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The Afghan-Soviet War: The U.S. and its Covert Cold War

By

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INTRODUCTION

The country of Afghanistan, bordering Pakistan in the southeast, Iran in the west, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the north, and China in the northeast, is home to over 20 million ethnically and religiously diverse people. Afghanistan is an Islamic country divided into several tribal based groups, which follow a variety of political and religious customs and traditions. Although considered an “Islamic Republic” today, or a government representative of all people, in actuality, the nation’s central government consists of the most powerful tribal groups and fighting factions in the country.

Located in the center of Asia and the Middle East, the country has long been a key geostrategic location for the international community. In addition, its natural resources including oil, coal, and various textiles for domestic use have made it the focus of European influence since the 19th century. Beginning with the British Empire in the late 1800’s, the tribes of Afghanistan have combated European expansion and have undertaken extreme, and often times violent, political transformations in order to protect their sovereignty and people. Amid these changes, the dynastic rule of Amanullah Khan, Mohammad Nadir Shah, and then Mohammad Zahir Shah over Afghanistan that began in 1919 after British withdrawal from the region, began to weaken and dissipate. Liberal reform attempting to modernize Afghanistan challenged the traditional Islamic political framework in Afghanistan and generated the rise of Soviet Marxism and Communism in the country. In the early 1970’s, led by Nur Mohammed Taraki, Haffizullah Amin, and Babrak Kamal, the communist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan introduced controversial social and political reforms which had several ideological ties to Soviet

Marxism. By 1978, despite the disaffection of the Afghan people, the support of the government in Moscow facilitated the overthrow of Sadar Mohammed Daoud Khan, the last member of the ruling royal family, and the establishment of a Soviet government regime within Afghanistan led by Nur Mohammed Taraki.

Marxist-style reform under the newly established government competed with Afghan traditions and customs. Violent opposition to the Marxist Democratic Republic of Afghanistan developed quickly into a nation-wide insurgency. The growing insurgency ultimately pressured Moscow to initiate change in its government regime in Afghanistan. In September of 1979, Hafizullah Amin overthrew Taraki for control in the Democratic Republic. However, the Soviet backed political party still faced a large Afghan insurgency, which continued to weaken its morale and strength in the country. Despite increased military assistance and aid to equip the Afghan Army to protect the political regime, the insurgency effectively challenged the Afghan Army. By December 27, 1979, Soviet forces landed in Kabul and began a full-scale invasion of Afghanistan to support the government.

The Soviet-Afghan War was the catalyst for increased hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1980's. The war between the Soviet Union and a majority of the people of Afghanistan began with the Soviet invasion in December of 1979 and ended with the ascension of the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, in 1989. Prior to the Soviet invasion, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War were marked by *détente*, a period of eased relations between the political leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, each recognizing the other's nuclear capability of mutually assured destruction. The Soviet invasion of

Afghanistan and the Afghan-Soviet War itself marked the end of the period known as *détente* between the United States and the Soviet Union. As the Afghan people found themselves in a losing battle against the more advanced Soviet Union, the United States government, under President Carter and throughout the presidency of Ronald Reagan, began to utilize its alliance with Pakistan to provide monetary and military aid to various groups and leaders of the Afghan insurgency or *Mujahadeen*.

During the war, the monetary aid and military training and assistance provided by the CIA, State Department and National Security Council to Afghan insurgents, combined with the Afghan insurgent's extensive knowledge of the region, enabled the *Mujahadeen* to effectively combat the Soviet Union's military forces. Ultimately in 1989, the Soviet Union was forced to withdraw from Afghanistan.

U.S. involvement in the Afghan-Soviet War forced the Soviet Union into excessive spending, which created a political and economic situation from which it could not recover. With the Soviet Union defeated, the future of Afghanistan was uncertain both among its people and the United States government. Soon after the Soviet Union's withdrawal, Afghanistan erupted into civil war. *Mujahadeen* leaders and the Taliban were competing for power and control over Afghanistan. By 1996, through acts of political manipulation, persuasion, and terror, the Taliban effectively gained control of Afghanistan. In 2001, the United States re-engaged itself in the region in response to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and after the discovery of the Taliban's hosting of Osama Bin Laden.

Although the history of U.S. foreign policy and involvement in Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet War and after the Soviet withdrawal has been studied and

examined by numerous scholars and historians, this period of U.S. history still poses questions that can be further explored. In particular, what was the true extent of the relationship between the United States and *Mujahadeen* during the Soviet war? What were U.S. perceptions and evaluations of the *Mujahadeen* during the war? And finally, what are the implications of the history of U.S. relations with the *Mujahadeen* and its leaders, during and after the war, upon the nation's relations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and its most recent history in Afghanistan?

In answering these questions, not only will the history of the Afghan-Soviet War and U.S. involvement in the war be examined, but also, and more importantly, the ways in which the larger geostrategic engagement between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War blurred American policymakers sensibilities towards the conflict among Islamic groups and leaders of the *Mujahadeen* during the war period will be assessed. Furthermore, the consequences of U.S. policymakers approach to the Afghan-Soviet War from a Cold War perspective will be evaluated.

Several existing studies by numerous scholars and historians regarding the Afghan-Soviet War and its aftermath are available in order conduct a deeper historical analysis of this period of U.S. history.

History of the Afghan-Soviet War and U.S. Involvement: A Comparative Analysis

The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Time, by Odd Arne Westad, provides a retrospective historical overview of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, specifically under the Reagan administration, in the context of a broader

study of the international Cold War.¹ In examining the Afghan-Soviet War in 2007, in addition to U.S. involvement in the war, Westad, an award winning author and professor of Cold War history at the London School of Economics, discusses how the U.S. and Soviet Cold War, preceding the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, shaped both the “international and the domestic framework within which political, social, and cultural changes in Third World countries took place.”² In other words, Westad contends that the United States and Soviet Union were driven to subjecting the “Third World” country of Afghanistan to their ideologies and political methods in order to prove their applicability and create a new ally in their competition for power. In doing so, the conflicting ideological and political structures that were impressed upon the various Afghan leaders by the U.S. and Soviet Union during the anti-Soviet jihad resulted in tension between the U.S. ideas and models of government and those of the Afghan people, during and after the war. It is the “new imperialism” exhibited by the Soviet Union and U.S. during the Afghan-Soviet War, on the part of the U.S. that led to an Afghanistan torn by civil war and a country eventually led by the Taliban and anti-American terrorist leaders.

The book entitled, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, by Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison also provides an analysis of the Afghan-Soviet War from 1973 to 1988.³ Written in 1995, only five years after the complete Soviet withdrawal, Cordovez, the U.N. special representative for Afghanistan during the war, and Harrison, a journalist and scholar who specializes in South and East Asian affairs and a senior fellow at both the Center for International Policy and the Woodrow Wilson

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

² *Ibid*, 3

³ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

International Center for Scholars, provide a broader, yet detailed, analysis of the war than does Odde Arne Westad by covering the history of the war through the Soviet withdrawal in six parts. Corodvez and Harrison examine how the Soviet Union decided to invade Afghanistan, the extent of Soviet occupation, the resistance met by the Soviet Union from Afghan rebel forces, the amount and type of aid provided by the U.S. government to Afghan forces, and how the Soviet Union eventually decided to withdraw from Afghanistan.

Indeed, in examining these particular aspects of the Afghan-Soviet War, Corodvez and Harrison argue that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan not only to reach the Indian Ocean or to spread Communism, but also in order to gain a strategic advantage over the United States, the world's only other superpower.⁴ Corodvez and Harrison contend that not only did the unique guerilla warfare exhibited by the Afghan *Mujahadeen* lead to the Soviet withdrawal, but also, and more importantly, the Afghan rebel leader's alliance with the United States raised the costs, in both human and economic terms, upon Moscow leading to their eventual diplomatic agreement to withdraw. As demonstrated by Corodvez and Harrison, the allocation of American money and weaponry to Afghan rebel leaders and groups of the *Mujahadeen*, although difficult and highly controversial within Washington during the war, contributed to the Soviet defeat and withdrawal. It is the relationship between the *Mujahadeen* and the United States during the war which played a pivotal role in the United States history during the Cold War with the Soviet Union and in the nation's most recent history in Afghanistan.

⁴ Ibid, 49.

Hooshang Amirahmadi's, *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives*, is a collection of scholarly essays and arguments providing a historical analysis of U.S. Middle East policy.⁵ In his historical overview of the Cold War, comprised of several different opinions and contentions by historians such as Richard Cottam, Richard Falk, and Carl Brown, Amirahmadi demonstrates the roots of U.S. involvement in the Middle East and the shortcomings of U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan. In doing so, Amirahmadi argues much like Westad that the United States, despite its superpower status, continues to experience crisis after crisis rather than stability in the Middle East, specifically Afghanistan. However, in contrast with Westad, Amirmahdi goes a step further in affirming that a change in U.S. foreign policy within Afghanistan must be made.

In discussing Afghanistan's political and social structure, Amirmahdi maintains that since the Cold War, the U.S. government, in its entirety, has misconceived the position of Afghan leaders in the Middle East and their role in the religious politics within Afghanistan. Furthermore, Amirmahdi primarily addresses the civil war chaos in Afghanistan after the Afghan-Soviet War and contends that there were fundamental flaws in U.S. strategic policy towards the Persian Gulf, particularly Afghanistan. Although Hooshang Amirmahdi wrote his book in 1993, during the civil war following the Afghan-Soviet War, he recognizes that the "unwarranted emphasis on the Soviet threat to the region, and the misplaced confidence in the U.S. ability to protect its interests militarily" through monetary and military aid to the *Mujahadeen* during the Afghan-Soviet War led

⁵ Hooshang Amirahmadi, *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives* (Albany: State of University New York Press, 1993).

Hooshang Amirahmadi is the president of the American Iranian Council and director of Rutgers University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies and the Center for Iranian Research and Analysis.

to the U.S. government to engage in failed foreign policy to politically organize Afghanistan in the postwar period. Indeed, it is Amirahmadi's thesis regarding U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, based on U.S. history in Afghanistan during the Cold War, which is important to an understanding of the relationship between the U.S. government, and the *Mujahadeen* and its leaders, during the war, and the consequences of the relationship after the Soviet withdrawal.

Steven Coll's, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, follows a similar approach to the Afghan-Soviet War as Westad and Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, but provides more of an in-depth historical analysis of the events prior to, during, and after the Soviet war, and the extent of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.⁶ Providing not just a Soviet perspective but also an American perspective, *Ghost Wars* is considered one of the most comprehensive books today on the Afghan-Soviet War and the extent of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. Published after 9/11 in 2004, Coll tracks the events of the Cold War from the attack on the U.S embassy in Islamabad to the rise of international terrorism until September 10, 2001. Indeed, in contrast to Hooshang Amirmahdi, Coll provides a deeper inside look into the workings of the U.S. government, specifically the State Department, National Security Council, and most of all, the CIA, during and after the Cold War in Afghanistan and in the United States.

Coll discusses the U.S relationship with the governments of Pakistan and the Saudi Arabia, and the groups and leaders of the *Mujahadeen*, through these different

⁶ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

Steven Coll is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author. He served as a staff writer for *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post* during the time of the Afghan-Soviet War and has written several books on the Middle East and U.S. foreign relations.

sections of the U.S. government, and particularly the CIA, during and after the Soviet invasion. Coll also demonstrates that America's involvement in Afghanistan during the war, and relationship with several Afghan leaders, such as Ahmed Shah Massoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, led to a campaign on the part of U.S. government officials to put into place a reliable ally and leader for Afghanistan. Parallel to Odd Arne Westad, Coll reveals that this was based on the U.S. goal to establish not only Afghanistan as an ally, but also ensure the ascension of an Afghan leader who could incorporate and maintain American political and economic influence, values and ideas in the region. However, in doing so, Coll, much like Amirmahdi, contends that the United States government and CIA effectively dismantled their cooperative relationship with the Afghan people, and the *Mujahadeen* and its leaders within the region that they had dealt with during the war. Furthermore, Coll demonstrates that as a result of this, the U.S. government became faced with an internal and external struggle with the Taliban as they gained control over the country, and created an Afghanistan that became a sanctuary for terrorism.

From this historical analysis of the Afghan Cold War in the aftermath of 9/11, Coll argues that America's official and unofficial covert action in training and aiding the *Mujahadeen*, financially and militarily, ultimately led to a change in Cold War politics between the United States and Soviet Union, the Soviet withdrawal, and more importantly what would become the United States' "War on Terror" within the region. The Afghan-Soviet War and the clandestine terrorism and counterterrorism that followed as Afghanistan experienced civil war, ushered in a new era of U.S. foreign policy and a new chapter in U.S. history.

Parallel to Coll's examination of the aftermath of the Afghan Soviet war, Larry Goodson's book entitled, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban*, evaluates the decades of military and political turmoil, and fighting within Afghanistan for power.⁷ Although the history is the same, the historical analysis of this period by Goodson is much different from that conducted by Odd Arne Westad and Steve Coll. As director and associate professor of Middle East studies at the U.S. Army War College, Goodson breaks down the Afghan-Soviet War and its aftermath in Afghanistan into "seven discrete stages". From the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, to a civil war between Ahmed Shah Massoud, Hekmatayar, and the Taliban, to the ultimate rise of the Taliban, Goodson sheds light on the extent of not only the U.S. military influence in Afghanistan during the war but also the level of influence the U.S. had on Afghanistan's changing political system. In particular, Goodson discusses the attempt in the late 1980's of U.S. government officials, specifically in the CIA and State Department, to bring forth the rise of Ahmed Shah Massoud, a leader within the *Mujahadeen*, as Pakistan and the ISI contributed to attempts made by Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, a more extreme fundamentalist leader of the *Mujahadeen*, to gain control of Kabul in the post-war period. Although Goodson does not directly comment on U.S. perceptions of the *Mujahadeen* during and after the war, he does reveal that the United States government saw potential in the *Mujahadeen* and its leaders, specifically Ahmed Shah Massoud, to form a stable government in Afghanistan that could be a desirable ally for the U.S. in the Middle East following the war.

⁷ Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

Although Goodson and Coll comment on U.S.-Afghan relations through 2001, they have different views of its transition from the Afghan-Soviet War to the postwar period. Compared to Steve Coll's argument that U.S. official and unofficial covert aid to the *Mujahadeen* during and after the war facilitated the rise of internal civil war in Afghanistan and terrorism towards the U.S., Goodson argues that the rise of terrorism against the U.S. was linked with the U.S. government's lack of understanding of the ethnic and religious divisions within the country during and after the war and the rise of the Taliban over U.S. backed leaders of the *Mujahadeen* in the post-war period. The policy of the CIA and State Department to continue to arm the *Mujahadeen* during and after the war while shifting from a policy of simply defeating the Soviet Union to one of nation building, and the decimation and decline of the Afghan population during the Afghan-Soviet War, in Goodson's view, created a chain reaction that produced political and economic instability within the region. According to Goodson, although the Afghan refugee crisis was given its due attention by the U.S. government, these consequences of the Soviet invasion were ignored by the United States during the war, whose sole mission at that time was to ensure the defeat and withdrawal of the Soviet Union. Even though it was these factors in this downward spiral of Afghanistan that created a demand not only among the Afghan people, but also the U.S., for a new leader within the country after the war, by then it was too late to avoid a civil war. The instability in Afghanistan sparked civil war and a social and cultural change within Afghanistan, which in turn led to a backlash against the United States, accompanied by the rise of terrorism and the Taliban organization in the post war era.

In Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus's book, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and the Mujahid*, the aftermath of the Afghan Soviet war is also discussed.⁸ However, in comparison to the analyses presented by Coll and Goodson, Naby and Magnus focus on the transition of the *Mujahadeen* from a fighting force during the war to an Islamic political movement and organization after the war. Although the extent of U.S. aid and involvement with the *Mujahadeen* during the Afghan-Soviet War and after the war is not as thoroughly explored in this book, Naby and Magnus do elaborate on the armed conflict between the Afghan rebel forces and the Soviet Union, and among their leaders once the war ended. Furthermore, in looking at pre- and post- Soviet Afghanistan, Naby and Magnus discuss Islamic politics between Afghanistan's Tajiks and Pashtuns, the international aspects impacting Islamic politics, culture, and economic circumstances, and the eventual rise of the Taliban in contemporary Afghanistan. By doing so, Naby and Magnus shed light on the confounding reality of the country of Afghanistan as a major "Third World" player in the international system and as source of conflict in its relations with other countries, primarily the United States, after the war.

In addition to the historical analysis presented by Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, historian Brian Glyn Williams book entitled, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, also evaluates the history of Afghanistan, but primarily focuses on the post-Soviet period.⁹ Although the discussion of Islamic politics within Afghanistan is not as thoroughly examined compared to the book by Naby and Magnus,

⁸ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and the Mujahid* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002).

Eden Naby is a respected and renowned historian of Central Asia and the Middle East, and reported for CBS during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Ralph H. Magnus has written several books regarding the invasion of Afghanistan and the perceptual and strategic security of the Persian Gulf in the 1980's.

⁹ Brian Glyn Williams, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Williams, provides a perspective regarding the Afghan-Soviet War and the internal civil war for power that ensued among Afghan leaders, such as Ahmed Shah Massoud and Hekmatyar, following the Soviet withdrawal. In his discussion, Williams, like Coll, contends that U.S. military armament and funding to various Afghan rebel groups and leaders during and after the Soviet invasion heightened the ensuing civil war between Afghan leaders. Furthermore, according to Williams, this led to a “boomerang style blowback” for the U.S. government in form of a strained relationship with Afghanistan and the growth of terrorism against the United States.

The history of U.S. engagement in Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet War, and the perceptions and evaluations of the U.S. relationship with the *Mujahadeen* and several Afghan leaders during the war, has several implications with regard to the nation’s involvement in the region in the post Soviet period, from the internal civil war to the “War on Terror”. In drawing from the analyses conducted by historians and scholars in the past and present, the history of the Afghan-Soviet War, the civil war that led to the rise of the Taliban in the post Soviet war period, and the rise of Afghanistan within the international system, will be thoroughly researched. More importantly, the political and military relationship between the people and leaders of Afghanistan and the United States will be assessed in order to reveal that the larger geostrategic engagement between the United States and the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War blurred American policymakers’ sensibilities towards the conflict among Islamic groups and leaders of the *Mujahadeen*.

In addition, the failure of the U.S. government to properly address the political and military instability and the division and competition between *Mujahadeen* factions

and leaders during and after the war undermined U.S. aspirations to successfully enact a policy of American style nation building in the region during the post-war period. Given that nation building marked the final transition in U.S. foreign policy at the end of the Afghan-Soviet War and into the post-war period, it is important to assess the theoretical literature on and framework of this form of U.S. foreign policy in order to properly understand the aftermath of the conflict.

Despite its practice as a tenet of United States foreign policy, there is no doctrine, document, or guide to the activities and actions, diplomatic or militaristic, with regard to U.S nation building. Although this form of U.S. foreign policy has been heavily debated among scholars and historians, it is generally agreed upon that it is a unique policy of the United States involving the intervention in foreign countries, whether by force or international organizations, in order to rebuild the political, economic, and social infrastructure of a particular nation, and democratize its institutions and people.

