directive 166" Washington, DC, March 27, 1985. NLRR M07-062 https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-166.pdf

Like the Politburo, the USG based their policies regarding Afghanistan on concepts of high modernism and Orientalism. While the Politburo propped up the PDPA in an attempt to create a future SSR, the USG believed Afghanistan had not adhered to the linear path necessary to reach modernity. According to the USG, there never exited a legitimate market or competition in Afghanistan that would justify its development into a modern state. Further, the USG held Orientalist views of Afghanistan and believed its tribalism prevented the country from becoming a modern state. The USG exploited the tribal factions by funding their insurgency to wage a proxy war against the Soviet Union. The USG, believing the tribal factions would never unite, sought to perpetuate conflict, not only between the Mujahideen and the Soviet military, but also between tribal factions. Continued conflict would ensure instability and discredit the PDPA, the Politburo, and the Mujahideen's ability to govern themselves.

Chapter IV – Mission Accomplished?

February 15, 1989, Colonel General Boris Gromov, the "last" Soviet soldier to leave Afghanistan. *Photo Courtesy New York Times*

The photo above was taken by a Soviet news outlet on February 15th, 1989. In the forefront of the photo there are two individuals walking towards the camera. The individual on the right appears to be a teenage boy smiling jubilantly, arms interlocked with the individual to his left. The man on the left is an older, weathered man, wearing a Soviet military utility uniform. The man on the left is Lieutenant-General Boris Gromov, and the teenage boy he is

walking with is his thirteen-year-old son. Despite reuniting with his son after his third deployment to Afghanistan, General Gromov seems less ecstatic. Rather than carrying a weapon, General Gromov is holding a bouquet of flowers, given to him by his son to congratulate him on his arrival home. In the background of the photo is a Soviet Armored Personnel Carrier (APC). From the opened hull protrudes the outline of the two soldiers – the vehicle commander and his assistant. A large crimson Soviet flag stands flies between them, unfurled to the rear as the APC follows in trace of the Soviet General and his son. As the APC passed the duo, a Soviet news reporter stopped the General to ask him about the withdrawal of his troops. Gromov leans towards the microphone and tells the reporter, "I can say that not one soldier remains behind me."[246] Gromov and his son continue walking to cross into Soviet territory. Around the same time, approximately 400 kilometers south of the bridge, an Afghan sniper's gunshot echoed in the mountains north of Kabul. The bullet, fired from a Mujahideen sniper traveled a few hundred meters and struck a Soviet soldier, killing the young man – a telling sign that the Gromov's claim to the news reporter wasn't entirely true.[247] While most of the Soviet military forces had withdrawn from their positions, other units remained, waiting for their orders to travel the treacherous route home, which was surrounded by Mujahideen fighters. Weeks later, when the final units crossed the border into the Soviet Union, hundreds of Soviet soldiers still remained in the country – missing in action.

In May of the previous year, Gromov took part in a news conference during the initial stages of the Soviet withdrawal. Having been decorated with some of the highest awards in the Soviet military, to include "Hero of the Soviet Union," Gromov was on the path to a high-profile

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[246] Bill Keller, "Last Soviet Soldiers Leave Afghanistan," *New York Times*, February 16, 1989. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/africa/021689afghan-laden.html
[247] Yousaf and Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 215

career.[248] During the interview, Gromov refuted the idea that the Soviet mission in Afghanistan should be labeled aa a failure. Gromov explained, "The troop withdrawal is not a defeat; it is the completion of an internationalist mission and the fulfillment of the Geneva Accords…None of our units, even the smallest one, have ever retreated. That is why there is no talk of a military defeat."[249] Gromov's words eerily echoed those of the oft cited conversation in 1974 between United States Army Colonel Harry Summers and North Vietnamese Army Colonel Tu at the Paris Peace Talks. During the meeting, Colonel Summer remarked to his counterpart Colonel Tu, "You know, you never did beat us on the battlefield." Colonel Tu responded, "That may be so, but it is also irrelevant."[250]

August 30, 2021, Major General Chris Donahue, the "last" US soldier to leave Afghanistan. *Photo Courtesy Jack Holt*

[248] "Our Army Has Its Own De Gaulles: An Interview with Boris Gromov," Russian Politics & Law, 33:3, 55-60, DOI: 10.2753/RUP1061-1940330355. Gromov, following his illustrious career and rising to the highest ranked aviator in the Soviet Military was tasked with planning and executing the Soviet withdrawal. Despite continued attacked on the withdrawing troops, Gromov's integration of air support assets and effective planning of the withdrawal gained him fame as a commander. Gromov later became the Russian Deputy Minister of Defense

[249] Bill Keller, "Last Soviet Soldiers Leave Afghanistan,"

[250] Fred Kaplan, "Rumsfeld's Free Pass on Iraq: Senators Didn't Ask, Weren't Told," Slate Magazine Online: March 9, 2006." https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2006/03/rumsfeld-s-free-pass-on-iraq.html

Forty-seven years after the Colonel Tu's response, and thirty-two years after Gromov's remarks, The United States Military was executing the last phases of its withdrawal from Afghanistan. The withdrawal marked the end of two decades of combat between the United States Military and insurgent forces across Afghanistan. As the hours counted down to the deadline for the withdrawal to be complete, thousands of refugees flocked to Kabul International Airport in hope of escaping the country that surely seemed like it would fall back into the hands of the most powerful faction, the Taliban. At 930 AM on August 26th, 2021, insurgent forces executed a suicide bomb attack and subsequent complex ambush on United States Marines aiding in the evacuation efforts. Thirteen Marines and over 150 civilians were killed because of the bombing.

