

Lebanese American University

Department of Social Sciences

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The Consequences of U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan

From 1978 to 1992

By

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Abstract

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan compelled the United States to intervene in Afghanistan to contain Soviet influence. However, there were several consequences for the interference of both superpowers. While the Soviet Union deployed more than 100,000 troops to Afghanistan, the United States utilised its regional allies to launch a covert operation to aid and train Afghan mujahidin, or holy warriors, in their war against the Soviet Union. This Senior Study poses two questions on the topic: what different foreign policies were employed by the three presidential administrations during the period of 1978-1992 – Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush – and how U.S. support for non-state actors affected their power in the region. The arguments of this Senior Study are that all three presidents supported and continuously increased the aid sent to the mujahidin during the fluctuation of U.S.-Soviet relations throughout four Cold War periods that ranged from détente to rollback, and that U.S. support for non-state actors was facilitated with the aid of Pakistan, who favoured radical and conservative groups, which may have led to their evolvment as violent groups and the development of an anti-Western agenda. The hypotheses of this Senior Study examine the methods of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and the outcome of U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan. The findings of this Senior Study prove the negative outcome of U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan given the current state of Afghanistan, the presence of terror groups in the country, and the ongoing conflict in the country, which resulted in the active presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. This Senior Study also reflects on the outcomes of the Soviet-Afghan War and compares the current state of Afghanistan to Iraq after the 2003 War, calling it a weak and borderline failed state because of its inability to protect its citizens, secure its sovereignty, and maintain legitimacy with its constituents.

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Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
ISI	Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence
MI6	British Intelligence Services
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitations Talk
U.S.	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or Soviet Union

Introduction

Following the destruction European states faced during World War II, a power struggle ensued due to economic, political, and ideological differences between the U.S. and USSR. The Cold War between the Eastern and Western blocs resulted in geopolitical tensions between 1947 and 1991, resulting in several proxy wars such as the Vietnam War and the Soviet-Afghan War. The repercussions of the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, or the Afghan War, are still felt today. Between 1979 and 1989, Soviet forces intervened in Afghanistan to support the communist government in power against the mostly Muslim anti-communist guerilla fighters, who were then backed by the United States and sympathetic Muslim states, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.¹

Rebel forces, known as the Mujahidin because of their religiosity, emerged within tribal and urban groups and launched insurgent attacks against the government, prompting the USSR to intervene to protect their political interests in Afghanistan. The Mujahidin were composed of multiple guerilla groups fighting during the war against the communist government and Soviet forces. As a result, the U.S. supported the Mujahidin by providing them with funding and weapons to fight off Soviet power in the region in an attempt to contain its influence.²

This Senior Study examines the different foreign policies undertaken by three U.S. presidents and their administrations during the Afghan War: Presidents James (Jimmy) Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush. It compares the steps taken by each president and their administration as a reaction to the Afghan War, along with the level of intervention of each

¹ Ted Galen Carpenter, "The Unintended Consequences of Afghanistan," *World Policy Journal* 11, no. 1 (1994): pp. 76-87, 76-78.

² Jacqueline Fitzgibbon, "US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan: History, Context and Carter," in *US Politics, Propaganda, and the Afghan Mujahedeen: Domestic Politics and the Afghan War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 13-32, 13-16.

administration. In addition, consistent U.S. support for religious guerilla fighters in Afghanistan, as well as Muslim volunteers who travelled to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Mujahidin known as Arab Afghans, draws focus to the reasoning behind U.S. interference in Afghanistan. It also establishes whether U.S. foreign policy backfired by drawing a connection between U.S. intervention in the Afghan War and its current threat of international terrorism, which embroiled the U.S. in long, never-ending wars in the Middle East.

This Senior Study answers the following questions. How did the foreign policies of the administrations of Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush differ during America's intervention in the Soviet-Afghan War between 1978 and 1992? How did American support for non-state actors in Afghanistan during the Cold War help insurgent groups gain momentum and power in the Middle East? By answering these questions, this Senior Study delves deeper into the unintended consequences of U.S. intervention at the time and during this critical period in U.S. foreign relations and the political history of the modern Middle East. These questions tackle the effects of supporting insurgent groups in Afghanistan. Specifically, there is a special focus on the Taliban following the war. The Taliban is an insurgent group that harbours terrorist groups and has factions included on the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organizations list.³ The Taliban had violently assumed control of Afghanistan after the war ended and developed an anti-Western agenda, irrespective of the support provided for them by the West during the Afghan War.

While this Senior Study focuses on America's role in the Afghan War, these questions help connect America's past intervention in Afghanistan with its recurring role in Afghanistan and the Middle East following the War on Terror in 2003. Tackling these connections helps readers

³ "Foreign Terrorist Organizations - United States Department of State," U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, n.d.), <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>.

understand the importance and relevance of history in the current policymaking of presidential administrations. It also draws linkages between subsequent terror groups and external factors, such as U.S. intervention, funding, and support for insurgent groups and the actions of Pakistan's ISI during the distribution of U.S. funding and weaponry.