For the purposes of this analysis, a hybrid definition of nation building is provided. According to Carolyn Stephenson, nation building is the intervention, whether by force or international organization, in the affairs of a foreign nation state, particularly those that are dysfunctional, unstable, “failed”, or “rogue” states, typically in the aftermath of a conflict or unrest, for the purposes of changing the state’s political, economic, and social infrastructure. It is indeed more of an evolutionary process rather than a revolutionary one, in that it takes a long time for a nation to re-develop its political, economic, and social processes, and more importantly its overall identity within the international system.¹⁰

¹⁰ Carolyn Stephenson, “Nation Building” (Beyond Intractability Project, 2005), 1.

There are several independent variables impacting the United State's decision to participate and engage in nation building. In the years before and after the end of the Afghan-Soviet War, the U.S. was interested in securing the independence and self-determination of the Afghan people, but was more concerned with establishing a stable government in Afghanistan comprised of leaders that not only represented the interests of Afghanistan, but also, and more importantly, the interests, ideals and values of the United States.

In addition, it was believed that through the establishment of a stable government and economic system in Afghanistan, the United States government would be able to secure and further other important interests. For example, the U.S. was searching for another stable ally in the region in addition to Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Underlying U.S. aid to the *Mujahadeen* during the war and in the post-war era was the aspiration of U.S. policymakers to make Afghanistan a reliable and formidable ally in the Middle East. Indeed, the Middle East, particularly Afghanistan, before and after the war, was an unstable region founded and grounded on traditional principles in the Islamic faith, which were understood differently and had conflicting levels of significance among the multitude of ethnic groups in the region. As a result, stability was difficult to achieve and violent unrest was constant. This posed a threat to not only U.S. security and political interests and influence, but also to U.S. economic interests, specifically with regard to oil investments in the region. Through the establishment of an American-style political and economic infrastructure in Afghanistan, U.S. officials believed that Afghanistan could maintain its self-determination, become a reliable ally within an unstable region, and

would secure important U.S. interests and the spread of U.S. ideals and values in the Middle East.

In addition to America's national interests which form the backbone of U.S foreign policy, there are several other variables that also impact the United States decision to participate in the policy of nation building. Based on the analyses of nation building by James Dobbins and Ray Jennings Salvatore, the particular nation-state within the international system in need of assistance or change from the American perspective is a concern for U.S. policymakers' planning to pursue nation building. Nation building is an act conducted by the U.S. government to ensure the advancement of United States hegemony, influence, and security. The nature of the conflict in which the nation-state in question is involved, and the context in which the act of nation building is performed are also important factors. In other words, is it necessary for the United States to intervene militarily or diplomatically? Will involvement in the particular conflict forward American interests or threaten U.S security? Will the act of nation building by the United States after conflict be appropriate or will this threaten American security, interests, and image?

Furthermore, Dobbins, much like Salvatore, contends that the United States' decision to participate in nation building is also based on the status of the country in which the U.S plans to intervene. Indeed, U.S foreign policy officials have to consider, what is the existing condition of the nation-state's economy, government, and social homogeneity? Furthermore U.S foreign policy officials must address whether it is better for the U.S to nation build multilaterally or unilaterally? As the hegemon in the system, can the United States intervene alone or is it in fact necessary or more advantageous, to

rely on the support of allies or international organizations? In relation to this important factor influencing nation building is another, involving an assessment of U.S military, economic, and diplomatic resources. Specifically, depending on the conflict and country at hand, does the United States have the troops, money, time, and soft power necessary and at its disposal to intervene and re-develop a particular nation state?¹¹

The act of nation building by the United States requires sufficient economic and military resources to ensure that the nation in question can be restructured and reindustrialized properly and can carry on its changes and advancements into the future. The careful and systematic use of economic and military power and resources by the United States, in the form of troops, money, and machinery, has shown with the rebuilding and advancement of Germany and Japan after WWII, that these aspects of nation building efforts are of utmost importance.¹² The United States will ensure the success of their nation building efforts if it also establishes an appropriate exit strategy and if need be, an exit deadline for its political or military forces. A flexible exit strategy and deadline are indeed important in order to accommodate the objectives of the mission and changes that might occur in response to events at home or abroad, and the progression of the country in question.¹³

In addition, although Dobbins believes sufficient monetary and military resources are necessary to successfully conduct nation building, Marina Ottaway argues that it is essential to have the cooperation of the populace within the nation-state in question.

¹¹ James Dobbins, "Nation-Building: The Inescapable Responsibility of the World's Only Superpower" (RAND Corporation, 2003), 1; Ray Jennings Salvatore, "The Road Ahead: Lessons in Nation Building from Japan, Germany, and Afghanistan for Postwar Iraq" (*Peaceworks*, Volume 49, 2003), 6-7.

¹² James Dobbins, "Nation-Building: The Inescapable Responsibility of the World's Only Superpower" (RAND Corporation, 2003), 1-3.

¹³ Ibid, 2.

Without public support very little can be effectively established or accomplished, especially when changing their usual political, social, and economic framework. To achieve this end, the United States has to show that their nation building efforts are not only for U.S interests but also, and more importantly, for those of the people whose lives are being altered by U.S actions. Moreover, the United States has to demonstrate that their changes to the nation-state's overall infrastructure is for the better and that they will lead to the development of sustained stability, peace, and individual and national prosperity and power. In conjunction with this, the United States must also actively exhibit that their nation building efforts will maintain the particular nation-state's cultural and ethnic identity as the infrastructure and image of the nation changes.¹⁴ The United States should not aim to and does not aim to transform a nation-state to directly resemble the United States. Consequently, the United States hopefully will gain the cooperation of the people within the state in question, ensure its prosperity and stability, secure an ally in the system, and ultimately advance U.S hegemony and interests.

Moreover, Ottaway demonstrates that one of the most significant inquiries to address in determining what comprises a successful act of nation building on the part of the U.S, is whether the U.S should engage in this act through the use of its military or nongovernmental institutions, and whether the U.S should engage in this act multilaterally or unilaterally.¹⁵ It is clear that the use of the military in the act of nation building is effective. The United States military is one of the strongest militaries in the world and in enforcing changes within a particular nation it is important to have the

¹⁴ Marina Ottaway, "Think Again: Nation Building" (*Foreign Policy*, 2002), 2; Ray Jennings Salvatore, "The Road Ahead: Lessons in Nation Building from Japan, Germany, and Afghanistan for Postwar Iraq" (*Peaceworks*, Volume 49, 2003), 26-29.

¹⁵ Ibid, 1.

ability to control the people within the nation in question and any resistance that develops. Furthermore, the presence of the military in U.S. nation building efforts provides the perception of defeat among and a commanding influence over the populace within the state in question in addition to a well-structured form of leadership that can lead to success, as evidenced in Japan and Germany.¹⁶

However, the use of the military by the U.S. can generate public perception that the United States is aggressive and imperialistic, and in the end, does not have their best interest in mind. This could lead to resistance, and ultimately unsuccessful nation building. As a result, it might in fact be best to combine peacekeeping forces of the UN, nongovernmental organizations, and military personnel, in order to impress upon the people within the nation-state in question and the international system that the United States nation building efforts are peaceful rather than imperialistic.¹⁷

Finally, according to Jayne Carson, the United States government must take into account the context and time period in which they are deciding to carry out nation building. For example, the act of nation building that occurred in Germany and Japan followed a world war, U.S. victory, and U.S. rise to the status of an international superpower. Both nations' infrastructures were devastated and with the U.S. victory in the war, the act of nation building was most appropriate as the Soviet Union began to challenge the United States position as the hegemon within the system and influence within Europe. A national interest, in terms of maintaining U.S. power and influence, and

¹⁶ Marina Ottaway, "Think Again: Nation Building," 2002, 3-5.

¹⁷ James Dobbins, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (RAND Corporation, 2003), xx-xxi.

challenging Soviet Communism with American democracy, were at stake and a major part of U.S nation building efforts after WWII.¹⁸

Through an examination and evaluation of the Afghan-Soviet War, it is clear that Afghanistan exemplified a country in need of nation building. Yet the research will also demonstrate that U.S. involvement in Afghanistan throughout the Afghan-Soviet War was based on the context of the Cold War. In the pursuit of victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War, and implanting U.S. political and economic ideas and values in Afghanistan and the Middle East, American policymakers neglected the cultural and religious factors impacting Afghanistan's infrastructure, and the growing social, political, and military unrest, instability, and divisions between factions and leaders of the *Mujahadeen* during and after the war. As a result, the United States government experienced difficulty and ultimately failed in abiding by the principles and guidelines of successful nation building in Afghanistan during the post-war period.

¹⁸ Jayne Carson, "Nation-Building- The American Way" (Federation of American Scientists, 2003), 11-14.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOVIET INVASION, THE RISE OF THE MUJAHADEEN, AND THE TRANSITION IN U.S. POLICY

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979 was a major turning point in the history of the Cold War and has shaped Middle East politics down to the present day. The Soviet Union, in pursuit of advancing its Marxist-Leninist government, its authority internationally, and its geostrategic position in the Cold War with the United States, attempted to influence and ultimately change the political, economic, and social infrastructure of Afghanistan. Although the Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan began diplomatically, it eventually erupted into a nine-year war and international conflict between Afghan "holy warriors" or the *Mujahadeen* and Soviet forces. In fighting against the Soviet Union, the *Mujahadeen* received military and economic aid from various countries, specifically, Pakistan and the United States. After years of fighting and military deadlock, the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. The Afghan-Soviet War, the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, and the victory of the Afghan *Mujahadeen* was indeed a monumental moment in history and can be considered the single most important catalyst that led to the downfall of the Soviet Union and the victory of the United States in the Cold War.

The extent of U.S. involvement, in terms of military and economic support for the *Mujahadeen*, during the Afghan-Soviet War was tremendous. However, the larger Cold War engagement with the Soviet Union during this time overshadowed American policymaker's sensibilities towards the true aspirations of the Afghan people, the political

and economic disunion and disorganization of the Afghan nation, the importance of Afghan traditionalist values, religion, ideology, and ethnicity to the political and social fabric of the country, and the internal conflict among Islamic social groups, their leaders, and more importantly the leaders of the *Mujahadeen* within Afghanistan during and after the war. During the Afghan-Soviet War these factors were ignored by U.S. policymakers, the President of the United States, and members of the CIA, the National Security Council, and the State Department who viewed the war from a Cold War perspective. This has led to serious consequences and implications that have persisted to the present day with regards to the development of Afghanistan, and U.S. relations with the country and the Middle East. In order to properly understand this argument it is first important to examine the nature of the Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union, the political, economic and social environment within Afghanistan, and the relationship between the Soviet Union, and the U.S. with Afghanistan, prior to the Soviet invasion.

After their temporary wartime alliance against Nazi Germany in the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union began competition for global supremacy and influence. The United States and the Soviet Union never directly engaged each other militarily, for fear of what clearly would become a nuclear confrontation. Yet both did engage in a series of proxy wars, challenging each other's military strength and core political, economic, and social ideas and values, especially when influencing other nations to align with them and adopt their systems of government. It is through this international conflict that the Soviet Union and the U.S. became involved in the Middle East and more specifically Afghanistan.

Throughout the Cold War the United States government operated under the belief that “what is America today will be the world tomorrow.”¹ It is this ideology that framed the policies of U.S. foreign policy during American intervention in the Third World, particularly Afghanistan. Although considered a military conflict, the Cold War was an ideological competition, in which the core ideas and political and economic values that are the foundation of American society such as liberty, democracy, centralized political power, anti-collectivism, capitalism, and individualism, motivated U.S. policymakers to expand across the globe, to become what some historians have considered to be a “transoceanic imperialist power”, and to develop other nations in their image.² Over time in the twentieth century, as historian Odd Arne Westad argues, American policymakers have disguised in their rhetoric the notions of colonization and imperialism, and transforming the world into a “global America” with the idea that it is the duty of the United States to secure the “freedom and independence” of others outside U.S. borders.³ However, during the Cold War, behind each strategy, alliance and intervention, “lay a conviction that what had worked for the United States would also work for the world.”⁴ Although this interpretation of U.S. foreign policy and intervention has and continues to be heavily debated by scholars and historians, it is an important consideration when understanding the underlying pursuits of policies dictating U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. Indeed, the principal ideologies, values, and interests of the U.S. during the Cold War were used as a pretext or excuse for intervention when Communism was

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9.

² Ibid, 10-12.

³ Ibid, 14 and 24.

⁴ Ibid, 32.

construed as a threat. In the case of Afghanistan it was at the point of the Soviet invasion in 1979.

The same understanding of the Cold War from an American perspective also holds true for the Soviet Union following the Second World War. Like the U.S., the Soviet Union during the Cold War sought to modernize and influence other nations across the globe to accept Communist core political, economic and social values as their own. For the Soviet Union it was not a capitalist economic system but “class-based collective action” that would lead to the democratization and social advancement of all classes of people.⁵ For the Soviet Union, Communism and socialism were the keys to modernity and “social justice”, and they had to expand internationally.⁶

The actions of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan demonstrate what Westad terms “new imperialism”. This is a period in which the intervention of the United States and Soviet Union transformed conventional notions of colonialism and imperialism into a new form of imperialism or “welfare colonialism”.⁷ The aims of such imperialism translated into major changes for the improvement, not necessarily subjugation, of the host nation’s political, economic and social infrastructure, and national identity. Yet, this form of imperialism did keep the host nation in either the Soviet Union’s or United States’ sphere of influence.

During the Cold War, the political, economic, and military aid provided by the Soviet Union and the United States under this form of imperialism was usually welcomed. However the unequal distribution of power and the ideological division

⁵ Ibid, 40.

⁶ Ibid, 49.

⁷ Ibid, 78-79.

between the Soviet Union and the United States, which characterized the Cold War, led to difficulties for both international powers. Specifically, in Afghanistan, problems arose in terms of implementing long-term reform, rebuilding Afghanistan, and the animosity and resistance by Afghan citizens who were attached to more religious and traditional values.

Afghanistan is first and foremost ethnically diverse and is divided by racial and tribal boundaries. In 1979 there were approximately 20 ethnic groups, particularly the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and the Uzbeks, that were, and continue to be, spread across the region. Although each group is unified in language and faith in Islam, each has their own set of values, social and political institutions, and more importantly, forms of religious practice. Furthermore, “tribalism”, tribal identity, and tribal loyalty are primary sources of division among the peoples of Afghanistan.⁸ For many of the tribal communities within the ethnic groups of Afghanistan, “the allegiance of the individual almost never goes beyond the tribal unit.”⁹ The Pashtuns have been the largest in number and most dominant tribally based ethnic group within Afghanistan since the 18th century, and the Pashtuns have been the source of traditional leadership in Afghanistan.¹⁰ The Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group and are scattered throughout the eastern and western parts of Afghanistan. Although the Tajiks are not tribal in their roots like the Pashtun, they do have a strong sense of community loyalty and identity. The Uzbek and Hazara ethnic groups are much smaller than the Pashtun and Tajik populations, but do have significant influence in the mountain ranges of the northern and western regions of

⁸ U.S. National Foreign Assessment Center, “Afghanistan: Ethnic Diversity and Dissidence,” 1978, 1, National Security Archive- Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.

⁹ Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 14.

¹⁰ “Afghanistan: Ethnic Diversity and Dissidence,” 3.

Afghanistan.¹¹ Although each group lives within Afghanistan, each has religious and ethnic ties to neighboring Islamic countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran.¹² The United States was aware of Afghanistan's ethnic diversity and its influence on the political, economic and social infrastructure of the region but it was not a central focus in the war period and post war period. The violence that exists to this day among the many ethnic groups and divisions in Afghanistan are primarily based on their differences in practicing Islam. Islam has different roles, meanings, and levels of significance to each individual ethnic group and thus generates conflict in the political and social cohesion of the country.¹³ However, the connections between groups of Afghan individuals based on tribal loyalty and faith in Islam form the bases of Afghanistan's political and social order and identity.

In addition, Afghanistan's rugged and mountainous terrain also impacts its social, cultural, political character by furthering the divisions among the country's ethnic groups, decentralizing and disseminating political authority across the country, removing the Afghan people from their government, and isolating the country's development internationally.¹⁴ Yet the country's geographical location and natural resources have made it attractive to other countries and international powers. Afghanistan is at the heart of the Middle East and borders fellow Islamic nations such as Pakistan and Iran. Furthermore, the Afghan territory is rich with natural resources such as gold, copper, iron, ore, and, more importantly oil.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid, 5.

¹² Goodson, 16.

¹³ Ibid, 17.

¹⁴ Ibid, 13.

¹⁵ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and the Mujahid* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002), 71.

It is these unique characteristics and significant social and cultural factors that are the foundations of the Afghan nation, which both the Soviet Union and the United States government chose to marginalize in their foreign policy and strategy during the Afghan-Soviet War as part of their larger Cold War conflict. It was not until the end of the Afghan-Soviet War and the Cold War with the Soviet Union that the United States government began to consider the true importance, magnitude, and long-term foreign policy implications of Afghanistan's traditional values, ethnic bonds, and religion upon the nation's future political, economic, and social framework in the post-war period.

Afghanistan's rural and traditional nature has been a primary factor contributing to its long history of imperialism and foreign intervention in the country. The pursuit to transform Afghanistan into an ally and modern nation that was politically, economically, and socially stable led to the British attempt to establish dominion over the country in the early nineteenth century. The British sought to reconstruct Afghanistan into a modernized ally in order to use it as a buffer to secure British interests in India from other international powers, particularly Russia. However, political unrest within India, and the strength of tribal and religious roots that make up Afghanistan's social and political fabric led to a number of difficulties for British officials. The onset of large-scale resistance ultimately led to the withdrawal of British political and military officials in 1919. It was the departure of the British from Afghanistan that paved the way for Russian involvement in the country by the mid 1920's.¹⁶

Soviet concentration in Afghanistan progressed slowly with the formation of small Marxist-Leninist coalitions and groups within the country, primarily around the

¹⁶ Goodson, 23-30.

capital of Kabul. However, throughout the early twentieth century the Soviet Union's interests were inwardly focused, concerned more with the promotion of a consolidated socialist Soviet state comprised of neighboring nations that had ethnic and cultural ties to Russia.

It was not until the mid twentieth century, that the Soviet Union's political agenda included expanding its influence and Communism into the Middle East, particularly Afghanistan. During the 1950's the Soviet Union engaged in a series of diplomatic initiatives, including economic, technical, and military assistance to Afghanistan. In 1956, the Soviet Union began to influence the Afghan Army as they entered a \$32.4 million arms deal with Afghanistan.¹⁷ Although the appeal of Soviet Communism grew among some Afghans by the 1970's, Communism and Marxist coalitions, particularly the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan or PDPA, within Afghanistan had little political reach. Afghanistan was still governed by a king, Mohammed Zahir Shah. However, Soviet coalitions in Afghanistan received support from the government in Moscow, which facilitated their preparations for a large-scale revolutionary movement in the region.