One month prior to the attack, President Joe Biden addressed the United States during the the initial stages of United States Military's withdrawal from Afghanistan following twenty years of conflict against the insurgency that formed from factions funded by the CIA to wage war against the Soviets. President Biden explained, "the United States did what we went to do in Afghanistan: to get the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 and to deliver justice to Osama Bin Laden…We achieved those objectives." When questioned by the media, President Biden assured reporters that "the mission [hadn't] failed, yet," and stated that, "the mission was accomplished in that we got Osama bin Laden, and terrorism is not emanating from that part of the world."[251] In the months following the withdrawal of US troops, the country fell back into disarray, the Taliban seized power, and quickly enacted decrees enacting Sharia Law and depriving Women

[251] "Remarks by P{resident Biden on the Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan," (The White House Briefing Room: July 8th, 2021), White House Internet Archives, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/07/08/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-drawdown-of-u-s-forces-in-afghanistan/

and religious minorities of basic human rights.[252] Jihadists who had traveled to Afghanistan to fight the United States, as they did decades earlier to fight the Soviets, either remained in Afghanistan or returned back to their homes. Save the Taliban's control of the government, Afghanistan in 2021 looked very similar to the way it did before the first Soviet solider stepped foot into Afghanistan in 1979. The government in Kabul passed legislations oppressing those with beliefs different from their own. The tribal factions in the countryside largely remained autonomous, maintaining an indifference to the government in the major cities.

Tragically, USG and Politburo interventions resulted not only in failure, but perpetuated the violence cause by the civil wars within the country. The violence caused millions of deaths and the creation of countless millions of refugees. To be sure, Afghan factions have fought for centuries and some of their ideological differences are likely to continue to cause animosity and violence between them. However, USG and Politburo involvement in Afghanistan compounded the violence and likely eliminated most moderate groups who could have mediated between the warring factions. Perhaps it was best put by Westad when he claimed, "Cold War ideologies and superpower interventions therefore helped put a number of Third World countries in a state of semipermanent civil war…the existence of two ideologically opposed superpowers often perpetuated such clashes and made them much hard to settle."[253]

Both the Politburo and USG, despite claiming their support for non-alignment for developing nations in the post-colonial era, found new methods of colonialism which enabled

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[252] Belquis Ahmadi and Scott Worden, "The Taliban Continue to Tighten Their Grip on Afghan Women and Girls" United States Institute of Peace, Thursday December 8, 2022. https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/12/taliban-continue-tighten-their-grip-afghan-women-and-girls; Lindsay Maizland, "The Taliban in Afghanistan" Council on Foreign Relations, January 19th, 2023 https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan; and United Nations, "Human Rights in Afghanistan 15 August 2021 – 15 June 2022" United Nations Assistane Mission in Afghanistan, (Kabul : July 2022)

[253] Westad, *Global Cold War,* 398

them to maintain not only their control over the developing nations, but to maintain their status as world hegemons. Both nations attempted to project their own beliefs on nationhood and state-making onto a region they did not understand, and onto a people they did not respect. Rooted in Orientalist beliefs, the hegemons believed Afghanistan and the Greater Middle East incapable of reaching modernity on their own. The USG and Politburo's concepts of high modernism were built on the premise that the rest of the world would simply adhere to their guidelines. When Afghanistan emerged as a threat to the bi-polar world order, and the hegemons were constrained by universally accepted notions of post-colonial self-determination, they found other ways to intervene.

While on the surface it may seem to policymakers and diplomats that the USG's covert operation was successful during the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in that it ultimately expelled the Soviet Military from Afghanistan, drove the Soviet Union into debilitating debt, and contributed to the Soviet Union's demise, the USG failed to consider the second and third order effects of their actions. After the USG considered their mission to complete with the Soviet Military's withdrawal, they abandoned Afghanistan. The PDPA endured the Mujahideen for another three years until they were finally ousted, leaving a power vacuum for which the well-equipped Mujahideen continued to fight. Among the warring groups arose the Al-Qaeda, led by a prominent Saudi Arabian by the name of Osama Bin Laden. Afghanistan became a haven and training ground for anti-western extremist groups. Less than a decade later, the USG returned to fight the same insurgency, an insurgency supported by another call of Jihad this time targeting the United States. Twenty years later, the USG abandoned the country again, with nothing to show for it.

While my analysis mainly focused on Cold War hegemonic intervention into the Third World, and how the hegemons crafted their responses amid Afghan modernization, the results in-fact leave more questions than answers. Did the USG know their funding of the Mujahideen would result in further turmoil in Afghanistan? If the USG did know, did they care? And did they have any inclination they were funding the same insurgency they would return to fight a decade later? What is there left to learn after two failed interventions by two of the most powerful militaries? Has Afghanistan been modernized based on their own terms? While these questions remained debated and wholly unanswered, perhaps one Mujahideen freedom fighter said it best: "The foreigners never learn. They still keep trying to conquer us. This time, it is the Russians, and they will soon learn the lesson we teach anyone who tries to own us."[254]

[254] International Communication Agency. "Afghanistan: The Struggle to Regain Freedom," Diplomatic Pamphlet, 1982. Located in the CIA's CREST database. http://insidethecoldwar.org/sites/default/files/documents/Afghanistan%20The%20Struggle%20to%20Regain%20Freedom%20International%20Communication%20Agency%201982.pdf

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