This Senior Study makes a twofold argument. First, although U.S. presidents continued to support the Mujahidin with funds and weaponry, the U.S. was unable to confront Pakistan about its role in the ideological and religious indoctrination of factions within the Mujahidin. Second, in addition to the U.S.' passiveness towards Pakistan's role, the complete withdrawal of the U.S. from Afghanistan – encouraged by the ensuing Gulf War – following the USSR's retreat, left Afghanistan vulnerable to armed insurgent groups' fight over control in Afghanistan, as well as a violent and undemocratic takeover. To maintain friendly relations with Pakistan and ensure their continued support to distribute U.S. funds – granting the U.S. plausible deniability regarding its relations with the Mujahidin – the U.S. did not delineate to Pakistan how to distribute aid and to whom. This allowed Pakistan to prioritise aiding religious groups instead of secular and nationalistic factions. As such, religiously driven groups with continued funding and advanced weaponry were able to later assume control of Afghanistan, with some evolving into terrorist organisations.⁴

Scope of Study

The scope of this Senior Study includes the actions undertaken by each U.S. presidential administration and their foreign policies, especially towards the USSR and Afghanistan during the

⁴ Asfandyar Mir, "Afghanistan's Terrorism Challenge: The Political Trajectories of Al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, and the Islamic State," *Middle East Institute*, October 20, 2020, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/afghanistans-terrorism-challenge-political-trajectories-al-qaeda-afghan-taliban-and>.

Afghan War. It also includes covert operations undertaken by the CIA at the time to disburse funds, training, and weapons to the Mujahidin with Pakistan and the ISI acting as distribution channels. However, the Senior Study does not delve into the internal makeup of the Afghan government or its relationship with the USSR, nor does it analyse the Soviet perspective on the War. The limitations of this Senior Study include the inability to extensively analyse the effectiveness of U.S. intervention on the future of the Afghan state given the limited period of the study, as well as the inability to assess the reaction of Afghans towards U.S. intervention due to limited research on the subject and scholarly focus on the U.S. and USSR during the war. Thus, this Senior Study only analyses the effects of U.S. intervention from an American point of view by using declassified documents from the CIA and NSC. It does not analyse the influence of the USSR or its invasion on Afghanistan, or study USSR documents.

The timeframe of this Senior Study follows the timeline of the Afghan War, which occurred from 1979 until the end of 1989. The timeframe also includes the full presidential terms of each president studied to monitor their actions before and after the War, which expands the timeline of events from 1977 until 1993. The study begins by reviewing the existing literature on the foreign policies of each U.S. president, which are studied based on three aspects: political, economic, and security concerns. Then, this Study analyses the consequences of the intervention based on the literature and declassified documents obtained from the CIA and National Security Archive, which detail Pakistan's role in the distribution of American aid, to prove the hypotheses presented in this Senior Study.

Literature Review and Gaps

There have been numerous comparisons done of U.S. presidents and the differences in their foreign policies.⁵ Since the three presidents' terms occurred during and after the Cold War, analysts studied how their actions diverged during the War. Moreover, American foreign policy and US-Soviet relations underwent four intertwined periods during the terms of Carter, Reagan, and Bush that combined stages of relaxations of tensions, or *détente*, containment, rollback, and a new world order. There are three main reasons behind America's covert intervention in the Afghan War and the changes in its U.S.-Soviet relations, which are covered by the survey of existing scholarly works: political reasons, economic apprehensions and interests, and security concerns.

Political Aspects of US Foreign Policy

Before the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, President Carter's administration had inherited a period of *détente* with the Soviets from Carter's predecessors: Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.⁶ Carter aimed at decreasing the hostilities between the two superpowers. Prior to the Soviet Invasion and after the new government was installed in Afghanistan in 1978 following a coup, the Carter administration wanted to sustain a "restrained" strategy towards them to dissuade them from fully aligning with the USSR.⁷ However, the former ambassador to Afghanistan, Robert Neuman, argued that Carter's failure to deliver a harsher response to the coup convinced the USSR that America would not respond to their invasion in 1979.⁸ However, the Carter administration's foreign policy (1977-1981) aimed at redirecting US efforts abroad towards

⁵ David Carleton and Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (May 1985): pp. 205-229, <https://doi.org/10.2307/762080>.

⁶ Tim Weiner, "Part 5: Victory Without Joy: The CIA Under Carter, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush, 1977-1993," in *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (London: Penguin, 2011), pp. 355-435.

⁷ Tom Lansford, "1979: The Invasion and the Mujahideen," in *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 113-135, 118-119.

⁸ *Ibid*, 119.

democracy and its values, human rights, and nuclear non-proliferation.⁹ In addition, he withdrew American support from a number of dictators in South America due to their human rights violations.¹⁰ When the Soviet Union deployed 30,000 troops to Afghanistan to prevent an Islamist government from materialising, Carter authorised the launch of *Operation Cyclone*, the CIA's covert program to fund and arm the Mujahidin, a term used to describe groups of religious rebels fighting against the Soviets and the communist Afghani government, between 1979-1989 to help them fight and resist the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.¹¹

Reagan's term (1981-1989) and his foreign policy focused on 'winning' the Cold War and reversing communism.¹² His focus on the rollback of communism shifted US foreign policy from Carter's containment period, which occurred after the Soviet Invasion. Reagan's rollback attempted to pull communist states, or states allied with the USSR, away from communism and into democracy and the western neo-liberal economic agenda.¹³ Regarding Afghanistan, Reagan's support for the Mujahidin increased throughout Operation Cyclone, with him saying, "to watch the courageous Afghan freedom fighters battle modern arsenals with simple hand-held weapons is an inspiration to those who love freedom."¹⁴ During Reagan's second term, his political stance shifted towards friendliness with the Soviets and helping the USSR leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, implement reforms and cut the USSR's immense military spending.¹⁵ Moreover, Margaret

⁹ David F. Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, "Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 1 (January 2004): pp. 113-143, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2004.00400.x>, 114.