By the 1960's, the Communist coalitions in Afghanistan and the Soviet Union's influence in the country expanded exponentially as prime minister and future President Mohammed Da'ud Khan began a campaign to establish liberal reforms for the educational and economic modernization of Afghanistan.¹⁸ After a coup against the royal government in 1973, President Da'ud, suspected to have been supported by Moscow in his rise, called upon the Soviet Union to provide aid through the PDPA. By 1978, the

¹⁷ Ibid, 51.

¹⁸ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, 102-106.

Soviet Union had appropriated a total of \$1.25 billion in military assistance to the Afghan army.¹⁹ Although the royal government was well aware of the dangers of internal Soviet involvement in the country throughout the 1970's, the PDPA continued to gather support from thousands of Afghan intellectuals and students, and its agents soon found their way into the government bureaucracies.

In 1978, with revolt escalating among religious traditionalists towards Da'ud's policies advocating liberal reforms and the centralization of political authority in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union government and the PDPA decided that more aggressive action was necessary in order to ensure the modernization and establishment of Soviet Communism in the country. On April 27, 1978, the PDPA led by Nur Mohammad Taraki, secretary Babrak Karmal and Taraki's right hand man, Hafizullah Amin, who was a high ranking official of the Afghan military at the time, staged a successful coup against the Da'ud government in Kabul and effectively took control over the political infrastructure of Afghanistan. The leaders of the Soviet coup contended that it was a "true social and political revolution for the masses", yet the true aims of the Soviet Union reflected a Cold War reality.²⁰ The Soviet Union was primarily concerned with controlling Afghanistan for the purposes of providing themselves with a secure base to launch future advances into Middle Eastern countries to spread Marxist-Leninist Communism, not to foster the development of a more independent Afghanistan. The Soviet Union rendered Afghan politics, culture, and society unimportant to their larger goal to gain an upper hand in the Cold War. The United States government would follow

¹⁹ Goodson, 51.

²⁰ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, 122.

a similar line of thinking and foreign policy in the following years during the Afghan-Soviet War.

The Soviet coup of the Da'ud government regime was not welcomed by Afghan nationalists or religious fundamentalists of the indigenous population in Afghanistan. Soviet reforms in 1978 directly challenged the traditional socioeconomic and political structure of Afghanistan. Land reform, credit reform, mandatory education, and provisions centralizing government authority and altering the influence of religion on Afghan politics prompted the formation of resistance groups across the country. Large numbers of Afghans from various ethnic groups, particularly the Pashtuns and Tajiks, formed into resistance groups that began openly combating PDPA reforms and Afghan Army forces under the command of Soviet agents.

During this time, relations between the United States and Afghanistan were “uncertain”. A report by the U.S. Department of State on December 1, 1978, stated the United States was “unsure about the shape of things to come. Even assuring that the present regime maintains its hold on power...we believe we should work from the premise that a constructive U.S.-Afghan relationship could still emerge...The most adverse development in terms of our interests would be the introduction of Soviet combat troops within Afghanistan, which could seriously disturb the entire region.”²¹ The State Department urged greater attention towards the situation in Afghanistan but it was not until the actual invasion that it became a primary concern under the Carter administration. The situation in Afghanistan demanded constant attention as well as a continued dialogue with other states within the region, particularly Pakistan, in order to protect the nation's

²¹ United States State Department, “Assessment of Afghan Developments and U.S.-Afghan Relations,” 1978, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF00307.

geostrategic interests from possible threats. With the increased level of Soviet influence within the country by 1978, the United States initially proceeded with caution in supporting resistance forces, encouraging the embassies of nations such as Pakistan, and in cities such as Tehran, and Islamabad to take the lead in creating a “network of cooperative relations which will contribute to peace and stability” in Afghanistan.²²

The United States was concerned with the promotion of Afghanistan’s independence, its national identity, and its political and economic development in the international system, but primarily in terms of making it a part of the U.S. sphere of influence. The policy goals of the United States Embassy in Kabul in 1978 demonstrates that the United States government wanted to diversify Afghanistan’s economic, political, and military relationships with moderate countries of the Persian Gulf such as Iran and Turkey. Furthermore, the United States wanted to foster a stronger and more confident relationship with members of the Afghan elite not aligned with the PDPA, and leaders of moderate resistance forces. The United States aimed to maintain an exchange of views and ideas with Afghanistan through the government and private channels.²³ Indeed, in 1978 the United States intended to “maintain a bilateral aid program for basic human needs and that such a program is designed to keep open the avenues of communication between the United States and Afghanistan.”²⁴ However, despite these goals and policy proposals, the United States government in 1978 was concerned primarily with the revolt developing against the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. Moreover, as indicated by a telegram from the American Embassy in Tehran discussing a meeting with President Taraki, while

²² Ibid, 3.

²³ Afghanistan United States Embassy, “Annual Policy Assessment: Additional Submission,” 1978, 3-6, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00261.

²⁴ Ibid, 1.

the United States government proclaimed its investment in Afghanistan's independence, it was ready to "continue normal diplomatic relations" and have "close working relations with the new government."²⁵ In 1978, the United States government put its interest in preserving the Cold War *détente* with the Soviet Union above its interest in preserving the independence and national identity of Afghanistan, despite the increasing encroachment of the Soviet Union and the level of resistance against the Soviet regime in Kabul.

In early 1979, the situation with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan changed dramatically. At least twenty-four of the twenty-eight provinces in Afghanistan openly revolted against the Soviet regime in Kabul. Anti-government activity spread rapidly, particularly among Pashtuns. By the spring of 1979, resistance by Afghan rebels or the *Mujahadeen* in Afghanistan's cities, specifically Herat, intensified, and led many soldiers in the Afghan army to disband and join the *Mujahadeen*. It was at this point that the Soviet Politburo recognized that if the PDPA was to survive in Kabul the level of Soviet involvement had to increase.²⁶ Afghan politicians in the PDPA, and Soviet leaders in the KGB, and more importantly the Politburo, debated over whether Soviet military intervention in the region was necessary. While many leaders within the Politburo and KGB advocated an increase in arms and military training to the Afghan army, limited liberal reforms, and more educational reforms so as not to alienate and move the rest of the Afghan population closer to the resistance, there were still some Soviet officials who argued that the Afghan army was incapable of stopping the growing resistance and that Soviet military intervention was necessary to protect the government regime in Kabul. In

²⁵ American Embassy in Tehran, "Telegram to the American Embassy in Tehran- First Conversation with New Afghan President Taraki," 1978, 2, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00278.

²⁶ Goodson, 56-57.

early 1979, the Soviet Politburo ultimately decided to have President Taraki enact broader reforms and provide more effective military support to the Afghan army short of direct intervention in Afghanistan. However, after a few months of heavy back and forth fighting between the *Mujahadeen* and the Afghan army, Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin overthrew President Taraki in October of 1979. It was the coup orchestrated by Amin that ultimately led to the Soviet Union decision to invade Afghanistan on December 24, 1979.

During 1979 prior to the Soviet invasion, the United States closely monitored the situation in Afghanistan, the status of the Soviet regime in Kabul, and the *Mujahadeen* resistance. Despite the intensity of the fighting between the *Mujahadeen* and the Afghan army, and the major setbacks suffered by the Soviet regime in Kabul, the United States government did not foresee an invasion by the Soviet Union. According to a cable from the U.S. Embassy in the Soviet Union in May of 1979, the United States government was under the impression that an invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union was not likely to occur because it would be problematic for its global Cold War interests and the *détente* between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. “The likely nature and scope of Soviet military assistance in Afghanistan is to the Afghanistan military... All the information we have been able to gather about this region indicates that Moscow has the situation well under control...Should the discontent nonetheless surface, the Soviets can be counted on to move quickly and effectively to crush it.”²⁷ Furthermore, as demonstrated in a telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan during the same time, the United States government assessed that “the USSR will probably try to avoid plunging into what could

²⁷ Soviet Union United States Embassy, “Afghanistan: Prospects for Soviet Intervention,” 1979, 2 and 5, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00558.

well become a Vietnam-type scenario.”²⁸ However, this is all not to say that U.S. officials in Washington and Afghanistan did not contemplate the possible rationale that would lead the Soviet Union to invade. In fact, the United States Embassy in Afghanistan did consider the possibility of a Soviet invasion because under the pretext of the Cold War, the Soviet government was not ready to allow a conservative Islamic nation to disrupt Soviet influence in its central Asian republics. With the Afghan resistance movement effectively challenging Soviet ideals, values, and military power, the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan believed that the Soviets realized this example could potentially lead to the rise of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist movements in republics within the Soviet state and in other nations under Soviet influence. The persistence of the Afghan resistance movement represented an internal and external threat to the Soviet Union and the legitimacy of its Communist- Marxist political and economic system in the Cold War.²⁹

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to a major shift in opinion among U.S. officials towards the global intentions of the Soviet Union. The Soviet invasion marked an end to the Cold War *détente* and Afghanistan was now the battlefield between the U.S. and Soviet Union for influence and authority in the Middle East.³⁰ In his presidential address to Congress on January 4, 1980, President Carter declared the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a serious act of aggression that threatened vital U.S. interests and the security of the United States itself. The deployment of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, according to President Carter, placed “the Soviets within aircraft striking range of the

²⁸ Afghanistan United States Embassy, “The Current Soviet Role in Afghanistan,” 1979, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00546.

²⁹ Ibid, 1; Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1997), 146-147.

³⁰ Hooshang Amirahmadi, *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives* (Albany: State of University New York Press, 1993), 217.

vital oil resources of the Persian Gulf, threatens a strategically located country, Pakistan, poses the prospect of increased Soviet pressure on Iran and other nations in the Middle East, and above all shows that the Soviet will use force to take over a neighboring country.”³¹ However, under President Carter, the U.S. response to the invasion was slow, and minimal, and largely a mixture of symbolic gestures.³² President Carter enacted a grain embargo, authorized a boycott of the Moscow Olympics, and rallied the UN to condemn the invasion and help Afghan refugees. Furthermore, President Carter halted the sale of high technology such as computers and oil-drilling equipment to the Soviet Union, delayed the opening of a new Soviet consulate in New York, and curbed Soviet fishing privileges in U.S. waters.³³

By the spring of 1980, the presence of more than 100,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan propelled President Carter to pursue a policy to provide military aid to *Mujahadeen* forces and actively engage the United States against the Soviet Union.³⁴ In the fall of 1980 President Carter authorized the CIA and a Rapid Deployment Force or RDF, to orchestrate covert assistance to the Afghan *Mujahadeen* financed in part by congressional appropriations. Although the level of U.S. commitment to the Afghan cause was strong on paper, in actuality the amount of military aid appropriated by the United States to the Afghan *Mujahadeen* totaled only \$30 million in 1980.³⁵ This was hardly enough for the *Mujahadeen* to stage a successful war against the Soviet Union.

³¹ White House Office of President James Carter, “President Carter’s Response to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan,” 1980, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00799.

³² Goodson, 59.

³³ Afghanistan Task Force Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division. “Afghanistan: Soviet Invasion and U.S. Response Issue Brief,” 1980, 17, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00789.

³⁴ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 54.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 53; Amirahmadi, 217-221.

Even though there it is unclear as to why the United States government under President Carter was hesitant to provide more funding and military assistance to the Afghan *Mujahadeen*, it is clear that the U.S. government was concerned most with its own security and interests in Afghanistan and the Middle East in relation to the progress of the Soviet Union, rather than Afghanistan's independence. Some historians and scholars believe the Carter administration hoped to "bleed" the Soviet Union militarily and financially in Afghanistan, and was following a wait-and-see approach based on the progress of the Soviet Union and the *Mujahadeen*. Indeed, the United States government was ready to support whichever side prevailed in the conflict in order to protect its interests in Afghanistan and the Middle East as part of the larger geostrategic strategy to secure an upper hand in the Cold War.

In 1980, the United States government perceived the Soviet Union would "achieve a rapid and decisive outcome" over the *Mujahadeen* and a "long-term occupation remains a very real possibility."³⁶ In addition, the U.S. government considered the fighting strength of the *Mujahadeen* to be unorganized, uncertain, insubstantial, and weak compared to the power of Soviet military technology. According to a report in 1980 by the CIA on the tribes in Southwest Asia that comprised the *Mujahadeen* forces, "most are loosely organized with little or no central authority...The Afghan insurgency has been strongest only among the most traditionally minded, such as the Pashtun and Tajiks farther north..." Although,

a major problem of the Soviets was to convince the tribes that it is in their advantage to support the government...The Soviets can bolster their support and reforms with offers of weapons and money. They can also threaten retaliation

³⁶ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency- Directorate of Intelligence Office of Political Analysis, "The Soviets and the Tribes of Southwest Asia," 1980, 1, National Security Archive- Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.

against tribesman who will not cooperate, or threaten to support their traditional enemies... Ethnic ties between groups in the USSR and in northern Afghanistan can be exploited.³⁷

However, a level of uncertainty as to the motivations of the Soviet Union still existed.³⁸

Would the Soviet Union stop in Afghanistan or use Afghanistan as a springboard for further Communist revolution in the Middle East thus risking a war with the U.S.? This was the primary question and concern facing officials of the U.S. government. Many leaned towards the latter but were unwilling to act on what was at the time an assumption. Based upon the larger context of the Cold War, and U.S. perceptions of the military capabilities, cohesion, and strength of the *Mujahadeen* in 1980, members of Congress and political advisors to President Carter were not prepared to risk all out war with the Soviet Union and the end of a possible future *détente* with the Soviet Union, if they were to establish a stable government in Afghanistan, by providing noticeably large amounts of monetary and military aid to *Mujahadeen* forces and openly helping Afghanistan maintain its independence and national identity.

At the start of 1981, and at the very end of the Carter administration, the U.S. State Department continued to follow a policy in which the United States would take “a neutral line”. Under such a policy, there was little contact with the Soviet regime in Kabul or the leaders of the *Mujahadeen*, and the situation in Afghanistan was monitored closely. However, as fighting between the *Mujahadeen* intensified, leading to large losses for the Afghan resistance and among the Afghan civilian populace, U.S. strategy regarding the Soviet advance took a more firm line and signaled the end of the *détente* with the Soviet Union for U.S. policymakers. Although U.S. National Security Decision

³⁷ Ibid, 1-3.

³⁸ Afghanistan Task Force Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division. “Afghanistan: Soviet Invasion and U.S. Response Issue Brief,” 1980, 7-8, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00789.

Directive 63 focused on the security of the entire Persian Gulf, President Carter stated that the Soviet Union assault on the vital interests of the United States in this region, which included Afghanistan, “will be repelled by the use of any means necessary, including military force.”³⁹ In this directive, the administration specified the U.S. government intended now to maintain a credible presence in Afghanistan, “developing a broad range of military and related response options in and outside the region against the Soviet Union.”⁴⁰ As in 1980, U.S. options for influencing events in Afghanistan were limited to providing direct or indirect assistance to the Afghan *Mujahadeen* forces and refugees, and to support the regime of President Zia Ul-Haq of Pakistan, which had been the primary source of military and economic aid to the *Mujahadeen* thus far. In both cases, however, aid would flow through the government of Pakistan, specifically the ISI, since they provided the only refuge for the Afghan insurgents to which the U.S. had access.⁴¹

With the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the Reagan Administration made the policy approach to the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan far more aggressive. By the end of 1981, all 29 provinces of Afghanistan were engaged in open war with the Soviet Union. Rural Afghanistan became the battleground between *Mujahadeen* forces and Soviet troops. While the *Mujahadeen* had firm control over the Afghan countryside, the Soviet Union was in complete control of Afghan cities, government installations, and airports. With the situation in Afghanistan seemed to be moving away from a military deadlock toward a Soviet victory, President Reagan began to use the CIA and State Department to

³⁹ White House Office of President James Carter, “Presidential National Security Decision Directive/ NSC-63,” Federation of American Scientists- Intelligence Resource Program, 1981, 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 1.

⁴¹ Afghanistan Task Force Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division. “Afghanistan: Soviet Invasion and U.S. Response Issue Brief,” 1980, 14, Digital National Security Archive- Item #AF00789.

assess the military capabilities of the Soviet Union and the *Mujahadeen*, and the level of U.S. aid required to ensure a withdrawal of Soviet forces and defeat. In 1982 the United States government under President Reagan began to plan foreign military policies and strategies to effectively defeat the Soviet Union, and change the internal political direction of Afghanistan towards U.S. values, ideals, and systems of government, not its own independence. According to President Reagan and his political advisors such aggressive action on the part of the United States was necessary to secure victory in the Cold War, secure U.S. interests in the Middle East, and confirm his own conviction that the principles, values, and ideas of the United States were the routes to modernity, prosperity, and a better international system.⁴² In no part of the U.S. foreign policy objectives or strategy in the 1980's was a concern, for the political independence and national identity of Afghanistan, and how U.S. influence in Afghanistan might clash and backfire with the country's Islamic and traditional roots, a problem that the Soviet Union was encountering. The United States government was focusing on short-term rather than long-term policy objectives and gains.⁴³

Throughout 1982 up until the beginning of 1983, the Soviet Union had made great military gains and advances in Afghanistan. In the three years since the invasion, the Soviets had established military bases and control over the northern provinces and major cities and valleys in Afghanistan, such as the Panjishir Valley, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Kabul. Soviet assaults during this time consisted of the movement of heavily armed ground troops and elite *Spetsnaz* fighters, supported by T-55 tanks, Mi-24 Hind helicopters, and MiG 21 fighter jets. The Soviet army that invaded Afghanistan was well

⁴² Westad, 331.

⁴³ Amirahmadi, 23-24.

equipped and prepared for a fast paced, mechanized war. The overwhelming firepower of the Soviet forces and aircraft destroyed Afghan villages indiscriminately targeting and bombing civilian populations. Although the Soviet Union made advances in Afghanistan during this time, their assaults further invigorated the Afghan populace and refugee population to join the resistance, and the international community to support its cause.

The key to this transition in the war and in United States foreign policy was a focus on arming and equipping the Afghan *Mujahadeen* to cripple and defeat Soviet forces. Up until 1983, particularly in 1982, the Reagan administration continued the foreign policy framework established by President Carter. The U.S. National Security Decision Directive 32 in May of 1982 demonstrates that the United States' global objectives were still within in the confines of the larger geostrategic engagement with the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The security of the Southwest Asia, particularly Afghanistan, was "inextricably linked" to the security of, U.S. interests, in terms of maintaining its Cold War allies, and the U.S. itself.⁴⁴ Indeed, the United States government under this directive was to "deter military attack by the USSR and its allies against the U.S., its allies, and other important countries across the spectrum of the conflict", "to strengthen the influence of the U.S. throughout the world by strengthening existing alliances", "to contain and reverse the expansion of Soviet control and military presence throughout the world," and "to neutralize the efforts of the USSR to increase its influence through the use of diplomacy, arms transfers, economic action, propaganda, and disinformation."⁴⁵ To achieve these foreign policy goals, the U.S. government continued its programs of limited funding for weaponry and other supplies to the Afghan

⁴⁴ White House Office of President Ronald Reagan, "Presidential National Security Decision Directive/ NSC- 32," 1982, 4, Federation of American Scientists- Intelligence Resource Program.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1.

resistance through Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The extent of U.S. relations with Pakistan, particularly between the CIA and the ISI, at this time was based on their competition for control over the situation in Afghanistan, and thus fragile, not extending beyond the bounds of channeling funds and military equipment to the *Mujahadeen*.

In assessing only the military capabilities of the insurgency compared to Soviet forces, the CIA Directorate of Research in October of 1982 stated that,

all six major resistance groups appear to have adequate supplies of modern assault weapons and ammunition but still lack the heavier weaponry needed to turn the military situation in their favor. Smaller groups in isolated provinces, however, are still affected by shortages of small arms and ammunition.... Major military equipment deficiencies among resistance forces include more and better surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns, heavy machine guns, antitank missiles, antitank mines, man-pack mortars, and tactical radio equipment.⁴⁶

Although some U.S. policymakers believed that the resistance forces could continue the insurgency for the foreseeable future at its present level, the Soviet forces in Afghanistan continued effective bombing raids from higher altitudes and use high performance aircraft in order to provide sufficient escort protection.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in 1982, the United States government had mixed perceptions with regards to the sustainability of the *Mujahadeen* against Soviet forces. Despite a level of uncertainty, U.S. officials did not disregard the possibility of a Soviet defeat if the *Mujahadeen* were better equipped. In the early 1980's, the U.S. government did not assess in its foreign policy the political capabilities and reliability of the *Mujahadeen* and its leaders, and the future political situation in Afghanistan if the Soviet were defeated. As with the Carter Administration, the Reagan Administration focused on the presence of Soviet forces in Afghanistan and aid to the *Mujahadeen* through a monetary, military and Cold War lens.

⁴⁶ Defense Intelligence Agency- Directorate for Research, "Afghan Resistance," 1982, 1, National Security Archive- Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 2.

In 1983 a number of events propelled a more active American foreign policy and involvement in Afghanistan. Under the U.S. National Security Decision Directive 75 outlining U.S. relations with the USSR, the Reagan administration made this point clear stating that the U.S. would “contain and overtime reverse Soviet expansionism by competing effectively on a sustained basis with the Soviet Union...particularly in the overall military balance in geographical regions of priority concern to the United States.”⁴⁸ In Afghanistan, “the U.S. objective is to keep pressure on Moscow for withdrawal and to ensure that the Soviets’ political, military, and other costs remain high while the occupation continues...the U.S. will enter into arms control negotiations.”⁴⁹ Moreover, relations with Pakistan, particularly between the CIA and ISI, and President Reagan and President Zia Ul-Haq, were improving. The government in Washington was becoming more cohesive and aligned in pushing for a policy to provide more assistance in arming the *Mujahadeen*.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ White House Office of President Ronald Reagan, “Presidential National Security Decision Directive/ NSC- 75,” 1983, 1, Federation of American Scientists- Intelligence Resource Program.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 4-5.

⁵⁰ Westad, 352-353.

CHAPTER THREE

THE U.S. AND MUJAHADEEN TURN THE TIDE

The most intense fighting and covert action occurred in the Afghan-Soviet War between 1984 and 1987. As the Soviet Union altered its political and military strategy in Afghanistan, following more aggressive tactics and measures, the Reagan administration, the CIA, the State Department, and Congress began to increase its level of monetary and military aid to the *Mujahadeen*. Although this helped facilitate the *Mujahadeen* success over Soviet forces in the second half of the 1980's, United States policymakers continued to set aside the growing internal unrest and conflict arising among *Mujahadeen* leaders for U.S. interests, specifically with regards to defeating the Soviet Union in the larger geostrategic competition that was the Cold War.

In 1984, the Soviet Union experienced a shift in its military leadership, which resulted in more aggressive military tactics and a broadening of military objectives in Afghanistan. In the period from the invasion in 1979 to 1983 the military had been under the direction of Yuri Andropov, General Secretary to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Under Andropov, Soviet forces were limited to maintaining control over key urban centers and passes to Pakistan, and destroying supply lines to the *Mujahadeen* from Pakistan. This stance perplexed U.S. policymakers. At a hearing on Afghanistan by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in November of 1984, Alexander Alexiev, a research analyst for the RAND Corporations stated,

the most striking and, at first glance, paradoxical feature of the Soviet military effort at present is the increasing evidence that it may not be designed to secure a

purely military solution through a decisive defeat of resistance forces. This is very likely due to the realization that such a military solution is not obtainable short of a dramatic intensification of the Soviet effort entailing massive and perhaps intolerable personnel loss and economic and political costs...The Soviet approach has consisted of large-scale attempts to curtail food production and destroy the economic base of support in general for the *Mujahadeen* in areas known to be resistance strongholds.¹

The Soviet Union used scorched-earth tactics such as napalm for the outright destruction of land and irrigation systems, while establishing strong defenses around urban centers, particularly Kabul.²

Soviet political warfare had been both internal and external. As demonstrated by Alexander Alexiev, the Soviet strategy internally was aimed at winning over some elements of the diverse Afghan society, exacerbating traditional ethnic and tribal tensions, promoting separatism, and preventing the emergence of Afghan nationalism. The Soviets established a Ministry of Tribes and Nationalities to pursue these goals and also utilized the Afghan secret service or Khad. The Ministry pursued a dual approach in Afghanistan. In the northern part of the country, primarily populated by the Uzbek and Tajik ethnic groups, the Soviet Union government stressed their separate identity and close historical and cultural links to the Soviet Union. In addition, the Soviet government in Moscow and Kabul promoted a “higher level of modernization and standard of living” and promised, “the Afghan’s own future will be brighter under socialism and Soviet rule.” The other side of the Soviet political approach to Afghanistan consisted of bribing and co-opting tribal and religious elites in the southern part of Afghanistan and Pashtun ethnic groups to support the Soviet government and withhold aid to the resistance. Externally, the Soviet Union government in Moscow sought to divert international

¹ Alexander Alexiev, “The War In Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the Stage of the Resistance,” 1984, 1-2, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01609.

² Ibid, 3.

attention from the conflict in Afghanistan and more importantly intimidate Pakistan into curtailing its support for the resistance.³

Although the Soviet Union did experience some success militarily and politically up until mid to late 1984, from a U.S. perspective it was not clear to what extent these tactics were effective in the long term. In late 1984, with resistance forces still holding off the Soviet advance, the Politburo in Moscow appointed Konstantin Chernenko as General Secretary and head of Soviet military operations in Afghanistan.⁴ Under his command the Afghan resistance faced the biggest Soviet military challenge of the war. Offensives by the Soviet Union from 1984 to 1988 involved 5,000 to 10,000 troops and *Spetznaz* units, the indiscriminate carpet bombing of highly populated areas and border regions, and high altitude TU-16 Badger jet bomber and Mi-24 and Mi-25 Hind attack helicopter raids. The Soviet forces adopted “Vietnam-style search and destroy” tactics.⁵ The tactics were successful initially, particularly between 1984 and 1985. The Soviets gained control over most of the Panjshir Valley, the Salang Road, and resistance strongholds in Herat, and in the Logar Valley surrounding Kabul.⁶ However, the resistance proved strong and prevented a complete overthrow of Afghanistan by Soviet forces.

This phase of the Afghan-Soviet War witnessed the rise of a new generation of unified fighters or “holy warriors” in Afghanistan known as the *Mujahadeen*. Although Muslims have been waging war in the name of Islam among themselves and with international powers since the nineteenth century, the Afghan-Soviet War witnessed a

³ Ibid, 4.

⁴ Diego Cordovez, and Selig S. Harrison. *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 147.

⁵ Ibid, 149-150.

⁶ Ibid, 150.

transformation and an expansion in the legitimacy and importance of the concept of *jihad* and the *Mujahadeen*.

The term *jihad* literally means “struggle” and is frequently connected within the Islamic faith with “striving in the way of God”. A person who engages in a *jihad* is known as a *Mujahid* and the plural is *Mujahadeen*.⁷ Considered an important religious duty for Muslims, originally the concept of *jihad* applied to defensive action rather than the conquest of infidels. Over time, and with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in particular, this understanding has changed to include action against direct and indirect forms of imperialism and colonialism. The *jihad* conducted by the *Mujahadeen* in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion led to the term’s association with revolt, revolution, and offensive action known as a “holy war,” which crosses a spectrum of political and religious principles within the Islamic faith and Muslim world.⁸ The Afghan resistance against the Soviet Union under the banner of *jihad*, was the first case in which the ideologies and politics embedded within the Islamic faith served as a point of unification for success against an outside aggressor and non-Muslim force.⁹

In addition to this transition was also a change in the significance of the *Mujahadeen* within the Islamic faith, the Muslim world, and the international system, as a result of the Afghan-Soviet War. Over the course of the war against the Soviet Union, the *Mujahadeen* in Afghanistan witnessed a major transformation from a small guerilla fighting force to a large religious and political resistance movement that effectively

⁷ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and the Mujahid* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2002), 136.

⁸ Ibid, 135-136.

⁹ Ibid, 137.

challenged and defeated an international power in a technologically uneven war.¹⁰ The victory over the Soviet Union in the 1980's led to the rise of the *Mujahadeen* from a regional stage to an area of international importance, specifically for the United States.

Beginning in 1978, the resistance raised substantial opposition to the Soviet regime in Kabul, despite the *Mujahadeen's* disunity and disorganization. Factors which contributed to the formation of the Afghan resistance included the atheism of the Soviet regime in Kabul, the destruction of their homes, the rapaciousness of Soviet soldiers, and the development of a large refugee population in Pakistan.¹¹ The Soviet pursuit of reform and social revolution might have succeeded, argues Naby and Magnus, had the Soviet regime respected the connection of the Islamic faith and customs to the social and political infrastructure of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Soviet Union might have experienced success had the Afghan military been more loyal to the Soviet cause, but Afghan troops did not truly recognize the Afghani Communist politicians and agents as legitimate leaders.¹² The ranks of the *Mujahadeen* grew exponentially as members of the Afghan army disbanded and joined the resistance upon the Soviet invasion and after the Soviet assault began, attracting more Afghan citizens and refugees within Pakistan to its cause. Ultimately, the *Mujahadeen* grew to include not just Pashtuns and Tajiks, but Afghan peoples from all of its 29 provinces and multiple ethnic groups.

Nonetheless, the *Mujahadeen*, albeit large, was deeply fragmented, divided into individual fighting groups with their own leaders. The primary *Mujahadeen* fighting forces were led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and Ahmed Shah

¹⁰ Ibid, 136.

¹¹ Ibid, 147.

¹² Ibid, 141.

Massoud.¹³ Although they led resistance groups formed under similar circumstances, these leaders engaged in competition not only against the Soviet military but also, and more importantly, among themselves for outside support, power, and control over Afghanistan. The United States government recognized the ethnic and religious divisions between factions and leaders of the *Mujahadeen* throughout the war, but chose to neglect the social and political implications it would have in the post-war period so long as the *Mujahadeen* used U.S. weapons to effectively challenge and defeat the Soviet Union.

In the first stage of the *jihad*, the Afghan *Mujahadeen* fighters were equipped with Enfield rifles, rusting sabers, and were organized into village guerilla units. According to U.S. analysts in 1984, the “most glaring deficiency” for the resistance was a,

lack of any effective means to combat Soviet jets and helicopters such as portable heat-seeking missiles. The best weapon presently used against Soviet air, the ZPU 14.5 mm anti-aircraft gun in its single and double barrel configuration, is only conditionally portable and is generally available only in the border regions. The standard weapon used, the 12.7 mm DShK heavy machine gun, has a range of only 1000 meters and is not very effective. As a result, the Soviets are able to operate with virtual impunity in the air, which, given the fact that perhaps 80% of all Soviet combat and logistic operations depend on air, virtually precludes any significant and lasting *Mujahadeen* military gains.¹⁴

The *Mujahadeen* lacked not only heavy weaponry, but also essentials such as ammunition, communication devices, mine detectors, range finders, binoculars, and warm clothing for the winter season.¹⁵

By 1989 however, the fighters were equipped with the world’s most elite weaponry.¹⁶ This was primarily due to the large increase in monetary and military aid by the United States beginning in 1984 under President Reagan. This was matched by the

¹³ Ibid, 141.

¹⁴ Alex Alexiev, “The War in Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the State of the Resistance,” 1984, 5.

¹⁵ Ibid, 6; World Anti-Communist League, “Report of Afghanistan Resistance Seminar,” 1984, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01605.

¹⁶ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, 149.

kingdom in Saudi Arabia, and furthered by an influx of “captured” Soviet weaponry supplied by Egypt. These weapons were channeled to the resistance groups by President Zia- Ul Haq and the ISI in Pakistan and the CIA. Reagan’s policy marked a fundamental shift in U.S. perception of the *Mujahadeen*, and a major change in the course of the Soviet-Afghan War, and U.S. relations with Afghanistan up to the present day.

The war was a contest of endurance, perseverance, and will. The *Mujahadeen* used the terrain and combined its guerilla tactics with the advanced military aid provided by the United States to ultimately wear down Soviet morale, resilience, and the effectiveness of their new military tactics. Although the military deficiencies, agricultural decline, and shortages of food among Afghan citizens and members of the *Mujahadeen* were of great concern and importance to the U.S. foreign policy agenda, the biggest problem facing the *Mujahadeen* was in the political realm, particularly the lack of unity among its political representatives. According to a report by Alexander Alexiev to Congress and the Select Committee on Intelligence concerning the Afghan conflict, “Many Mujahadeen field commanders and leaders of political factions at present represent more of an obstacle to effective resistance than an asset. They also contribute to the divisiveness inside Afghanistan by virtue of the fact that they continue to be the main recipients and distributors of weapons and ammunition which gives them powerful political leverage over the men in the field.”¹⁷

In addition, Alexiev analyzed U.S. perceptions and strategy in Afghanistan during this time. For U.S. officials in the CIA, State Department, and National Security Council in 1984 it appeared that there were “a number of ways in which the effectiveness of the

¹⁷ Alex Alexiev, “The War in Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the State of the Resistance,” 1984, 6-7.

resistance could be improved considerably through streamlining of the international aid effort.”¹⁸ The “key” was a,

better understanding of the needs of the men fighting in the field, which should lead to the correction of the shortages hampering the resistance...there is a need to supply at least some of the aid directly to the *Mujahadeen*, which will help decrease the opportunities for corruption of the present system and alleviate politicization. Direct supplies to the resistance are increasingly feasible since there have emerged on the inside of the country a number of strong and respected military commanders who possess political authority and respect...¹⁹

However, the Reagan Administration was divided on the issue. Some officials and advisors to President Reagan and members of Congress cautioned against aid, arguing it meant more “visible” U.S. involvement than heretofore, exacerbating relations with the Soviet Union and thus “make plausible deniability impossible”. Furthermore, U.S. officials in the Reagan Administration and Congress argued that Pakistan would be unwilling to escalate aid to the *Mujahadeen* due to a fear that a more effective resistance would bring Soviet assaults to Pakistan’s interior.²⁰ As evidenced by analyses of the *Mujahadeen* for the U.S. government in 1984, policymakers were concerned with the political divisions and corruption within the *Mujahadeen* leadership but were primarily focused on how such problems would impact U.S. monetary and military aid to resistance groups and their level of success in defeating Soviet forces. U.S. government officials did not evaluate the long-term implications of such divisions and the consequences of such a lack of unity and compromise between *Mujahadeen* groups and their leaders upon the post-war political and social fabric of Afghanistan if they were to declare victory over the Soviet Union. The Reagan Administration and officials of the government in Washington

¹⁸ Ibid, 7.

¹⁹ Ibid, 7.

²⁰ Ibid, 7.

were assessing their foreign policy objectives and strategy in terms of what would secure and enhance U.S. interests within the region and in the larger Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union.

Despite the debate within Washington over the course of action in aiding the *Mujahadeen*, the Reagan administration and Congress ultimately pursued more aggressive monetary and military aid. In early 1984, Director William Casey of the CIA tipped the balance in Washington, stating to President Reagan and Congress, “the Soviet Union is tremendously overextended and they’re vulnerable. If America challenges the Soviet Union at every turn and ultimately defeats them in one place, that will shatter the mythology of Communism as the future, and it will start to unravel.”²¹ Although he argued this as early as 1981 under President Carter, in the Reagan Administration such words and conviction by the Director of the CIA had a greater level of significance and importance.

In January of 1984, the Reagan Administration authorized Casey to develop a more intensive strategy for U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. Director Casey led the Afghan Task Force in increasing arm supplies, money, and the level of training to the *Mujahadeen*. Under the CIA SOVMAT Project, members of the Afghan Task Force primarily relied on supplying the *Mujahadeen* with Soviet equipment and weaponry captured by other nations and former Soviet allies, particularly Egypt.²² The U.S. Defense Department cooperated with the CIA SOVMAT Project to upgrade the captured Soviet weapons including rocket launchers, heavy machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, and grenades. In addition, the early months of 1984, the CIA and the ISI designed special

²¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 354-355.

²² Ibid, 355.

training camps for *Mujahadeen* field commanders in the United States at Fort Pickett and in Pakistan.²³

These initial efforts by the CIA were accelerated from late 1984 to early 1985, as Congressman Charles Wilson, Senator Paul Tsongas, and Congressman Clarence “Doc” Long, made great strides in expanding the CIA Afghan Task Force initial budget for foreign military aid and assistance to the *Mujahadeen* from \$30 million to \$120 million. These particular members of Congress, who had jurisdiction over discretionary congressional appropriations to the branches of the U.S. military, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the CIA, accepted the fact that without more substantial U.S. aid, the *Mujahadeen* would ultimately be overrun and the Soviet Union would be successful in launching further campaigns for Communist expansion in the Middle East from Afghanistan. Furthermore, Wilson, Tsongas, and Long believed that the Reagan Administration was more willing than former President Carter to accept and support such budget increases in order to defeat the Soviet Union. Like CIA Director William Casey, Congressmen Charles Wilson and “Doc” Long, and Senator Paul Tsongas, many, but not all, of the officials in the CIA, the State Department, the National Security Council, as well as in Congress, were motivated by a Cold War mentality of anti-Communist and anti-Soviet sentiment. They desired to “get even” with the Soviet Union and Communists for the American losses during the Vietnam War.²⁴ They were concerned in helping Afghanistan gain political independence from the Soviet Union, but not outright independence from U.S. influence. As demonstrated above, although U.S. policymakers

²³ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 69; William Claiborne, “Reports of More Aid to Afghan Rebels Stir Feuds,” *The Washington Post*, February 7, 1985, 1.

²⁴ Ibid, 158; Philip Geyelin, “U.S. Leaks and the Afghan Resistance,” *The Washington Post*, August 9, 1984, 1; Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987* (New York, Pocket Books, 1987), 425-426.

in the CIA and Congress were aware of the risks of supplying the resistance, they continued to focus strictly on arming and using the *Mujahadeen* rather than U.S. troops to deal a defeat to the Soviet Union in the Cold War and prove that Communism was a threat to individual freedom and welfare, and modernity. However, U.S. government officials were careful not to have their foreign aid to the *Mujahadeen* traceable back to the United States.