¹⁰ Carleton and Stohl, *Foreign Policy of Human Rights*, 215-216.

¹¹ Charles G. Cogan, "Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan Since 1979", *World Policy Journal* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 73-82, 76-78.

¹² Peter Beinart, "Think Again: Ronald Reagan," *Foreign Policy*, June 7, 2010, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/06/07/think-again-ronald-reagan/>, 3.

¹³ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁴ Ronald Reagan, "Message on the Observance of Afghanistan Day," Ronald Reagan, Presidential Library and Museum (National Archives, March 21, 1983), <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/message-observance-afghanistan-day>.

¹⁵ Beinart, *Think Again: Ronald Reagan*, 4-5.

Thatcher, then-Conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, credited Reagan with having ultimately ended the Cold War and later the USSR.¹⁶

Reagan's goals were achieved during his vice president's term. Bush's term (1989-1993) began with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European revolutions which helped achieve a rollback on communism. However, historians disagree on whom to recognise for these achievements,¹⁷ which made the U.S. the sole superpower globally and shifted US foreign policy into a new world order. A few weeks following his inauguration, Bush witnessed the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Bush's foreign policy encapsulated multiple key events from the Gulf War to the German reunification and the rollback of communism in Eastern Europe, with newly formed states adopting democratic and liberal governing systems.

Economic Aspects of US Foreign Policy

Both Carter and his national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, agreed to send the Mujahidin aid in order to expend Soviet resources in the war.¹⁸ The Carter Doctrine outlined Carter's belief that America would use military action if necessary to defend American interests in the Persian Gulf, in addition to renewing aid to Pakistan and imposing sanctions on the USSR.¹⁹ Operation Cyclone was done in cooperation with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and Saudi Arabia which helped Carter further increase funding to the Mujahidin.²⁰ At the time, it was considered the most expensive covert operation the CIA has embarked on.²¹ Under Carter in 1979,

¹⁶ Margaret Thatcher, "Lecture to the Heritage Foundation ('The Principles of Conservatism')," Margaret Thatcher Foundation (Thatcher Archive, December 7, 1997), <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108376>.

¹⁷ John Prados, *How the Cold War Ended: Debating and Doing History* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011), 24-28. Jeffrey W. Knopf, "Did Reagan Win the Cold War?," *Strategic Insights* 3, no. 8 (August 2004).

¹⁸ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 366.

¹⁹ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 853.

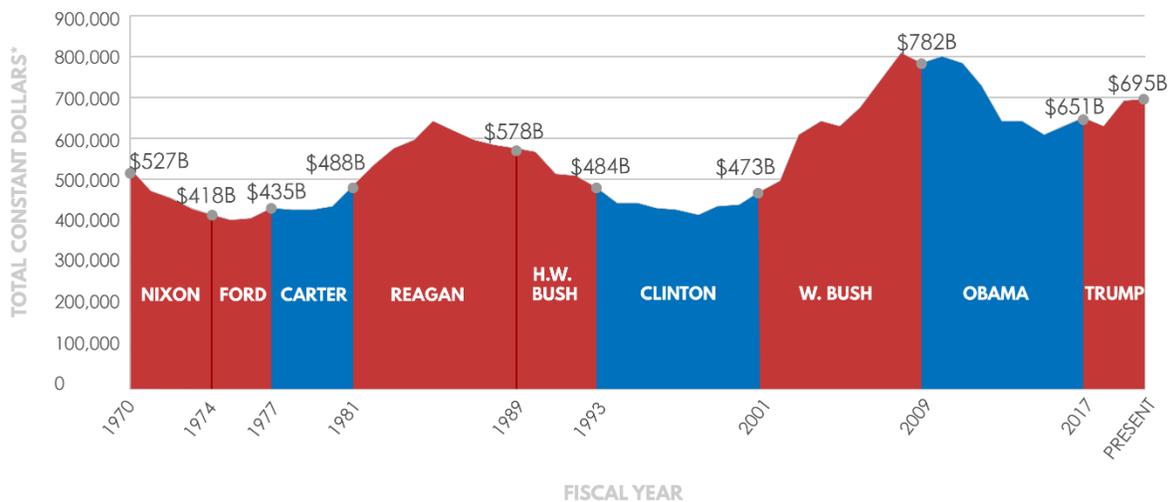
²⁰ *Ibid*, 855.

²¹ Robert Pear, "Arming Afghan Guerrillas: A Huge Effort Led by U.S.," *The New York Times*, April 18, 1988, p.1.

the yearly funding began at almost \$700,000, moving to between \$20 and \$30 million during 1980, and ending at almost \$630 million in 1987.²² Over 8 years between 1979 and early 1988, the operation’s cost was estimated at \$2 billion.²³ Finally, Carter imposed a wheat embargo on the USSR, but it hurt American farmers and was lifted under Reagan.²⁴ The following figure illustrates the changes in the Department of Defense’s budget under each president’s term.