The actions of Casey, Wilson, Long, and Tsongas paved the way for further increases in monetary and military aid to the *Mujahadeen* by other Congressional committees, such as the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, and the Senate and House Defense Subcommittee of Appropriations, headed by Congressmen mentioned above and other members of Congress.²⁵ With such increased support for aiding the *Mujahadeen* in Congress, President Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 166 or “Expanded Aid to Afghan Guerrillas” in March of 1985, authorizing efforts to drive Soviet forces out of Afghanistan “by all means available.”²⁶

Although this new policy followed an increase in funding by Congress to provide the Afghan *Mujahadeen* with U.S. military technology and money, the National Security Council and its Planning and Coordination Group or PCG, rather than the CIA, was given more authority in the distribution of aid to *Mujahadeen* leaders.²⁷ However, the CIA under Director Casey persisted in involving itself with the supply and training of *Mujahadeen* forces. By mid-1985, the total amount of U.S. monetary and military aid

²⁵ Ibid, 156-157.

²⁶ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York, Penguin Books, 2004), 126-127.

²⁷ Ibid, 126-127.

provided to the *Mujahadeen* amounted to \$250 million, matched by Saudi Arabia. The appropriations were primarily used for the purchase of more advanced military weaponry, such as the Swiss Oerlikon anti-aircraft cannon and British Blowpipe missiles, in order to limit the effectiveness of Soviet air strikes and helicopter assaults.²⁸

The United States continued to channel its monetary and military funding primarily to the *Mujahadeen* through President Zia Ul-Haq and the ISI in Pakistan. However, the government in Pakistan had its own political agenda with regards to aiding Afghanistan and the *Mujahadeen* during the war that countered American interests and objectives. With Soviet military offensives increasing in Afghanistan in 1984, President Zia cooperated with the United States to not only remove the threat posed by the Soviet Union but also to bring about a “strategic realignment” of South Asia under the leadership of Pakistan.²⁹

Brigadier Mohammed Yousef, Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammed Khan, and General Akhtar Abdur Rahman of the ISI equipped, trained, and allocated monetary aid from the Pakistani government and U.S. government to *Mujahadeen* groups. In doing so, they aimed to assert stronger control over the resistance and its movements in Afghanistan against Soviet troops. Compared to the U.S. strategy to aid a variety of fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist local commanders of the *Mujahadeen*, the ISI channeled the bulk of the United States and Pakistan’s military and monetary aid to leaders of the most fundamentalist factions of the resistance. This included the distribution of weapons and money to Hezbe Islami, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Jamaat-e-

²⁸ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 157-158; William Claiborne, “Reports of More Aid to Afghan Rebels Stirs Feuds,” *The Washington Post*, February 7, 1985, 1.

²⁹ Ibid, 92.

Islami, and most importantly, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar.³⁰ They chose this strategy because leaders such as Hekmatyar were the most popular among the refugee population in Pakistan and were considered by the ISI to be the most effective and determined units of the *Mujahadeen*. In addition, the ISI and Pakistani government respected the significant ties Gulbaddin Hekmatyar had to Pashtuns within their country.³¹

Hekmatyar was the most radical Islamic fundamentalist among the *Mujahadeen* during the Afghan-Soviet War. A member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and founder of the Hezb-e Islami political party, Hekmatyar was a fervent Islamic extremist who had alliances with various radical members of the *Mujahadeen*. Although he was well connected with other members of the *Mujahadeen*, he was not willing to compromise and unify with other field commanders and leaders within the resistance. Despite their common enemy, the Soviet Union, Hekmatyar was known for fighting with and at times killing leaders of rival factions within the *Mujahadeen* forces during the war in order to improve his status in the country in the post-war period. Even though his actions were criticized by the CIA, the National Security Council, and the State Department, the ISI provided him with the strongest support and allocated the highest percentage of its covert aid to him during the war. The leaders of the ISI argued that he was reliable and had a history of success in organizing military assaults against Soviet forces.³²

The ISI's distribution of money and weapons from the U.S., Egypt and Pakistan to fundamentalist leaders and, more importantly, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, during the war contributed greatly to the pervasive corruption, political unrest, and civil war that marked

³⁰ Ibid, 160-161.

³¹ Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 61.

³² Westad, 349; Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, 151; Goodson, 61-62.

Afghanistan in the post-war years. According to Cordovez and Harrison, the United States government “did not make a serious effort to prevent the consolidation of fundamentalist control over the resistance” under the direction of the ISI.³³ For the larger Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, Pakistan was a major U.S. ally in the Middle East and was a “frontline state” in the Cold War and Afghan-Soviet War. The United States allowed the ISI to continue aiding Hekmatyar and other fundamentalist leaders as long as it was effective in combating Soviet troops and contributing to the defeat of the Soviet military in Afghanistan, further strengthen U.S. relations with Pakistan, and would, in the end, secure U.S. Cold War interests and influence in Afghanistan. However, this is not to say that the CIA did not recognize, in its entirety, the threat of ISI activity and aid to Hekmatyar to Afghanistan’s future and U.S. interests in the region because of his extreme fundamentalism.

In 1985, as a result of their concerns about Gulbaddin Hekmatyar and the future of Afghanistan, the CIA began to limit their dependency on the ISI and take more unilateral action by providing their own military assistance to preferred leaders of the *Mujahadeen*, such as Ahmed Shah Massoud. Furthermore, the CIA Afghan Task Force began to utilize Afghan agents within Kabul, such as Abdul Haq, and members of the Pashtun Durrani tribal federation, all of whom opposed the ISI and Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, to increase their involvement in the war and open new outlets for aid to the *Mujahadeen*. Despite former President Ford’s Executive Order 11905 restricting intelligence activities and political assassination, the CIA in late 1985 also began to

³³ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 163.

organize covert operations to attempt to assassinate Mohammed Najibullah, the fourth and last President of the Soviet Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.³⁴

Although the CIA had provided Massoud's resistance forces, the United Front of the Council of the North, with weapons and funding in the years prior to 1985, it was in 1985 that aid to his Afghan fighters in the Panjishir Valley markedly increased relative to other leaders of the *Mujahadeen* that the U.S. government was supporting. The U.S. considered Massoud to be a major strategist and fighter in the Panjishir Valley during the war.³⁵ Despite a temporary truce with the Soviet Union in 1983, Massoud was well respected among many leaders and volunteers of the *Mujahadeen*. From a U.S. perspective, the truce provided Massoud with a period of time in which he was able to regroup and rearm his forces in the valley, and challenge Hekmatyar on a regional level for power. Indeed, in 1984 and throughout 1985, Massoud and his forces countered a 20,000 man Soviet advance into the Panjishir Valley.³⁶ Moreover, and more importantly, the CIA and the State Department valued the fact that Massoud, although devout, was not an extremist like Gulbaddin Hekmatyar. As a result, the CIA contended that arming him over others posed less of a threat to U.S. interests in the region.

Although there was immense competition for power and aid between Ahmed Shah Massoud and extreme Islamic fundamentalist leaders of the *Mujahadeen*, particularly Rabbani and Hekmatyar, the CIA neglected to properly address the threat posed by Hekmatyar and the possible consequences of aligning themselves and the U.S. with Massoud. The CIA continued to provide the most monetary and military aid to the

³⁴ Coll, 131.

³⁵ Ibid, 115-117.

³⁶ Ibid, 121-123.

Mujahadeen and Massoud, and conduct covert operations in Afghanistan, despite NSDD-166 limitations on their authority in the Afghan-Soviet War. Under the context of the Cold War, the CIA perceived Massoud as the most capable ally and source of U.S. military and monetary aid for the defeat of the Soviets, protection of U.S. interests during the war, and spread of U.S. political influence in the post-war period.

In January of 1985, Soviet elite *Septznaz* units and the Soviet Fourth Army, were continuing their new military strategy and tactics in attempt to break the stalemate with the *Mujahadeen*. Air missions and helicopter raids continued along with increases in troop numbers to a total of 115,000 men in Afghanistan. An additional 40,000 men on the Soviet side of the Afghan border and between 30,000 and 40,000 soldiers of the Afghan army backed these forces.³⁷ According to U.S. analysts in the U.S. Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, the war was estimated to cost the Soviet Union \$3 billion per year and 25,000 combat related casualties. Notwithstanding such costs, the Soviet military in 1985 still remained strong and continued to make clear advances in Afghanistan. According to Richard P. Cronin, a U.S. analyst for the U.S. Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division of the Congressional Research Service, the Soviet Union has “kept a communist regime in power in a sensitive border region and has gained some strategic advantages, including an expanded airbase at Shindand, in Southwestern Afghanistan, which puts Soviet tactical aircraft nominally within range of the Persian Gulf.”³⁸ Furthermore, “Soviet strategy seems to be maintaining control of Afghanistan

³⁷ Richard P. Cronin, U.S. Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, “Afghanistan After Five Years: Status of the Conflict, The Afghan Resistance and the U.S. Role,” 1985, 1 and 4, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01615.

³⁸ Ibid, 3.

with a minimum military commitment while seeking to train a new generation of Afghan communist leaders loyal to Moscow.”³⁹

Even though there was a level of uncertainty as to the sustainability of the strength of the Soviet government regime and military in Afghanistan, the United States was aware of the capacity of the Soviet military to continue its efforts in Afghanistan in 1985. However, Cronin perceived that the Soviet government regime to continue to “lack popular support and remain divided between the dominant pro-Soviet *Parcham* (“banner”) faction and a more radical *Khalqi* (“masses”) faction. The Afghan military and bureaucracy (under the Soviet regime in Kabul) have been demoralized and decimated by defections to the resistance and the flight of officials and soldiers to Pakistan.”⁴⁰

In contrast to the Soviet Union’s status in Afghanistan, U.S. relations with the *Mujahadeen* in January of 1985 remained strong thanks to the increases in weaponry and funding and the covert assistance provided by the CIA. Although U.S. aid to the Afghan resistance was primarily a covert action by the U.S. government that did not bar the U.S. news media from depicting the level of U.S. commitment to the resistance. According to a *Washington Post* article, Congress had not only increased covert funding to the *Mujahadeen* in the last two years to a range between \$250-280 million, reportedly 80% of the CIA covert operations budget, but it had also approved of a decision to supply the resistance with a new anti-aircraft weapon.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁴¹ Bob Woodward and Charles P. Babcock, “U.S. Covert Aid to Afghans of the Rise: Rep. Wilson Spurs Drive for New Funds, Anti-Aircraft Weapon for the Insurgents,” *The Washington Post*, January 13, 1985, 1; Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1997), 320-321.

In addition, despite division within the U.S. government over how much and for how long aid to the resistance will continue, the government, according to the *Washington Post* in 1985, planned to continue the Afghan Task Force program. The U.S. perceived the *Mujahadeen* to be making great strides and advances militarily with U.S. assistance but according to analysts in the U.S. Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, the resistance “still lack a common political platform and remain divided by ideological, sectarian, and tribal differences and personal rivalries.”⁴² Despite the alliance known as the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahadeen, formed between fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist *Mujahadeen* leaders and parties such as Ahmed Shah Massoud, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar and his Hezb-e Islami party, and Burhanuddin Rabbani and his Jami’at-e-Islmani party, division and conflict between Massoud, Hekmatyar, and Rabbani persisted. However, as Cronin noted, for the majority of U.S. government officials, the fact that the *Mujahadeen* has “continued to fight for five years to prevent a Soviet consolidation is reason enough to provide them with the wherewithal to fight more effectively.”⁴³

The United States government concerned itself with the lack of unity and conflict between the leaders of the *Mujahadeen* mentioned above only when it was affecting the military performance of the resistance against Soviet forces. However, for the majority of the war, U.S. officials chose to ignore the possible implications of the conflict between the future leaders of Afghanistan. This is evidenced as the U.S. continued to fund and arm the *Mujahadeen* and its leaders despite warnings and declarations by the United Nations General Assembly that the foreign armed intervention in Afghanistan threatens

⁴² Richard P. Cronin, U.S. Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, “Afghanistan After Five Years: Status of the Conflict, The Afghan Resistance and the U.S. Role,” 1985, 1.

⁴³ Ibid, 9.

Afghan people's rights to "determine their own form of government and to choose their own economic, political, and social system free from outside intervention."⁴⁴ Furthermore, the U.N. General Assembly, while stressing humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees, cautioned against foreign intervention as it challenged the "preservation of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned character" in Afghanistan and the consequences of this threatened international peace and security.⁴⁵

In 1985, the consequences of such negligence on the part of U.S. officials began to arise, particularly with the increase and spread of international terrorism. Influenced by Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, extreme Islamic fundamentalists within the Muslim Brotherhood and in Hezbollah, attempted to encourage support for the Arab cause in Palestine against Israel and in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union by orchestrating terrorist attacks across the world in areas such as Vienna, Italy, and Rome. Indeed, many of the terrorists arising during this period were trained and funded as part of the Afghan *Mujahadeen* supported by the ISI and Brigadier Yousef. Furthermore, the terrorist cells arising were also aided by the money, and military training and technology provided by the U.S. government under NSDD-166.⁴⁶ Although the U.S. government, particularly the CIA and National Security Council, was aware of this, under NSDD-166 members of the CIA and National Security Council continued to train fighters and leaders of *Mujahadeen* forces to

⁴⁴ United Nations General Assembly, "The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security," 1985, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01655.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 1-2.

⁴⁶ Coll, 139-140; Woodward, 465, 468-469.

use weapons and explosives in the form of car bombs and briefcase bombs in order to defeat Soviet military forces moving across Afghanistan.⁴⁷

In response to this increase in international terrorism, President Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 179 in July of 1985 stating, “The United States has an obligation to protect its citizens and interests against terrorists who have so little regard for human life and values we cherish. It is therefore imperative that the United States develop a sustained program for combating terrorism.”⁴⁸ Yet, although the Reagan Administration recognized this growing threat, its impact on Afghanistan during and after the war was underestimated and not a primary concern and objective under U.S. foreign policy during the 1980’s. Blinded by their pursuit to secure victory over the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and in the Cold War, the United States government continued to train and aid *Mujahadeen* leaders and fighters themselves and through the ISI.

The rise of terrorism in the mid to late 1980’s was as a result of the political divisions within the *Mujahadeen* and of significant increases in U.S. aid to the resistance. Yet *Mujahadeen* leaders were still gaining the support of the Afghan people and the international community. In comparison to the *Mujahadeen*, the situation in Afghanistan for Soviet forces was marked by long periods of stalemate and slow progress. Furthermore, the new Soviet General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the Politburo pursued a change in its political strategy within Afghanistan. The PDPA, under the leadership of Babrak Karmal, was pushed by the Politburo, particularly Mikhail Gorbachev, to adopt more liberal policies in Afghanistan and to transform the regime from one dominated by Soviet Communist officials to one in which non-Communists

⁴⁷ Ibid, 129.

⁴⁸ White House Office of President Ronald Reagan, “Presidential National Security Decision Directive/ NSC-179,” Federation of American Scientists- Intelligence Resource Program, 1985, 1.

were given influence and power. However, as the war progressed, Karmal resisted the demands of the Soviet government in Moscow and the idea of a U.N. negotiated settlement.⁴⁹ The Soviet Politburo replaced him with Mohammad Najibullah.

In 1986 the most intense fighting of the Afghan-Soviet War occurred and Afghan rebel divisions began to effectively challenge and reverse the success of the Soviet military. Despite rumors of a possible Soviet strategy for withdrawal in Afghanistan, the U.S. government, specifically the Office of the Secretary of Defense, contended that the Soviet approach was “hard and intense on the battlefield, soft-sounding in the diplomatic arena”.⁵⁰ The U.S. government, particularly the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Congressional Afghan Task Force, believed that the Soviet Union, although experiencing setbacks, was “as determined as ever to destroy and subjugate the resistance” while deceiving and dividing the resistance and the international community with false promises of a negotiated settlement and withdrawal from the region.⁵¹ Gorbachev initially pursued a U.N. negotiated settlement with the United States and Pakistan; however, the Politburo insisted that the war could be won. The Soviet military continued to add more elite *Spetsnaz* units and increased their air bombardment of Afghanistan, particularly sites of *Mujahadeen* operations.⁵² *Mujahadeen* resistance activity intensified in all northern provinces of Afghanistan bordering the Soviet Union.

The United States government did not consider a U.N. negotiated settlement to be a viable option as long as Soviet military forces were in Afghanistan. Indeed, the Reagan

⁴⁹ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 202-203; Gates, 327-330.

⁵⁰ Dr. Elie D. Krakowski, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense, “A Negotiated Settlement to the Afghan Soviet War?,” 1986, 9, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01686.

⁵¹ Ibid, 4 and 10; U.S. Congress Task Force on Afghanistan, “Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan Hearing,” 1986, 3-4 and 16, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01701.

⁵² Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 187-188.

administration would have only agreed to a negotiated settlement for the regional conflict in Afghanistan if the Soviet government guaranteed a withdrawal of its military. Although a negotiated settlement could have ended the Afghan-Soviet War and signified a major setback for the Soviet Union in the Cold War, the United States government, despite the consequences, wanted to arm the *Mujahadeen* until the Soviet Union was militarily and economically crippled before agreeing to a negotiated settlement to the conflict. U.S. policymakers were fixed on securing U.S. hegemony in Afghanistan and the Middle East through a Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. As a result of the continued presence of the Soviet military in Afghanistan, the United States government considered supplying Pakistan with a particularly important set of military hardware: Stinger anti-aircraft cannons and Sidewinder missiles.

The decision to arm the *Mujahadeen* with the Stinger was hotly disputed in Washington. The Stinger is a lightweight, easily portable, shoulder-fired air defense system capable of destroying low-altitude high-performance aircraft. As a lightweight yet durable weapon, it performs well in rugged and difficult terrain like that found throughout Afghanistan.⁵³ The U.S. Army was reluctant to deplete its stocks of one of its most valued weapons and feared that American military technology, if captured by Soviet forces, would be compromised and deny the United States “plausible deniability”. The State Department was concerned that the introduction of Stingers would provoke the Soviet military to assault Pakistan.⁵⁴ The CIA was wary of giving its full support to

⁵³ U.S. CENTCOM, “Stinger: One Year of Combat,” 1987, 3 and 9, Digital National Security Archive-Item # AF02065.

⁵⁴ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 195; Patrick E. Tyler and David B. Ottaway, “The CIA in Transition: Casey Strengthens Role Under ‘Reagan Doctrine,’” *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1986, 1.

supplying the Afghan rebels with Stinger Missiles because of a fear that missiles could be captured and used by terrorists rising within the ranks of the *Mujahadeen*.⁵⁵

In addition, members of the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan began to debate over the establishment of a more legitimate political alliance of the *Mujahadeen* in order to represent the resistance on an international stage. Task Force members such as Congressman Charles Wilson, Senator Humphrey, Senator Wallop, and Ambassador Kirkpatrick, believed the creation of a political headquarters for the *Mujahadeen* alliance would facilitate not only greater political unity and stability in the post-war period, but also, and more importantly greater humanitarian aid, unity among fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist leaders in the *Mujahadeen*, and more reliable distribution of U.S. military aid to members and leaders of the resistance.⁵⁶ As evidenced by the statements made by Senator Wallop on this issue, there was a concern that “what we are seeing isn’t a change in policy but an absence of policy. We have yet to decide what to do, and therefore we do a little bit of everything in the hopes that in some moment in time we will see an emerging event which we can live with—and the best we could expect would be something that we could live with...it wouldn’t be something that we created, it would be something that we ultimately absorbed...there is not now a policy...it’s a vacuum.”⁵⁷

Although the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan considered the short term and long terms implications of the political instability of the resistance, these concerns were subverted and undermined by the CIA, the National Security Council, the State Department, and President Reagan. These particular branches of the U.S. government,

⁵⁵ Patrick E. Tyler and David B. Ottaway, “The CIA in Transition: Casey Strengthens Role Under ‘Reagan Doctrine,’” *The Washington Post*, March 31, 1986, 1.