Historical Department of Defense Budget Authority



*Base Budget + OCO Funding

Source: Department of Defense FY 2019 Green Book

Figure 1: Historical overview of the DoD's budget

Source: “Thematic Brief: The Department of Defense Budget and Oversight – Third Way,” (Third Way, March 7, 2019), <https://www.thirdway.org/primer/thematic-brief-the-department-of-defense-budget-and-oversight>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Robert L. Paarlberg, “Lessons of the Grain Embargo,” February 11, 2009, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1980-09-01/lessons-grain-embargo>.

The shift to containment further exacerbated the U.S.' arms race with the USSR when the U.S. increased their military budget;²⁵ Reagan inherited a defense budget of \$444 billion from Carter, and by the end of his first term, it had increased to \$580 billion.²⁶ Reagan followed Carter's path and focused on supplying anti-communist opposition in multiple countries with the logistical and financial support needed to 'rollback' communism, especially by strictly opposing left-wing regimes in Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan.²⁷ While Reagan increased the military budget over time, he was optimistic regarding peace and the outcome of the anti-communist movements in multiple countries. His DoD's budget dramatically increased during his first term; however, it started gradually decreasing in his second term,²⁸ which coincides with the shift in his relationship with Gorbachev.²⁹ While his relationship with the Soviet Union was tense at first and escalated the U.S.' arms race with the USSR, with Gorbachev in power, Reagan abandoned his "hard-line anti Soviet stance"³⁰ and adopted friendlier relations.³¹

Following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Bush celebrated the "triumph by the Afghan people" by saying, "as long as the resistance struggle for self-determination continues, so too will America's support."³² Not only were the Mujahidin receiving funding from the U.S, but Saudi

²⁵ Herring, *Colony to Superpower*, 857.

²⁶ Lawrence J. Korb, Laura Conley, and Alex Rothman, "A Historical Perspective on Defense Budgets," Center for American Progress, July 6, 2011, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2011/07/06/10041/a-historical-perspective-on-defense-budgets/>.

²⁷ "Reagan Doctrine, 1985," U.S. Department of State, Archive (U.S. Department of State, n.d.), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/rd/17741.htm>.

²⁸ Korb et al., *A Historical Perspective*.

²⁹ Reagan's defense budget increase during his first term: \$488 billion in his first year, \$521 billion in the second, \$542 billion in the third, and \$580 billion in the fourth year. However, in his fifth year, the budget decreased to \$558 billion, then \$541 billion, followed by \$529 billion, and finally ending with \$523 billion in his last year.

³⁰ Beinart, *Think Again*, 3.

³¹ Friendlier relations between the two superpowers did not translate to being allies. However, it meant that they were not in direct confrontation between one another. With Reagan's support and de-escalation, Gorbachev was able to slowly implement reforms to the Soviet Union, which resulted in its dissolution.

³² George H.W. Bush, "Public Papers - George Bush Library and Museum," George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, February 6, 1989, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/andickdickrchi ves/public-papers/64>.

Arabia also matched every payment that the U.S. made, doubling the amount that the rebels were receiving.³³ However, funding to the rebels was significantly reduced after the withdrawal, with Bush ending funding in 1992 due to the inability of the Afghans to achieve stability. In 1991, his administration declared the non-renewal of funds for the Mujahidin because of their inability to defend the current Afghan policy in place, calling it outmoded.³⁴ Bush's refusal to continue funding stemmed from the Afghans failure to reach a settlement about the incumbent Afghan president Mohammad Najibullah's position in the future of Afghanistan's state-building. While the Soviets supported Najibullah remaining in power, the U.S. opposed him.³⁵ However, a settlement still could not be reached even after both sides softened their disagreements and agreed to elections that will decide the outcome. As such, civil war and in-fighting between factions continued.

Security Concerns in US Foreign Policy

Carter's focus on nuclear non-proliferation was aimed at alleviating a major security concern for the US, whereby it feared nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands.³⁶ Although both countries were engaged in a Cold War, Carter's focus on nuclear non-proliferation resulted in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks I and II (SALT) conferences, with SALT I creating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. However, the SALT II's agreement was not ratified by either party due to the Soviet Invasion.³⁷ During Reagan's second term and his warming relations with

³³ Michael Rubin, "Who Is Responsible for the Taliban?," The Washington Institute, March 1, 2002, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/who-responsible-taliban>.

³⁴ Elaine Sciolino, "U.S., Deeming Policy Outmoded, May Cut Off Aid to Afghan Rebels," *The New York Times*, May 12, 1991, sec. 1, 1.

³⁵ Rubin, *Who is Responsible for the Taliban?*

³⁶ Jimmy Carter, "Statement of President Jimmy Carter on Nuclear Policy," Nuclear Power Policy (U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, April 7, 1977), <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1209/ML120960615.pdf>.

³⁷ "Strategic Arms Limitations Talks/Treaty (SALT) I and II," Office of the Historian (U.S. Department of State, n.d.), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/salt>.

Gorbachev, both leaders came close to destroying a sizable portion of their nuclear arsenals, almost achieving Carter's non-proliferation goal. Yet, it did not materialise due to Reagan's rejection to limit 'Star Wars,' or the Strategic Defense Initiative – the missile defense system meant to protect the U.S. from nuclear weapons.³⁸

Moreover, when it came to the security and safety of U.S. soldiers, Reagan was extremely cautious and apprehensive about sending troops overseas, which mirrored the view of most Americans who opposed launching wars abroad.³⁹ This explains why very few CIA operatives were in Afghanistan, and instead aid, training, and weapons were funnelled through the ISI to the Mujahidin.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) were conducting their own separate operation to aid the mujahidin in their fight.⁴¹ Both operations leaned towards Islamic militant groups who were favoured by Pakistan's ISI, rather than supporting nationalistic or secular resistance groups fighting communist influence.⁴² The CIA also supplied them with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and other sophisticated weaponry, along with monetary contributions.⁴³

At first, rebels were supplied with Soviet-made weapons to avoid any relation between the U.S. and the rebels and maintain the notion that the weapons were captured instead; however, multiple U.S. officials viewed the rebels as lacking effective missiles and long-range weaponry, which prompted members of Congress and some CIA officials to support supplying them with

³⁸ Beinart, *Think Again*, 4.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁰ Peter L. Bergen, "Blowback: The CIA and the Afghan War," in *Holy War, Inc* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2001), pp. 66-78.

⁴¹ Martin Beckford, "National Archives: Britain Agreed Secret Deal to Back Mujahideen," *The Telegraph*, December 30, 2010, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8215187/National-Archives-Britain-agreed-secret-deal-to-back-Mujahideen.html>.

⁴² *Ibid*, 68-70.

⁴³ Pear, *Arming Afghan Guerillas*, New York Times.

sophisticated Swiss guns and later U.S-made Stingers.⁴⁴ With advanced artillery, the rebels were able to inflict greater damage and drive the Soviets out, with Congressman Charlie Wilson saying, “We were startled by the success of the Stingers... It's rare that one weapon can transform a situation so radically.”⁴⁵ However, Pakistan disproportionately funded Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his faction, Hizb-e Islami, who attacked civilians and other Mujahidin and was known to be friendly with Osama Bin Laden.⁴⁶ Bin Laden was also running an operation assisting “Afghan Arab” volunteers who came from different countries to fight alongside the Mujahidin.⁴⁷ Moreover, the CIA and State department had a direct relationship with Hekmatyar.⁴⁸

By 1989 and with the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Operation Cyclone officially ended, and the U.S. resumed sending humanitarian aid to Afghan civilians.⁴⁹ With the start of the Gulf War in 1990, American intervention in Afghanistan was completely withdrawn in favour of assisting in the Gulf. Robert Oakley, U.S. ambassador in Pakistan, believed that Pakistan and the U.S. should severely decrease their “assistance to the real radicals”⁵⁰ in an attempt to moderate the mujahidin; however, the Director of the CIA, William Webster, held that the CIA should not have left Afghanistan, but rather they should have stayed to avoid further radicalisation of Afghanistan and the emergence of Al-Qaeda.⁵¹ The future emergence of Al-Qaeda and radicalisation of several groups in Afghanistan presented a security concern to the U.S. and later a threat.

⁴⁴ Rubin, *Who is Responsible for the Taliban?*

⁴⁵ Pear, *Arming Afghan Guerillas*, New York Times.

⁴⁶ Rubin, *Who is Responsible for the Taliban?*

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.*, 71-72.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 74.

⁵⁰ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 421.

⁵¹ Ibid, 422.

In 1992, Bush was appealing to the Mujahidin to not use excessive violence and force, but rather to act with restraint to avoid “an instant vacuum”⁵² when an official resigns. Compared to his predecessors, Bush was not as active in Afghanistan, since his arrival was marked with the withdrawal of Soviet troops, allowing the US to stop funding the Mujahidin against communism.

Gaps

The literature reviewed tackled each administration’s actions regarding Afghanistan, but it fails to connect the actions of Pakistan with the CIA in the radicalisation of factions within the mujahidin. Furthermore, any divergence or disagreements found between authors pertains to the CIA’s relation to Bin Laden and whether it could be attributed to the rise of Al-Qaeda and Taliban. Some of the literature has undergone white washing, where the actions of the U.S. are viewed as heroic, instead of self-interested, since the actions of the U.S. were driven by the need to defeat the USSR and protect American interests in the region.

This Senior Study’s contribution to the literature fills these gaps by studying American interests in the region and the drive behind interfering in Afghanistan, along with analysing Pakistan’s role in the distribution of aid and the reasoning behind their actions. Multiple sources have been examined, starting with primary documents, such as recently declassified CIA reports and National Security Directives on Afghanistan and Operation Cyclone. Moreover, other sources have been studied including statements made by U.S. ambassadors to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistani and CIA operatives active in the field during the invasion, and statements made by the heads of U.S. bureaucratic agencies. The use of declassified documents provides an unadulterated insight into the actions of the CIA and the different branches in U.S. government during the War.

⁵² Sid Balman, “U.S. Calls for Peace in Afghanistan,” UPI (UPI, April 16, 1992), <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1992/04/16/US-calls-for-peace-in-Afghanistan/7182703396800/>.

As such, this Senior Study aims at addressing those gaps by comparing the presidential administrations and CIA officials' reports, intelligence assessments, and actions during the War to capture a clearer image of the historical context behind the War, America's role in it, and future developments in the region.

Argument, Hypotheses, Variables, and Concepts

After reviewing the existing literature on the topic, two working arguments are made to preliminarily answer the research questions at hand. First, although the U.S. did not directly intervene in Afghanistan after the Soviet Invasion, support and funding for the Mujahidin continuously increased over time throughout the three presidencies, specifically with Operation Cyclone, and U.S-Soviet relations fluctuated between four intertwined periods during the Cold War with moments of tension and apprehensive friendliness. Second, U.S. support for non-state actors may have inadvertently played a hand in the rise of terror groups in the region, since the U.S. did not moderate the actions of its distributors – Pakistan and ISI – which allowed them to funnel aid to religious insurgents, such as Hekmatyar's *Hizb-i Islami* and other fundamentalist factions, instead of secular or nationalistic groups.