⁵⁶ U.S. Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan, “Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan Hearing,” 1986, 31-37, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01701.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 53.

although dependent on congressional appropriations to fund and arm the *Mujahadeen*, were focused solely on arming the resistance until the Soviet Union was defeated and committed to a negotiated settlement for withdrawal of its military forces under U.S. pretences.

By mid-1987, the CIA station chief of Afghanistan, Milton Bearden, and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Fred Ikle convinced President Reagan to authorize the deployment of 250 Stingers and 1,000 missiles to Pakistan and the *Mujahadeen*.⁵⁸ The Stingers did lead to massive losses for the Soviet Union militarily and economically in 1986. Soviet air superiority was crippled as their fighter jets and assault helicopters were shot down in large numbers.⁵⁹ Though their effectiveness may have been overstated, the Stinger was very successful in limiting the Soviet military and securing *Mujahadeen* supply lines. Furthermore, the increased activity and success of the resistance with more advanced military technology such as the Stinger missile demoralized Soviet troops. The “hit-and-run ambush tactics” of the *Mujahadeen* forced Soviet troops to exercise increased vigilance and expect the unexpected. In addition, the rugged terrains continued to create numerous difficulties for the mechanized warfare Soviet forces were accustomed to. The new phase of the Afghan-Soviet War entailed warfare that the Soviet Armed Forces were not trained and prepared for.⁶⁰

Although the U.S. government and military considered the implications for providing the *Mujahadeen* with Stingers, the overall mission and policy goal to declare victory over the Soviet Union in the conflict and in the Cold War overcame any

⁵⁸ Coll, 154, and Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 198.

⁵⁹ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 199-200; David B. Ottaway, “U.S. Missiles Alter War In Afghanistan: Rebels Able to Blunt Attacks on Enclaves,” *The Washington Post*, July 19, 1987, 1.

⁶⁰ U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, “Soviet Troop Morale In Afghanistan,” 1986, 1-2, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF01680.

consideration of the collateral consequences of this action. It can be concluded that the Stingers made it much more difficult for the United States to move toward disengagement from the region and from the war against the Soviet Union.⁶¹ Despite the impact of the Stingers upon Soviet air power, and the fact that it probably hastened the eventual Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, it can be considered that their introduction to *Mujahadeen* forces threatened U.S. interests and security in the post-war period. This is primarily evidenced as Islamic extremist groups and leaders such as Gulbaddin Hekmatyar and members of the Hezb-e Islami party, and Burhanuddin Rabbani and members of the Jami'at-e-Islmani party acquired this new military technology from the ISI and intensified their campaign for power within Afghanistan while condemning U.S. influence in the region after the Soviet withdrawal.⁶² But, for U.S. policymakers, the supply of Stingers to the *Mujahadeen* served U.S. interests at the time of their deployment, which was to defeat the Soviet Union, halt the spread of Communism, and secure U.S. victory in the Cold War.

By 1987, it was clear to Gorbachev and his political advisors that the Soviet Union could not continue their military efforts in Afghanistan. At this point in the war the *Mujahadeen* were better organized and experiencing more military success. In addition, American willingness to support and aid the *Mujahadeen* until victory was assured was another factor influencing Gorbachev and his political advisors to reconsider their strategy in Afghanistan. However, the most important element impacting Gorbachev's reevaluation of Soviet strategy and policy in Afghanistan was the effect the war was having on the Soviet Union's international position, and its political, economic, and

⁶¹ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 199-200.

⁶² Westad, 358.

social infrastructure. According to the CIA, on an international level, the Soviet-Afghan War, according to Gorbachev, was a “bleeding wound”. The Soviet Union’s involvement in the war led to periodic censure within the United Nations, and has become a “stumblingblock for improved Sino-Soviet relations, and complicated Soviet policy toward nations in the nonaligned movement.”⁶³ Furthermore, the Soviet Union’s continued engagement in the war by 1987 diminished the legitimacy of Soviet Communism relative to U.S. democracy. Indeed, the idea of “Soviet exceptionalism” was in question across the international system.

As an increase in Soviet casualties resulted from more aggressive Soviet military action in the war, antiwar sentiment among the Soviet populace in Moscow grew. In January of 1987 a government-sponsored opinion poll revealed that one out of six people in Moscow openly criticized the war.⁶⁴ The costs of the war helped divide public opinion and the Politburo in Moscow. From 1979 to 1986 the number of Soviet troops within Afghanistan increased from 80,000 to 120,000. Furthermore, from 1980 to 1985, Soviet aircraft and military hardware was upgraded but at a considerable cost.⁶⁵ These placed a strain on the Soviet Union’s economic and political infrastructure. According to the U.S. government, by 1987 the war had cost the Soviet Union 15 billion rubles. During 1984 to 1985 the Soviet military lost 750 aircraft, particularly helicopters. Although some of the aircraft was replaced by existing stock, many of the more advanced and expensive aircraft were remanufactured. Moreover, with the need for increases in the number of troops within Afghanistan, the Soviet military was forced to spend more money on the

⁶³ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “The Cost of Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan,” 1987, 1, National Security Archive-Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.

⁶⁴ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 247.

⁶⁵ CIA Directorate of Intelligence, “The Cost of Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan,” 1987, 7-9, National Security Archive- Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.

production of weapons, ammunition, equipment, and personnel carriers.⁶⁶ Although less than three percent of the Soviet Union's armed forces were engaged in the war in Afghanistan by 1987, the economic costs of the war were becoming staggering.

As a result, the U.S. government perceived that under Gorbachev, the level of Soviet military expenditures would level off and would not continue to grow. Despite the increasing number of Soviet helicopters in Afghanistan to support Soviet special forces, the United States government expected the Soviets "to continue to limit the resources they are committing to ground operations" as they pursued political and military strategies for disengagement and placing responsibility on the Afghan army to deal with the resistance. However, the U.S. government did not believe that the Soviet Union was prepared to abandon its government regime in Kabul.⁶⁷ According to U.S. policymakers, the USSR's determination to sustain the rise in economic costs in the war until this point in the war is evidence that they were committed to do whatever was necessary to secure its government regime from the resistance. As a result, U.S. officials in the CIA, State Department, and Congress were not prepared to relinquish their control over the *Mujahadeen* and the situation in Afghanistan. The U.S. government was beginning to experience a broadening of their objectives in Afghanistan. Despite a withdrawal of Soviet military forces from the region, the U.S. government believed that Soviet influence would remain in Afghanistan with the continued existence of the PDPA in Kabul. In the context of the Cold War, it was no longer enough to secure a military and economic defeat for the Soviet Union; U.S. policymakers were becoming more

⁶⁶ Ibid, 13.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 17-18.

concerned with the political future of Afghanistan and establishing a political system that would reflect American political and economic values and principles.

In recognition of this, Gorbachev continued to emphasize the need for a government coalition that was not only attractive to Communist factions within Afghanistan, but members of the resistance and tribal and ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Gorbachev affirmed that the PDPA, under the leadership of Mohammad Najibullah, needed to prepare to relinquish half of its power to nonparty and resistance elements, and tribal and ethnic group leaders. However, the PDPA would remain in control of the interior, defense, and foreign affairs in Afghanistan. Najibullah's policy of "national reconciliation" appealed to some members of the PDPA and Politburo, but did not gain the approval of political hard liners within the PDPA and local and tribal ethnic leaders in Afghanistan.⁶⁸

Moscow's internal conflict over the leadership and direction of the Kabul government regime was influenced and further complicated by the United States and Pakistan's policy of continued aid to the Afghan resistance. The United States was confident that increased pressure from a well-supplied and equipped resistance would accomplish a Soviet troop withdrawal and ultimately displace the Najibullah regime in Kabul in the post-war period. Yet, the United States government, in contrast to Pakistan, did not want the future of Afghanistan to be controlled by Islamic fundamentalist leaders.⁶⁹ Although this may have been a secondary concern for U.S. policymakers earlier in the war, in late 1987 as the Soviet resistance was on the brink of victory, it was elevated in the U.S. foreign policy agenda in Afghanistan. Indeed, in late 1987, the

⁶⁸ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 250-252.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 253.

United States government was beginning to shift its attention and policies towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan's political system and the future of its leadership. However, a fundamental part of this transition in U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan consisted of the United States government's pursuit of negotiating a peace with the Soviet Union to ensure the establishment of its own influence and control politically within Afghanistan in the post-war period. The United States, anticipated a direct role in the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. The *Mujahadeen*, recognizing this, began to condemn that peace process which they had sacrificed themselves for and now were not a part of. In July of 1987, the *Mujahadeen* organized a council meeting at Ghor, in which 1,200 *Mujahadeen* commanders called for the "political and tactical unity of all *Mujahadeen* fighting groups."⁷⁰ In addition, they asserted, "that the right to self-determination belonged to the Mujahadeen, and to those Afghans who are prepared to die in defense of their country."⁷¹ The *Mujahadeen* was preparing for victory and the future political, social, and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. In their preparation however, was no mention of the United States.

⁷⁰ European Office of the United Nations and other International Organizations, "Mujahidin High Council Meeting at Ghor, July 1987," 1987, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02051.

⁷¹ Ibid, 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

VICTORY WITHOUT PEACE: THE U.S. AND MUJAHADEEN BREAKDOWN OF THE SOVIET UNION AND AFGHANISTAN

Between 1986 and 1988, diplomats from Pakistan, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in talks in Geneva, Switzerland for a negotiated settlement of the political and military situation in Afghanistan. Despite a unilateral ceasefire in 1987, the war continued and intensified during the Geneva meetings. As a result of the economic and political situation in the Soviet Union, by the end of 1987, it was clear that Soviet military forces could not continue the war effort in Afghanistan. Yet, the United States government continued to heavily arm the *Mujahadeen* and pursued not just the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the region, but also a major defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Despite negotiations for the removal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and recognition of a rising civil war between *Mujahadeen* leaders, U.S. policymakers ignored the implications of providing monetary and military aid to the *Mujahadeen*, so long as it ensured a U.S. victory in the Cold War and the opportunity, not necessarily guarantee, for continued U.S. influence in Afghanistan in the post-war period.

In March of 1988, the CIA believed that Moscow had made a firm decision to abandon Afghanistan as a result of the war's effect on the Soviet regime's ability to follow through with its political agenda and goals in Afghanistan. In addition, U.S. intelligence assessed that there was growing pessimism politically and socially in Moscow about the military and political prospects for creating a viable client regime in

Afghanistan. However, the Soviet government in Moscow aimed to maintain the existence of the Soviet backed political regime under Najibullah in Kabul.¹

The CIA did not believe that Moscow would attempt to partition Afghanistan or start withdrawal and then renege.² According to a special national intelligence estimate by the CIA in March of 1988,

The Soviets want to withdraw under the cover of the Geneva accords. We believe they would prefer to withdraw without an agreement, however, rather than sign one that formally restricts their right to provide aid and further undermines the legitimacy of the Kabul regime.³

The CIA focused on two possible scenarios with regards to the future of Afghanistan's political framework. One considered that the fighting for power among the resistance groups would create so much chaos that no stable government would control Afghanistan after the Communist regime collapsed and withdrew. The other scenario focused on the possibility that Soviet regime would survive long after the Soviet's military's withdrawal from the region.⁴

However, many U.S. government officials and advisors under President Reagan argued that the Najibullah regime in Kabul would not long survive the completion of Soviet withdrawal even with continued Soviet military assistance. An assessment of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan by the director of the CIA stated, "Despite infighting, we believe the resistance will retain sufficient supplies and military strength to

¹ Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1997), 428-429.

² Special National Intelligence Estimate- Director of the CIA, "USSR: Withdrawal from Afghanistan," 1988, 219, National Security Archive- Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.

³ Ibid, 219.

⁴ Ibid, 220.

ensure the demise of the Communist government.”⁵ Yet, the United States government, particularly the CIA, could not predict the composition of the new government that would take its place in Kabul. U.S. policymakers believed “it initially will be an unstable coalition of traditionalist and fundamentalist groups whose writ will not extend far beyond Kabul and the leaders’ home area. It will be Islamic-possibly strongly fundamentalist...”⁶ With regards to the new coalition’s relations with the U.S. once the war concluded, the U.S. government perceived that it would be “ambivalent and at worst actively hostile...”⁷ The CIA was becoming aware of the conflict between leaders of the *Mujahadeen* and the possible implications it would have on U.S.-Afghan relations in the post-war period. Yet, instead of addressing this problem and the consequences it could have on U.S. security, and interests and influence in the region, the CIA continued to focus on arming the *Mujahadeen* to ensure a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the demise of the Najibullah regime in Kabul.

Gorbachev and the Politburo hoped to neutralize U.S. aid to the resistance once the Soviet military withdrawal began and use President Reagan and Washington’s alliance with Pakistan to moderate the support for pro-Islamic fundamentalists provided by Pakistani President Zia Ul-Haq. The United States government proved more willing to limit the pro-Islamist fervor of Pakistan than to limit its own influence and aid to the *Mujahadeen*.

The U.S. government also evaluated the international consequences of the Soviet military’s defeat in Afghanistan in the context of the Cold War. According to U.S.

⁵ Ibid, 219.

⁶ Ibid, 219.

⁷ Ibid, 219.

officials in the CIA, “It is an implicit admission that Soviet-supported revolutions can be reversed. It will demonstrate that there are limits on Moscow’s willingness and ability to use its power abroad, tarnish its prestige among some elements of the Communist movement, and lead other beleaguered Soviet clients to question Soviet resolve.”⁸ In addition, withdrawal was perceived by the U.S. as a benefit for the Soviet Union and for the West as well. It created an image of the Soviet Union as a responsible power in the international system and improved Soviet diplomatic status in the U.N. and with the United States. U.S. policymakers contended the withdrawal would present difficulties but also opportunities for improved relations and influence in the Middle East, particularly with Pakistan and Afghanistan. As evidenced by the statements above, the CIA viewed the international consequences of a Soviet withdrawal in terms of its effect on the Cold War, not in how it could impact U.S. security, the security of the international system, and U.S. influence in Afghanistan’s social, political and economic reconstruction. The CIA, although aware of the destabilizing situation in Afghanistan, failed to devote enough consideration and attention to the fact that with the removal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the well-armed *Mujahadeen* commanders and leaders would focus their efforts and weaponry on competing and assaulting each other for power over the country.

On April 14, 1988, the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan and the government of Pakistan, with the United States and the Soviet Union serving as guarantors thereof, signed the Geneva Accords relating to the situation in Afghanistan. The Geneva Accords consisted of an agreement for mutual relations, non-interference and non-intervention, and the return of Afghan refugees, to Afghanistan. In addition, and

⁸ Ibid, 220; Gates, 430-432.

most importantly, the Geneva Accords established a timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops beginning on May 15, 1988 and ending February 15, 1989.⁹ The United States predicted that the withdrawal of Soviet troops would be conducted in stages. According to the Defense Intelligence Agency, a central military intelligence branch of the United States Department of Defense, “The pullout of Soviet forces will probably be achieved by the successive evacuation of entire garrisons and areas, rather than through the ‘thinning’ of personnel in units. Larger forces will be turned over to Afghan forces.”¹⁰ Half of the Soviet troops would return to the USSR within the first three months of the withdrawal. Equipment, weapons, ammunition, and fuel would be passed to units of the Afghan army while armored vehicles would return to the Soviet Union. Once the Afghan army established a “protective perimeter”, the balance of the Soviet forces would depart Kabul for the Soviet Union by air and land.¹¹ The Soviet Union planned to withdraw its military forces from Afghanistan, but rearm the Afghan Army in order to maintain Soviet influence in the region through the protection of the Communist government regime under Najibullah in Kabul.

With regard to the *Mujahadeen*’s response to the withdrawal, the Defense Intelligence Agency believed that the *Mujahadeen* would focus their efforts on limiting the increase in strength of Afghan forces in order to conserve their own. In doing so, it was argued that the resistance would focus on isolating major government garrisons and cities, gaining control of supply routes, and stopping any aerial and tactical support to the Afghan army and their acquired garrisons from the Soviet military. Also, it was

⁹ U.S. State Department Bureau of Public Affairs, “Agreements on Afghanistan,” 1988, 4-8, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02178.

¹⁰ Defense Intelligence Agency, “Afghanistan: Soviet Withdrawal Scenario,” 1988, 1, National Security Archive- Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.

¹¹ Ibid, 2.

considered that *Mujahadeen* commanders would encourage Afghan forces to surrender and negotiate defections to the resistance through constant rocketing of airfields and missile bombardments.¹²

During this period, the Afghan government and military were weak. The Afghan government had never been able to completely fill its armed forces with the appropriate manpower, and Afghan aircraft and ground vehicles were older and less capable of competing with the advanced weaponry provided to the *Mujahadeen* by the U.S. and Pakistan during the war. The U.S. recognized that, “On the whole, the largely unmotivated and poorly trained Afghan troops are no match for the *Mujahadeen*” and during the later stages of the withdrawal, the U.S. government contended that the situation in Afghanistan would deteriorate rapidly.¹³ The CIA and State Department not only anticipated great rivalry between the resistance and the remaining PDPA government in Kabul, but also between the Afghan tribes and their leaders that had gained military and social power during the war. Furthermore, U.S. policymakers contended that, although it would be difficult, the *Mujahadeen* would probably capture the capital of Kabul and create an uneasy coalition of fundamentalists and traditionalists.¹⁴ But, the U.S. government underestimated the importance and impact of the internal rivalry between leaders of the *Mujahadeen* and ethnic groups within the region upon their goal to politically and economically reconstruct Afghanistan in an American image in the post-war period.

¹² Ibid, 2.

¹³ Ibid, 3.

¹⁴ U.S. State Department Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, “Afghanistan: Briefing to Members of Congress,” 1988, 4, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02144.

The United States government was focused on removing the Soviet military from Afghanistan, confident that the *Mujahadeen* would remove Najibullah and the Soviet government in Kabul. Although the U.S. government, particularly the CIA, was aware of the unrest among fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist resistance leaders, and the consequences of such discord during the Soviet withdrawal and in the post-war period, it was clear that once the Soviet military re-entered the Soviet Union in 1989, Afghanistan would no longer be a priority among U.S. policymakers in the post-war period. Furthermore, U.S. concern for Pakistan's influence within Afghanistan would take a back seat in the U.S. foreign policy agenda. The United States government conducted a foreign policy strategy similar to that during the initial phases of the war. Parallel to the wait-and-see approach of the U.S. government under President Carter from 1978 to 1981, U.S. policy makers were again monitoring Soviet military movement, the actions of the resistance, and were making "rhetorical bows" to the goal of Afghan self-determination.¹⁵

However, there was great debate within Washington over whether to continue to aid and arm the *Mujahadeen* and particular non-fundamentalist leaders, such as Ahmed Shah Massoud. Despite the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the region and the signing of the Geneva Accords, there was a majority within the U.S. government, specifically in the CIA, State Department, National Security Council, and Congress, who contended that the presence of the Najibullah government in Kabul made a "mockery" of the victory over the Soviet Union.