Hypotheses and Variables

Thus, this Senior Study aims at proving two hypotheses. First, if Soviet influence were to increase in a region, American foreign policy is more likely to employ multiple options to contain its influence, such as funding non-state actors and leveraging its power with allies like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to limit the growth of the USSR. Second, if U.S. support for non-state actors in Afghanistan led to a rise in terrorist organisations, then American interventionist policies have backfired, since terror groups are currently classified as security threats to America and its interests.

The first hypothesis draws causal relations between its two variables, with the independent variable being Soviet influence and interference in a region and the dependent variable being the methods of American intervention to contain Soviet influence. The second hypothesis draws another causal relation between American foreign policy and the ultimate outcome of the policy used, specifically its effects on U.S. national security and interests, with the independent variable being the policy of increasing support for non-state actors by the U.S. and the dependent variable being the eventual product of American intervention, whether positive or negative.

Concepts

To ensure the concepts used in this research complement the topic being studied, the following concepts are defined. Soviet influence is the control, support, and expansion of the USSR and its ideology following World War 2, where many regions adopted Soviet teachings or joined the USSR; primarily, those teachings included communism at its core.⁵³ Communism is an economic and political theory adopted by the USSR, with the adoption of a command economy where the state controls all economic policies and procedures to promote the rule of the people, or the working class. However, economists label it as “state capitalism” instead due to the nature of the Soviet economy, where although the state controls the means of production, workers are still exploited in the system with the state as the only beneficiary.⁵⁴

Power struggle, or the fight for control, occurred between the U.S. and USSR during the Cold War for global hegemony. As a result, bipolarity defined the period between 1947 to 1991,

⁵³ “The Cold War (1945–1989),” Soviet expansionism - The Cold War (1945–1989) (University of Luxembourg CVCE.eu), <https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/55c09dcc-a9f2-45e9-b240-eaef64452cae/462f6bf5-c496-4a36-981c-66a9e83576d0>.

⁵⁴ Stephen A. Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, *Class Theory and History: Capitalism and Communism in the USSR* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

due to the presence of the U.S. and USSR as the two superpowers in the world.⁵⁵ When it comes to concepts pertaining to Afghanistan, the Mujahidin are “members of a number of guerrilla groups operating in Afghanistan during the Afghan War (1979–1989) that opposed the invading Soviet forces and eventually toppled the Afghan communist government.”⁵⁶ They are referred to as Mujahidin, or holy warriors, due to the nature of their religious beliefs and their opposition to communist thinking.

Methodology

A comparative analysis research design is used in the format of this research since the foreign policies of three presidential administrations regarding their intervention during the Afghan War were compared. The presidencies of Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush lie within the timeframe of the War, allowing for elements of a case study design to be utilised since the comparison focused on the case of the Afghan War and U.S. intervention. The comparative analysis design helped categorise the differences between the presidents and their policies to equally assess them based on the three aspects mentioned previously.

Furthermore, this Senior Study uses qualitative data for content analysis, with quantitative data used to measure the economic aspect of the three presidents’ foreign policies. The data ranges between primary and secondary sources, since it relied on archival documents, newspaper articles, speeches, and interviews done by the presidents and their administration pertaining to the Afghan War and the literature written on the topic. Declassified reports from the CIA, documents from the

⁵⁵ “Towards a Bipolar World (1945–1953),” Towards a bipolar world (1945–1953) - The Cold War (1945–1989) - CVCE Website (University of Luxembourg CVCE.eu), <https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/55c09dcc-a9f2-45e9-b240-eaef64452cae/1dc7e103-8078-45e1-b8ac-2199a9be5783>.

⁵⁶ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Mujahideen,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, June 25, 2020), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mujahideen-Afghani-rebels>.

Office of the Historian and the National Security Archive, and archived newspaper articles are also considered. The timeframe of the study allowed for the use of archived documents and interviews with government officials, which gave a first-hand account of the topic, providing a less biased recount of events. By citing newspaper articles, the overall attitude of the American population on their presidents' policies was accounted for and whether it affected each president's actions.

Analysis and Findings

This Senior Study's arguments center around U.S.' relations with non-state actors, such as the Mujahidin, and key regional allies, with a special focus on Pakistan and its role in the distribution of U.S. aid, and the effects of these relations on Afghanistan's stability and state after the war. As such, the analysis of this Senior Study focuses on four aspects. First, U.S. interests in the Middle East are assessed; then, the role of U.S. Congress, CIA, and national security directives on the amount and type of aid to be sent to the mujahidin is studied. Then, it focuses on the role of Pakistan and the ISI as the intermediaries between the CIA and the mujahidin. Finally, the analysis presents a general assessment of the state of Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal and end of the war. The analysis presented is based on the literature reviewed and primary documents such as National Security Directives and their analyses, declassified CIA reports, news reports, and existing studies on the role of Pakistan.