Like the government in Pakistan and the ISI, conservative policymakers in Washington argued for continued military assistance to the *Mujahadeen* to place pressure

¹⁵ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 268; U.S. State Department Bureau of Public Affairs, "Agreements on Afghanistan," 1988, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02178.

on Najibullah. The conservative political officials of the U.S. government perceived that continued military assistance to the *Mujahadeen* in the post-war period would force Moscow to amend the Geneva Accords and call for the removal of the Soviet government regime in Kabul, or Najibullah would be forced to withdraw unilaterally.¹⁶ However, a minority of policymakers in the U.S. government believed that “Afghanistan’s future political course must be left to the Afghan people to decide”, and hoped that Afghans would be able to develop a process for selecting a government representative of Afghan society. But, the CIA and State Department, supported by President Reagan, and powerful members of Congress such as Charles Wilson, Clarence “Doc” Long, and Paul Tsongas, pressed to continue to support the resistance militarily during the Soviet withdrawal and in the post-war period on a covert basis.¹⁷ According to the U.S. State Department Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, the United States, “will not end aid to the Afghan resistance until we are totally satisfied that the Geneva Agreements will get the Soviets out...and result in a free Afghanistan.”¹⁸

On the surface, for the sake of preserving the Geneva Accords and maintaining positive international opinion, the U.S. began enacting foreign policy for the return of Afghan refugees from Peshawar to Afghanistan in June of 1988. Approximately three million Afghans had fled to Pakistan and another two million fled to Iran in the years

¹⁶ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 268-269.

¹⁷ Alexander Alexiev, “The United States and the War in Afghanistan,” 1988, 19-20, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02098; U.S. State Department Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, “Afghanistan: Briefing to Members of Congress,” 1988, 3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02144.

¹⁸ U.S. State Department Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, “Afghanistan: Briefing to Members of Congress,” 1988, 4, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02144.

following the Soviet invasion. The U.S. budgeted \$119 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.¹⁹

However, the U.S. government was also creating policies and budgetary measures for “helping the Afghan people get back on their feet and rebuild their war-devastated country” through military aid to the *Mujahadeen* in order to combat the Afghan army and ultimately overthrow the Soviet government in Kabul.²⁰ This was evidenced in a concurrent resolution drafted by the House of Representatives to Congress in July of 1988, stating, “U.S. military and humanitarian assistance to the Afghan resistance should be maintained until the Soviet Union completely withdraws from Afghanistan.”²¹ In the context of the Cold War, the United States government wanted to guarantee the self-determination of the Afghan people, but on U.S. terms and conditions. In other words, through continued aid to the *Mujahadeen* and particular non-fundamentalist leaders within the resistance, the U.S. aimed to remove the remaining Soviet influence in the region in order to establish Afghan self-determination while securing and implanting its own political and economic influence, values, and principles in Afghanistan’s post-war reconstruction.

The Geneva Accords did not consist of an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union stating that the U.S. would not continue to intervene in Afghanistan and with the *Mujahadeen*. It only specified that Pakistan enter a concession for mutual relations, non-interference and non-intervention in Afghanistan during the Soviet

¹⁹ U.S. State Department Bureau of Public Affairs, “Status Report on Afghanistan,” 1988, 3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02225.

²⁰ Ibid, 3; Hooshang Amirahmadi, *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives* (Albany: State of University New York Press, 1993), 241.

²¹ U.S. House of Representatives, “Concurrent Resolution: U.S. Military and Humanitarian Assistance to the Afghan Resistance,” 1988, 2, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02318.

withdrawal. Furthermore, it stated, “should the Soviet Union exercise restraint in providing military assistance to parties in Afghanistan, the U.S. similarly will exercise restraint.”²² The Soviet Union however, continued to arm the Afghan Army in order to protect the PDPA regime under Najibullah in Kabul and as a result, the U.S. provided military assistance to the *Mujahadeen*. Whether the U.S. government intentionally assured that the Geneva Accords did not include a clause barring them from aiding the *Mujahadeen*, in anticipation of continuing policies to aid the resistance in the post-war period, is unclear. At the end of 1988, the only issue for U.S. policy was how far to press the Soviet Union by continuing to supply the resistance during and after the Soviet troop withdrawal.

According to the Congressional Research Service in 1988, there were officials in the U.S. government that argued that “political factors, not material, will determine the outcome of the internal Afghan conflict, and that the United States should not jeopardize the Soviet withdrawal and the accord itself...” However, Afghan activists in Washington argued that the U.S. “must match not only new supplies that the Soviets may send to their Kabul allies, but also tons of material being left by departing Soviet troops to insure a victory by the resistance.”²³ Although Pakistan, in acknowledgement with the Geneva Accords, may have limited the flow of weapons, such as the Stinger anti-aircraft missile, to the *Mujahadeen* during the Soviet withdrawal, the U.S. government, particularly the CIA, continued to provide arms to the resistance. The *Mujahadeen* and the U.S. gave no indication of any desire to give the Soviet Union a “reprise” or “decent interval” in their

²² U.S. State Department, “Revision of U.S. Statement on Afghanistan,” 1988, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02191.

²³ Congressional Research Service, “Afghanistan: Status, U.S. Role, and Implications of a Soviet Withdrawal,” 1988, 15, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02241.

withdrawal and plan to protect their government regime in Kabul by creating a stronger Afghan army.²⁴

However, the United States government and *Mujahadeen*, although aiding one another in the defeat and removal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, were pursuing very different goals at that point in the Soviet-Afghan conflict. The *Mujahadeen* were using U.S. aid to expedite the Soviet withdrawal from the region and overthrow the Soviet government under Najibullah. Yet, *Mujahadeen* leaders such as Ahmed Shah Massoud, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, and Burhanuddin Rabbani, used U.S. weaponry supplied during the war and the Soviet withdrawal to assault not only the Afghan army protecting the Soviet government in Kabul, but also one another in an attempt to gain self-determination, power, and control once Najibullah was overthrown.

Although continued military aid to the *Mujahadeen* and the withdrawal of Soviet troops led to an increase in the violent conflict between resistance leaders and posed a threat to relations with the Soviet Union and Pakistan, the status of the Geneva Accords, and to U.S. influence in the political reconstruction of Afghanistan, the U.S. government saw the armament of the *Mujahadeen* through a Cold War lens. For the militarists and conservative policymakers within the Reagan Administration, continued military assistance to the *Mujahadeen* created a Vietnam-type scenario for the Soviet Union, crippled their remaining influence in Afghanistan and the Middle East, and reaffirmed that the United States had won the Cold War and was the global hegemon. Moreover, it affirmed U.S. “exceptionalism” and the sustainability of U.S. values and core ideas compared to those of the Soviet Union.

²⁴ Ibid, 15.

Despite those in the CIA and State Department aware of the growing unrest in Afghanistan, the U.S. government chose to neglect the civil war rising between *Mujahadeen* leaders, who were their only link to Afghanistan in the post-war period. Indeed, underneath empty promises and slogans for Afghan self-determination, the U.S. government planned to pursue a policy of nation building in Afghanistan in order to secure U.S. influence and interests in the region in the post-war period. It would be conducted first through arming the *Mujahadeen* to remove the Najibullah government and then through backing non-fundamentalist leaders, specifically Ahmed Shah Massoud, whom the U.S. government believed would best promote U.S. interests, values, and economic and political principles in the region. The U.S. government, however, would face enormous difficulties, parallel to those experienced by the Soviet Union, as policymakers continued to follow default rather than long-term policy strategies and ignored the implications of the situation in Afghanistan during the Soviet withdrawal and in the months following the war's end. The result would include civil war and the rise of extreme fundamentalist leaders and organizations promoting anti-American sentiment, traditional Islamic principles, and regional and international terrorism.

The war did not end with a Soviet withdrawal. By October of 1988, the situation in Afghanistan was rapidly changing. As the Soviet military was completely withdrawn from the region by that point in time, the remaining government under Najibullah in Kabul faced sustained opposition from *Mujahadeen* forces. Najibullah continually requested Soviet air strikes and brigades to protect the Soviet government in Kabul and break *Mujahadeen* blockades of various regions in Afghanistan such as Kandahar and Jalalabad. Gorbachev resisted each request made by Najibullah. The Geneva Accords had

inhibited the Soviet government in Moscow from protecting the government it had intended to defend.²⁵

However, the Soviet Politburo conducted covert airlifts and military assistance to the regime in Kabul. The assistance included supplying the Afghan army and agents of the Soviet Union remaining in Kabul with FROG and SCUD missiles, and \$250 to \$300 million per month. Thousands of Soviet technicians and military advisors remained within Kabul to advise the Afghan army in protecting Najibullah and the regime. In addition, covert combat operations were organized and mines were placed throughout the Afghan countryside to undermine Pakistan's and the United States support for the resistance. The Soviet government in Moscow and in Kabul also conducted a propaganda campaign blaming the West for the continuation of the Afghan conflict and the continued unrest within the country.²⁶

Despite the efforts of the Soviet Union to protect their government regime in Kabul, the United States government did not see them as sufficient. According to a report by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Public Affairs in January of 1989, the resistance was strong and coordinated compared to the weakening Kabul regime. Pursuant to U.S. government perceptions and estimates of the situation in Afghanistan, "the past year has seen greater resistance coordination on the battlefield and increased attention to political issues. An unprecedented number of resistance victories vividly exposed the weak core of the Kabul regime."²⁷ In addition, the U.S. government

²⁵ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, 269-270.

²⁶ Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 70-71.

²⁷ U.S. State Department Bureau of Public Affairs, "Afghanistan," 1989, 1, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02256.

contended that the resistance political thinking had “evolved” during the course of the Soviet withdrawal and the past year.²⁸

By February of 1989, the Afghan resistance had firm control over the Panjshir Valley, and Kandahar and Jalalabad, Afghanistan’s second and third largest cities. Furthermore, to facilitate political cohesion in anticipation for the collapse of the Soviet regime in Kabul, the leaders of the *Mujahadeen* who were part of the Islamic Unity of the Afghan Mujahadeen, established an interim government, despite their disputes and conflict with one another. The Afghan Interim Government or AIG consisted of seven parties based in Pakistan. The parties included were, Hezbi-Islami (HIG) headed by Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, Hezbi-Islami (HIK) headed by Maulavi Yunis Khalis, Jamiati-Islami led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ittehad-Islami headed by Abdur Rab Rasool Sayyaf, Harakati-Inqilabi Islami headed by Muhammed Ahmed Nabi, Mahazi-Milli-Islami led by Ahmad Gailani, and Jabhai-Nijati-Milli-Afghanistan headed by Sebghatullah Mojaddedi.²⁹

Although the United States government continued to make public statements of support for Afghan self-determination, and contended that the “US backs no parties or individuals in this process”, the United States government continued to monitor and

²⁸ Ibid, 1; U.S. National Security Council, “Afghan Withdrawal Update,” 1989, 1-2, Digital National Security Archive- Item # HN02094.

²⁹ Zalmay Khalilzad, “Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government,” 1991, v, RAND R-3949.

From 1979 to 1989, Zalmay Khalilzad was an assistant professor of political science at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. He also worked closely with Zbigniew Brzezinski, an official within Carter Administration who was involved in U.S. policy aiding the Mujahadeen during the Soviet invasion. In addition, he was involved with aiding U.S. policymakers in the White House, State Department, and Pentagon during the 1980’s and was the United States Ambassador to the United Nations and Afghanistan under President George W. Bush. Khalilzad is currently a counselor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

attempted to achieve control over the political future of Afghanistan.³⁰ The United States government did not perceive the prospects of the AIG to be very good. Due to internecine violence between the leaders of the *Mujahadeen*, specifically Hekmatyar and Massoud, in the post-war period, the U.S. government contended that the AIG was “most unlikely to dominate postwar Afghanistan” in 1989. Furthermore, the United States government viewed the AIG to be “narrowly-based”, alienating many educated Afghans while supporting religious and traditional fundamentalists. According to Selig S. Harrison’s testimony to the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the U.S. House of Representatives in June of 1989, “The basic dilemma now confronting Moscow and Washington alike is that neither the Kabul regime nor the Peshawar government-in-exile established by Pakistan and the United States represent the majority of Afghans.”³¹ The U.S. government also perceived the AIG to have a negative effect on the motivation of resistance commanders to fight as they found themselves between a government in Kabul which they despised and one in Peshawar that they did not support.³² The U.S. government contended that a broadening of the interim government would contribute to increasing the motivation of the military commanders to fight more aggressively and thus help expedite the removal of the Najibullah regime from Kabul, and would “swamp both the Communists and Islamic fundamentalists, who now

³⁰ U.S. State Department Bureau of Public Affairs, “Afghanistan,” 1989, 2, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02256.

³¹ Selig S. Harrison, “What Next in Afghanistan- Testimony for the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and U.S. House of Representatives,” 1989, 3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02291.

³² Zalmay Khalilzad, “Afghanistan After Soviet Military Withdrawal- Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Relations,” 1989, 2, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02293.

enjoy a degree of importance out of all proportion to their following.³³ However, in 1989, the situation in Afghanistan was still uncertain. Yet the U.S. was optimistic, believing that if the AIG was to fail, it could be replaced or fragmented. Either way, the U.S. surveyed the status of the AIG, as its outcome impacted not only the future of Afghanistan, but also U.S. policies in the region.³⁴

In the months following the formation of the AIG, the conflict between leaders of the *Mujahadeen*, particularly Hekmatyar and Massoud, intensified, as did assaults on the Soviet regime in Kabul. Despite their unified objective and commitment to creating a more representative government of the people or *shura*, the AIG was divided on how this should be achieved. U.S. concerns about the AIG proved valid as the AIG failed to develop a cohesive program with broad Afghan appeal, and further intensified competition and conflict between members and leaders of the *Mujahadeen*. The AIG ultimately split apart in late 1989. The United States pursued policies supporting Afghan self-determination but searched for a “political settlement” that was both “reasonable” and “possible”. For U.S. officials at the end of 1989, the most “desirable option” was a “transfer of power from Najibullah and the AIG to a neutral interim government, leading to elections for a new Afghan-wide assembly that can decide on a new political system for Afghanistan.”³⁵ The U.S. believed this could be done if the *Mujahadeen* leaders changed their idea of a proper government in Afghanistan to make it more acceptable to key military commanders, particularly Ahmed Shah Massoud, Afghan minority communities, supporters of the former king, and representatives in regime-controlled

³³ Selig S. Harrison, “What Next in Afghanistan- Testimony for the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and U.S. House of Representatives,” 1989, 3.

³⁴ Zalmay Khalilzad, “Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government,” 1991, v, RAND R-3949.

³⁵ Ibid, x.

territory.³⁶ U.S. officials and political analysts such as Selig S. Harrison, contended that a broadening of the interim government would contribute to increasing the motivation of the military commanders to fight more aggressively and thus help expedite the removal of the Najibullah regime from Kabul, and would “swamp both the Communists and Islamic fundamentalists, who now enjoy a degree of importance out of all proportion to their following”.³⁷

However, this appeared unlikely to many within the new Bush Administration, the CIA, and the State Department. As evidenced by Zalmay Khalilzad’s testimony before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Relations, although U.S. officials and advisors considered the balance of power to be favorable for the *Mujahadeen*, there was growing concern that commanders adopted a “wait and see attitude in the hope of encouraging the AIG leaders to accept power-sharing arrangements”.³⁸ Moreover, according to Khalilzad, officials in the Bush Administration believed that Soviet military aid to the Afghan Army, especially Scud missiles, created a “qualitative imbalance between Kabul and its opponents”.³⁹ The U.S. government argued and impressed upon the *Mujahadeen* that their main military strategy be to isolate the Kabul regime and increase tension between it and the Afghan populace.

³⁶ Zalmay Khalilzad, “Afghanistan After Soviet Military Withdrawal- Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Relations,” 1989, 3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02293.

³⁷ Selig S. Harrison, “What Next in Afghanistan- Testimony for the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and U.S. House of Representatives,” 1989, 3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02291.

³⁸ Zalmay Khalilzad, “Afghanistan After Soviet Military Withdrawal- Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Relations,” 1989, 4, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02293.

³⁹ Selig S. Harrison, “What Next in Afghanistan- Testimony for the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and U.S. House of Representatives,” 1989, 3; U.S. Director of Central Intelligence, “Afghanistan: The War in Perspective,” 1989, 2-3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # TE00997.

“A strategy of incremental strangulation—increasing pressure on cities by blocking roads, keeping airports under attack, conducting special operations against government facilities inside cities and mounting discriminating attacks from the outside can serve the Mujahadeen’s purpose well.”⁴⁰ To achieve this, the U.S. further encouraged the *Mujahadeen* to improve their coordination and develop strategies for the defection of those within the Kabul regime.⁴¹ In doing so, the U.S. government, specifically the Bush Administration and the CIA, pursued a policy to provide military aid to *Mujahadeen* while attempting to establish a more broad Afghan Interim Government that not only represented Islam but also and more importantly, would project American values and ideals in Afghanistan. For Selig S. Harrison, U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan in the post-war period carried “unacceptable moral as well as political costs. Such a policy is, in effect, a policy of ‘fighting to the last Afghan’ in the misguided pursuit of perceived American geopolitical objectives that can be achieved more through political and diplomatic means”.⁴² As a result, the U.S. government furthered the divisions and violence between fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists in Afghanistan.⁴³

At the end of 1989, the United States government did not perceive the *Mujahadeen* to be ready to govern Afghanistan effectively. Congress focused on continuing to supply the *Mujahadeen* until the Najibullah government was overthrown and expressed interest in supporting multiple moderate *Mujahadeen* leaders to establish a broad Afghan interim government, but the CIA and State Department began searching for

⁴⁰ Zalmay Khalilzad, “Afghanistan After Soviet Military Withdrawal- Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Relations,” 1989, 4.

⁴¹ Ibid, 5.

⁴² Selig S. Harrison, “What Next in Afghanistan- Testimony for the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and U.S. House of Representatives,” 1989, 15, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02291.