American Interests in the Region

The U.S. had numerous interests in the Middle East and South Asia, varying from access to oil to protecting key allies from Soviet advances. The U.S. had entertained friendly ties with Pakistan and Iran. Prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the U.S. was Iran's main ally, given

that Shah Pehlevi had given the U.S. access to multiple intelligence centres and military bases.⁵⁷ The Shah had also ensured the continuous flow of oil to the U.S. and other Western nations from the Persian Gulf, and in return, the U.S. would provide Iran with military assistance.⁵⁸ At the same time, the USSR and Afghanistan had shared a border and were engaged in friendly relations with one another. The U.S. did not view it as a threat given that it was perceived as a Soviet defensive strategy to “counter Western gains in the Middle East-South Asia area.”⁵⁹ As a result, Afghanistan was considered a buffer state between the two competing superpowers to preserve the balance of power.

However, with the Shah’s abdication and the takeover of Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini, Iranian relations with the U.S. grew hostile and were supplemented with the Iran Hostage Crisis between 1979 and 1981, where the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam’s Line seized the U.S. embassy, taking hostages and releasing confidential information and reports.⁶⁰ As a result, the U.S. feared that anti-Western Iran would turn to the USSR for support. Thus, Soviet assistance to Afghanistan and its deployment of 100,000 troops evolved to become the “most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War,”⁶¹ as President Carter stated in his State of the Union Address in 1980. The Carter Doctrine was born when he stated that any external force looking to take control of the Persian Gulf will be considered an attack on U.S. interests and will be deterred using military force, if necessary. Carter considered the USSR’s closeness to the Strait of Hormuz

⁵⁷ Michael Evans, “Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War,” <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/essay.html>. p. 1

⁵⁸ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁹ David Gibbs, “Does the USSR Have a Grand Strategy?” *Journal of Peace Research*, Volume 24, Number 1, 1987: p. 368.

⁶⁰ Elaine Sciolino, “7 Years After Embassy Seizure, Iran Still Prints U.S Secrets,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 1986, p. 12.

⁶¹ Jimmy Carter, “State of the Union Address 1980,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, n.d., <https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml>.

as an attempt to strategically position itself there to threaten the free movement of oil from the Middle East.⁶²

Fearing the fall of Pakistan and Iran from increased Soviet presence in the region via Afghanistan, Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski warned Carter of possible similar events in the region, which would affect U.S. interests there (oil and Soviet containment). Through the Special Coordination Committee of the NSC, Brzezinski called for the U.S.' decision to be more sympathetic to nationalistic Afghans who wanted to conserve the independence of their country.⁶³ As Chairman of the meeting, he stressed the need to show Saudi officials the gravity of opposing increasing Soviet power in Afghanistan, while highlighting that assistance from the U.S. would lead to increased Saudi readiness to send aid.⁶⁴ He favoured sending covert support to rebel groups that had settled in Pakistan and its refugee camps, with Hekmatyar's party recommended to the U.S. embassy in Pakistan by Pakistani military officers to receive such aid, as they believed it was the most organised and militant rebel group.⁶⁵

According to Pakistani sources, CIA officials had met with Hekmatyar, whose rhetoric was anti-American and radically Islamic, and documents released during the Hostage Crisis revealed that U.S. officials were secretly meeting with rebels or their representatives, even if it were to decline assistance to the rebels at first.⁶⁶ As a result, although Hekmatyar and other religious Afghani rebels were not in favour of Western interference, customs, or values, their main enemy was the USSR, resulting in close cooperation between the rebels and the U.S. through funding and

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983, p. 427.

⁶⁴ "U.S. Department of State," U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, n.d.), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v12/d76>. p. 2.

⁶⁵ Evans, *Lessons from the Last War*, 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 8.

assistance. Both the U.S. and religious rebel groups employed the strategy of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” where the USSR is seen as the main enemy and its enemies, which are the U.S. and the rebels, engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship against the main enemy – the USSR.

Congress, CIA, and National Security Directives

Unlike other instances of U.S. aid supplied by presidential administrations in support of developing countries in the face of Soviet influence such as the Contras in Nicaragua,⁶⁷ Afghanistan’s case enjoyed bipartisan congressional approval to fund the CIA’s covert operation. Congressional hardliners were able to secure additional covert aid and funding than the White House had requested for the mujahidin. The CIA, and specifically Deputy Director John McMahon, had cautioned Congress that increasing funding for the rebels would either incite retaliatory measures from the USSR or would be subjected to corruption and leakages, where some of the funds would be siphoned to groups that were not authorised to receive them or to the Pakistani security forces instead of the rebels.⁶⁸ The types of weaponry that the mujahidin received evolved during the war, moving from Soviet-made weapons, to Swiss-designed anti-aircraft missiles, and finally to U.S-made Stinger missiles, which were the strongest hand-held weapons to pierce through aircrafts.⁶⁹

At first, the CIA was completely opposed to sending American weaponry to the mujahidin in order to maintain plausible deniability, if needed. However, pressure from Congress, specifically from Senators Paul Tsongas and Gordon Humphrey and Congressmen Don Ritter and

⁶⁷ Hoover, Judith D. "Ronald Reagan's Failure to Secure Contra-Aid: A Post-Vietnam Shift in Foreign Policy Rhetoric." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1994): 531-41, p. 531-531.

⁶⁸ David B. Ottaway and Patrick E. Tyler, "CIA Deputy Chief McMahon Resigns," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1986.

⁶⁹ Evans, *Lessons from the Last War*, 12.