⁴³ Ibid, 9-10.

other options. Although Congress, and the CIA and State Department were preparing policies for Afghanistan's future leadership after Najibullah was removed, his regime still remained in Kabul from 1990 to 1991. During this period, despite its deficiencies, the *Mujahadeen* mounted numerous attacks and gained significant ground in Khost, Herat, Kandahar, and Kabul. Najibullah was hanging on by a thread and was suffering from the diminishment of Soviet aid. On the surface, the United States government continued to follow its policy agenda established since 1988. The U.S. State Department, although cognizant of the extreme division between Najibullah and the resistance, publicized American interest in an "initiation of dialogue between those active in the resistance and those Afghans now residing under regime control" in order to create Afghan self-determination, a representative Afghan government, and a non-aligned Afghan nation.⁴⁴

However, the CIA believed, as it had before, that it should persist in supporting the *Mujahadeen* movement against the Najibullah regime, and thus, continued to conduct covert operations to finance and arm resistance groups and leaders, specifically Ahmed Shah Massoud. The CIA concentrated on elevating Ahmed Shah Massoud and his forces to gain power and control of the government in Kabul. Despite the fact that Pakistan was still a base from which the CIA launched its covert operations, in Afghanistan, CIA operations, particularly those orchestrated with Massoud, were kept hidden from the Pakistani government under Benazir Bhutto and the ISI. The ISI, in turn, despite restrictions on the level of involvement Pakistan, was able to have in Afghanistan under the Geneva Accords and the setbacks of President Zia's death in 1988, continued to funnel arms and money to the resistance. Although the ISI and CIA continued to arm the

⁴⁴ U.S. State Department Bureau of Public Affairs, "U.S. Policy on Regional Conflicts: Cambodia and Afghanistan," 1990, 2-3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # AF02312.

resistance movement to overthrow Najibullah, they were still divided as a result of the ISI policy to support Hekmatyar, while the CIA armed and funded Massoud.⁴⁵

Between 1988 and 1989, although the number of incidents of international terrorism was gradually declining, U.S. interests continued to be the most frequent targets by international terrorists usually arising out of the Middle East. In 1989, 165 attacks were recorded against U.S. interests in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Western Europe.⁴⁶ According to the U.S. State Department Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, “Despite the decline in international attacks in 1989, terrorists retain the potential for resuming a greater level of violence, particularly against the United States.”⁴⁷ Even though there was fear and discomfort among members of the CIA and State Department towards the numbers of extreme jihadists arising within the ranks of the *Mujahadeen* and contributing to international terrorism, particularly against the U.S., CIA covert activities in Afghanistan did not stop. The CIA and State Department chose to disregard that their continued influence and presence in Afghanistan, although beneficial for the *Mujahadeen* in their pursuit to remove Najibullah, fueled anti-American sentiment and acts of terror emanating from extreme fundamentalists in the resistance and across Afghanistan.

The CIA, throughout 1990 and into early 1991, continued to fund Massoud and resistance groups without the assistance of the Pakistani government or the ISI. The CIA

⁴⁵ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 190-192, 195.

⁴⁶ U.S. State Department Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism and U.S. Office of the Secretary, “Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1989,” 1990, 3, Digital National Security Archive- Item # TE01012.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 4.

covert budget for Afghanistan in 1990 totaled between \$300 and \$400 million.⁴⁸ The CIA was providing military and monetary assistance to Massoud specifically, indicating, but not openly stating, that he was the best leader and military commander to unite the Afghan people, form a representative Afghan government, and combat extreme fundamentalists such as Hekmatyar, backed by the ISI, while promoting U.S. interests in the region. In accordance with this argument by the CIA, Peter Tomsen, the ambassador of the U.S to Afghanistan at the time, proposed and initiated a two-track plan to the situation in Afghanistan. The first recommended that the State Department hold political negotiations aimed at “sidelining extremists”, particularly Hekmatyar and Sayyaf. The second entailed the overthrow of Najibullah by assisting Afghan rebel forces, particularly those under the command of Massoud. As demonstrated by Steve Coll, although the CIA continued to work with the ISI to aid the *Mujahadeen*, they independently provided money and weapons directly to Afghan commanders under Massoud. For the United States government, specifically the CIA and the State Department, the interim government of Afghanistan would eventually be replaced by military leaders such as Massoud, Abdul Haq, and Ismail Khan.⁴⁹

As the assault against Najibullah persisted, Hekmatyar, receiving aid from Pakistan, and Massoud, receiving aid from the U.S., began to acquire and compete for territory surrounding Kabul.⁵⁰ A covert war for influence between the United States and Pakistan, and a civil war for power in Afghanistan was well underway by mid-1991. However, the U.S. government was hindered in its efforts to remove Najibullah and

⁴⁸ Al Kamen and George Lardner Jr., “Covert Action Budget Deferred; ‘Sensitive Talks Said to Be Underway Involving 3 Countries,” *The Washington Post*, July 21, 1990, 1.

⁴⁹ Coll, 207-208.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 202-203.

foster the establishment of an interim government in Afghanistan, as Massoud and the *Mujahadeen* were distracted by the civil war for power rather than removing Najibullah. Furthermore, Congress limited their appropriations to the CIA. By mid-1991, Congress had cut the CIA's funding for their covert war by approximately 60% to a total of \$280 million.⁵¹ The CIA's covert war was drifting to the outskirts of Washington's bureaucracy, as the fall of the Soviet Union and the reconstruction of East and West Germany under U.S. influence became a primary focus for policy makers.⁵²

The Cold War jihad alliance between the United States government and the *Mujahadeen* was unraveling due to uncertainty, Islamic radicalism, and the pursuit of power. The Middle East and the civil war raging between Massoud and Hekmatyar posed serious risks for United States security, U.S. allies in the Middle East, and U.S. influence in Afghanistan. This was evident as Hekmatyar began to stage massive assaults on Kabul itself with sophisticated long-range rockets supplied to him through the ISI. In addition, as Pakistan began programs for nuclear proliferation, the possibility that such technology could find its way into the hands of radical Islamic extremists and fundamentalists such as Hekmatyar became a concern of the CIA. Despite the end of the Afghan-Soviet War, the risks to U.S. security and U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and the Middle East, the rest of the government was still focused on Cold War politics. As radically violent and anti-American Islamic fundamentalists such as Hekmatyar and Osama Bin Laden began to rise in Afghanistan, and acquire more volunteers and modern military technology, the U.S. government, with the exception of the CIA and State Department, ignored this due

⁵¹ Ibid, 215-217.

⁵² Gates, 483-485.

to their pursuit to secure the fall of the Soviet Union, enhance U.S. hegemony, create a sphere of influence in Germany, and monitor the Iraqi military invasion of Kuwait.

On January 1, 1992, after the fall of the Najibullah regime, the CIA's legal authority to conduct covert operations in Afghanistan officially ended. With the incoming Clinton Administration, the situation in Afghanistan was no longer a priority in the U.S. policy agenda and was replaced by a focus on U.S. domestic policy. After years of monetary and military aid, and expectations for the creation and reconstruction of a stable Afghan government and Afghanistan under the umbrella of U.S. ideas, values and systems, the United States government perceived that such pursuits for the future of Afghanistan were no longer legitimate. In a country devoted to Islamic ideology which has meaning that can be interpreted in multiple ways and can be used for peaceful and violent purposes by the overlapping multiethnic and diverse population of Afghanistan, establishing a stable government under American influence proved problematic.⁵³ Furthermore, not only was the task of refugee repatriation and physical reconstruction of Afghanistan difficult, but also the remodeling of the Afghan political and economic system posed a challenge too great for the U.S. government. The agreement between *Mujahadeen* leaders to share power in Kabul with the overthrow of Najibullah was clearly a failed promise due to the violent religious and ideological competition for political power waged between leaders such as Massoud and Hekmatyar. Factions and leaders of the *Mujahadeen* intended to gain power individually through civil war and weaponry received by the U.S. and Pakistan.

⁵³ Eden Naby and Ralph H. Magnus, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and the Mujahid* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2002), 162-163.

It is the civil war and these cultural and political implications in Afghanistan in the early 1990's that led U.S. policy makers to realize that an internationally legitimate and stable government and army in Afghanistan could not be created and if it was, could not last long.⁵⁴ Moreover, since the Afghan-Soviet War concluded, the Soviet Union had disintegrated and the rise of Islamic radical threats as a result of U.S. influence in region posed a threat to U.S. security and the American public, the U.S. government perceived that aiding the *Mujahadeen*, remaining in Afghanistan, and pursuing a policy of nation building was a risky and unnecessary cost to the nation.⁵⁵

However, it must be recognized that the United States government facilitated its own failure in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The United States government, blinded by ambition, U.S. "exceptionalism", and Cold War politics, channeled military arms and money to groups that were, at best, partially reliable and organized, in order to serve American interests at that moment. The United States government dealt with multiethnic and tribal groups and leaders that, although united in a common effort to defeat the Soviet Union, were not bound to one another in the post-war period. U.S. policy makers failed to realize early enough that the Afghan-Soviet War was only the first step of a much larger and difficult conflict to establish peace and stability in the region. Furthermore, U.S. officials recognized too late that the cultural, social, and religious roots in Afghanistan could not be so easily dislodged by covert military arms agreements, money, and American diplomacy, ideals, values, and systems of government.

In 1992, with the Soviet Union dissolved, the Najibullah government abandoned in Kabul, and the withdrawal of U.S. influence in Afghanistan, the Afghan future was

⁵⁴ Ibid, 165.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 173-174.

determined by civil war between *Mujahadeen* volunteers, Massoud and Hekmatyar. The results would prove to be devastating for the Afghan people, its international status and its political and economic stability. As evidenced by recent history, the results of U.S. perceptions and policy during the Afghan-Soviet War and in the years after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan furthered the chaos and rise of terrorism and terrorist coalitions, such as the Taliban, within the region and abroad today.

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan was a victim of the Cold War, but it was the United States that became the ultimate victim. Although the geostrategic conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States that was played out in Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet War led to an American victory in the Cold War and Afghanistan to success in removing the Soviet Union from the region, it also created the military and social chaos that gripped the nation from the post-war period to the present day. The implications and consequences of this failure has greatly impacted the most recent history of the United States.

U.S. policies and strategy during the Afghan-Soviet War were made under a Cold War context and mindset. During the Afghan-Soviet War, the United States armed and funded “holy warriors” or fighters within the *Mujahadeen* to effectively combat and repel the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The United States government conducted this policy covertly through the CIA, the State Department, and the National Security Council in conjunction with the Pakistani government and ISI. Throughout the war and well into the post-war period, agents within the CIA and State Department organized the training of Afghan *Mujahadeen* fighters to tactically use the most sophisticated weaponry of the decade. The U.S. government provided monetary and military aid to the *Mujahadeen*, while training resistance fighters to properly use assault rifles, rockets, grenades, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, briefcase bombs, car bombs, and other explosives to physically and psychologically cripple and defeat Soviet military forces in the region.

Although this policy and strategy served U.S. interests during the war, the continued U.S. presence in Afghanistan in the post-war period and aid to the *Mujahadeen* contributed to the division of Afghan society, the rise of well-armed and well-funded extreme Islamic fundamentalists, and the inability of the United States government to successfully enact a policy of nation building to establish a stable Afghan government based on U.S. political and economic values, ideas, and principles. Furthermore, U.S. strategy during the Afghan-Soviet War and in the post-war period, fostered anti-American sentiment in the region, which ultimately developed into acts of terror against the U.S.

There are several questions to consider when looking at U.S. foreign policy during this period of history. Could the U.S. government have conducted a different and more effective strategy with regards to Afghanistan during and after the Afghan-Soviet War? What were the major pitfalls of such a U.S. policy? Does the U.S. government need to change its policy in Afghanistan and the Middle East?

The United States government could have administered a different and more effective strategy with regards to the situation in Afghanistan during and after the Afghan-Soviet War. The larger Cold War engagement with the Soviet Union during the Afghan-Soviet War blurred American policymaker's sensibilities towards the true aspirations of the Afghan people, the political and economic disorganization of the Afghan nation, the importance of Afghan traditionalist values, religion, ideology, and ethnicity to the political and social fabric of the country, and the internal conflict among Islamic social group, their leaders, and more importantly the leaders of the *Mujahadeen* within Afghanistan.

However, that is not to say that the arming and supplying of the *Mujahadeen* during the war was not necessary or imperative in order to stem the obvious Soviet goal to subjugate Afghanistan to Communism and use the region as a base to further spread Soviet influence and ideals across the Middle East diplomatically and if need be, militarily. If not for the United States, the Afghan *Mujahadeen* would not have been capable of effectively resisting and reversing Soviet military aggression and expansion. The money and advanced weaponry supplied by the United States to the *Mujahadeen* through Pakistan and the ISI was necessary and was the key to success during the war. However, the continuation of supplies of the *Mujahadeen* in the post-war period, albeit limited, proved to be a risky strategy for U.S. interests, security, and goals for continued involvement in the region to the present day.

In the post-war period, the United States government hoped and perceived that its efforts to aid the *Mujahadeen* and secure the overthrow of Najibullah during and after the war, would translate into support and the success of nation building policies in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, during and after the war, proved to be a prime example of a country in need of nation building and was perceived as a region that could further U.S. security, interests, and hegemony in the Middle East and internationally. Although it was supported by the Soviet Union prior to the invasion in 1979, Afghanistan was a politically and economically unstable region, torn and divided by civil unrest, and tribal and ethnic violence and conflict. With the invasion of the Soviet Union, the country was further devastated by the advanced Soviet military technology used in their assaults throughout the country. Despite the unification of the Afghan people towards defeating the Soviet Union, there were lasting divisions between members and leaders of the

Mujahadeen who represented different ethnic and tribal groups, and sects of the Islamic faith. This limited the stability and economic and political progress of the country.

The Soviet invasion and the Afghan-Soviet War proved to be a major opportunity for the United States to not only gain an upper hand in the Cold War against the Soviet Union, but also to enact direct policies geared towards improving U.S.-Afghan relations and U.S. influence in the Middle East, and more specifically, nation building in Afghanistan. Throughout the Afghan-Soviet War and in its aftermath, the United States properly approached its policy goals in Afghanistan multilaterally rather than unilaterally, calling upon the assistance of Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the United States had the economic and military resources to successfully ensure a lasting program to aid and arm the *Mujahadeen*, and rebuild Afghanistan during the war and in its aftermath. Yet, this plan backfired and strengthened the regimes of extreme Islamic fundamentalists and organizations that were traditional and religious in their thinking and practices and anti-American in their sentiment.

Moreover, “Afghanistan after 1979 was a laboratory for political and military visions conceived abroad and imposed by force.”¹ The United States perceived that Afghanistan could be exploited during the war in order to defeat the Soviet Union and then transformed in the post-war period into an ally and a nation that emulated American political, social, and economic ideals, values, and principles. Although this was possible during and after the war, the U.S. government missed their opportunity to do so as their foreign policy was shaped by “indifference, lassitude, blindness, paralysis, and

¹ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 576.

commercial greed”.² The United States government championed many groups, leaders, and members of the *Mujahadeen* during the war and in the post-war era. However, there were few convincing nationalists within the region willing to place their interests, and the interests of their tribe or ethnic group, behind that of Afghanistan’s. Although this suggests that Afghanistan may not have been a suitable candidate for nation building, agents within the CIA and State Department recognized this and continued to push forward with attempts to rebuild the political and economic infrastructure of Afghanistan in an American image. Moreover, in the early 1990’s, the CIA and State Department continued to implement its policies and strategy militarily rather than diplomatically with no clear or defined exit strategy from the region.

Although Ahmed Shah Massoud might have been the only true Afghan nationalist during and after the Afghan-Soviet, he could not create the Afghanistan that the United States hoped would develop once the Soviet Union withdrew and Najibullah’s regime collapsed. Massoud, like many of the other leaders of the *Mujahadeen* competing for power at the end of the war and in the early 1990’s, was very independent in character and conduct, and was tied to the Islamic faith and principles.³ Even though this inhibited the U.S. government’s ability to control his ascension to power and how he would rebuild Afghanistan once he established himself as the leader, U.S. officials proceeded with policies to fund and arm him. The United States government perceived that this was a better alternative to the radical Islamist vision of Afghanistan pursued by Pakistan in their support of Gulbaddin Hekmatyar.

² Ibid, 577.

³ Ibid, 577.

U.S. policy makers carried on the policies, perceptions, and Cold War politics of the Afghan-Soviet War into the early 1990's. The United States armed the *Mujahadeen* and its leaders, both fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist, during and after the war, despite the focus on Massoud. Although this proved successful in accomplishing the U.S. short-term policy agenda and interests, in the long run this strategy fostered the rise of a devastating civil war in Afghanistan, which inhibited and ended any hope of U.S. officials to successfully execute a policy of nation building in the region. Indeed, it was a poor strategy, and only at the war's end and too late in the scheme of things for the United States to employ a strategy for the democratization, and political, social and economic development of Afghanistan in an American image. The population of Afghanistan was demoralized and was divided, not only in their ethnic and tribal roots, but also in their support for different leaders of the *Mujahadeen* who expressed moderate and radical ideas for incorporating Islam into the country's political and economic infrastructure.

Despite the risk of pursuing a policy of American style-nation building among a divided populace engaged in civil war in Afghanistan, the U.S. government indulged in support for leaders and Islamic regimes that were undemocratic, corrupt, and bound to religious ideals and principles that clashed with American core ideas and systems. In addition, the U.S. government aligned itself with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in order to facilitate greater support for their efforts in Afghanistan in the 1990's. Although Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had significant influence in the region, there was evidence that both countries promoted the incorporation of traditional Islamic principles into the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, and extreme Islamic fundamentalists that

were members of organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban, and Al-Qaeda.⁴ As a result, U.S. policymakers enabled the development and rise of extreme Islamic fundamentalists and organizations such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda by focusing on the larger geostrategic engagement with the Soviet Union during the war and following Cold War politics and policies in the post-war period.⁵

The United States policy in the Middle East, specifically in Afghanistan, during and after the Afghan-Soviet War, was “based on some real and changing national interests rather than any immutable abstract principles. There is often a large gap between propaganda and actual policy.”⁶ During the war and in the post-war period, U.S. policy was consistent, but pursued “overlapping, conflicting, or inconsistent economic, political, and strategic interests”.⁷ On paper, U.S. policy objectives during the war were aimed at securing Afghanistan’s self-determination. However, the real policy goals of U.S. officials included assuring a flow of oil to the U.S., protecting the security of Middle East allies and Israel, and most importantly, ensuring continued U.S. influence in Afghanistan and the Middle East by containing Soviet expansion. The importance of these U.S. interests shifted during and after the war depending on the policymakers preferences and the changing situation and war effort in Afghanistan.⁸ There was and is a need for a balance of U.S. policy objectives and goals. Furthermore, U.S. officials ignored the political realities that ultimately distorted their foreign policy objectives in the region. This specifically pertains to U.S. covert operations during and after the war that exploited

⁴ Coll, 578-579.

⁵ Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, “The Mid-East Domino Theory”, 2006, 1, *The Washington Post*.

⁶ Hooshang Amirahmadi, *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives* (Albany: State of University New York Press, 1993), 10.

⁷ Ibid, 10.

⁸ Ibid, 11.

ethnic and tribal tensions, and individual power rivalries. In the pursuit to reshape Afghanistan in an American image and as part of an integrated international system under American influence, U.S. policymakers ignored the regions history, heritage, and dynamic cultural framework.

The U.S. government, like the Soviet Union, tried and continues to pursue policies to re-engineer the Afghan society and contain yet promote resurgent Islam. However, with such parallels in policy, the United States encounters the same problems which have continued to the present day. The Cold War patterns and politics have persisted in U.S. policy in the region, when the end of the Cold War could have marked a more peaceful transition of power, influence, and perception on the part of the United States. Although it has been heavily debated in the past and today, U.S. policy towards the Middle East and Afghanistan needs to be reviewed and re-evaluated. Yet even in the turbulence of conflict and struggle in the region, there are lessons from the past, which foster greater hope for the future.