Charlie Wilson, called for “effective” weapons and material aid to be provided for the rebels which would help them in their “fight for freedom from foreign domination.”⁷⁰ The resolution passed by Tsongas and Ritter would be later utilised by the Congressmen mentioned before to further boost the quality and size of aid provided. Although the CIA’s predictions of leakages and corruption materialised in both humanitarian and military aid, the U.S. continued to provide upwards of \$3 billion to the mujahidin, with an average of \$700 million yearly by 1987, which was more than the military assistance provided to Pakistan’s military at the time.⁷¹ The legislative branch of the U.S. is thus considered mostly responsible for providing the mujahidin with sophisticated weapons, including Swiss, British, and American artillery.

Moreover, National Security Directive 166 stressed the importance of reaching the U.S.’ ultimate goal, which was “the removal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the restoration of its independent status.”⁷² It highlighted that the achievement of this goal will be done through interim objectives, which should be achieved to safeguard U.S. national interests. However, the eventual outcome of the Afghan struggle was not considered of importance to the U.S, as stated, since the goal was to contain Soviet influence.⁷³ To reach their policy objectives, the American government had to improve intelligence reports on the situation, improve the effectiveness of Afghan rebels’ military power, review the state of corruption in the movement of supplies, and, most importantly, “maintain good working relations with Pakistan.”⁷⁴

The U.S. was forced to rely on Pakistan for the distribution of aid and weapons, considering there is no alternative route that the U.S. could use. Thus, the U.S. had to protect and aid Pakistan’s

⁷⁰ Ibid, 12.

⁷¹ Pear, *Arming Afghan Guerrillas*.

⁷² KML, “National Security Decision Directive 166,” National Security Decision Directive 166 § (1985).

⁷³ Ibid, 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 3.

security which might have been compromised by supporting the mujahidin. Furthermore, given the reliance on Pakistan for distribution, the U.S. was not willing to moderate and review Pakistan's distribution strategies, which favoured Islamic factions such as Hikmatyar's, for fear of losing their only covert route to the mujahidin. The U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Robert Oakley, (1988-1991) said, "the CIA couldn't or wouldn't get their Pakistani partners in line, so we continued to support some of the radicals,"⁷⁵ which included Hikmatyar, resulting in minimal checks on Pakistan's actions. Furthermore, CIA Director William Webster had invited the leaders of the Peshawar 7 – parties within the mujahidin, who would later unite to form the Sunni Islamic Afghan rebel alliance – for lunch in Washington, with Hikmatyar as one of the leaders invited.⁷⁶

Pakistan, ISI, and Their Role in Operation Cyclone

Pakistan's role in the Soviet-Afghan War had been pivotal for the United States, from distributing aid and weapons, to holding secret training camps for the rebels, and to hosting more than six million Afghan refugees during the war. Moreover, with the acquiescence of the U.S, Pakistan's support for the mujahidin grew with special operations forces entering Afghanistan to conduct missions.⁷⁷ Before the Soviet Invasion took place, Carter had cut funding to Pakistan in 1977 because of its nuclear program and its human rights abuses under General Zia-ul-Haq. However, when the Soviets invaded, Carter negotiated a deal with General Zia, where in exchange for economic and military aid, Pakistan would assist the U.S. in aiding the mujahidin. Reagan further increased economic and military assistance to Pakistan, making it again an ally to the U.S. and the third largest beneficiary of U.S. aid.

⁷⁵ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 421.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 421.

⁷⁷ Tom Lansford, "1979: The Invasion and the Mujahideen," in *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan* (Aldershot (Gran Bretaña); Burlington (USA): Ashgate Publishing Co., 2003), pp. 113-135, 128.

As previously stated, the ISI under the rule of General Zia favoured fundamentalist groups within the mujahidin, instead of nationalistic or secular groups, in an attempt to reduce internal unrest in Pakistan resulting from tribes' nationalistic hopes of reuniting territories that lie along the Pakistani-Afghan border that belong to the Pashtun tribe, who had hopes of creating their own state of Pashtunistan.⁷⁸ General Zia's actions bolstered Islamic and conservative voices in Pakistan and within the military. The U.S.' constant interaction with Pakistani generals, military officers, and other officials allowed it to develop a strong relationship that it did not enjoy with civilian opposition in Pakistan. Such actions minimised the voices of civilians in Afghanistan who opposed having a radical Islamic group take power, especially since Hekmatyar was ready to use the weapons obtained from Operation Cyclone on civilians in his bid for power, which he eventually did after the Soviet withdrawal.⁷⁹

On the other hand, while the U.S. worked closely with Pakistan to distribute aid to the mujahidin, they were against the actions of ISI officers who were training the mujahidin to launch strikes on storage depots and factories within USSR territory.⁸⁰ This was seen as unnecessary escalation to the war by Afghans and would be tied back to the U.S, which might result in a largescale response by the USSR and complete fallout in U.S-Soviet relations. Thus, the Reagan administration decided to stop any transfer of satellite images of military targets in the USSR to Pakistani intelligence. Instead, intelligence reports and Soviet reports intercepted by the U.S. were sent directly to the mujahidin.⁸¹ Such actions were in line with the U.S. sending Stinger missiles

⁷⁸ Evans, *Lessons from the Last War*, 5, 11; "III. Pakistan's Support of the Taliban," Crisis of Impunity - Pakistan's Support of The Taliban, 2001, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/afghan2/Afghan0701-02.htm>, p. 1-2.

⁷⁹ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 421.

⁸⁰ Steve Coll, "Anatomy of a Victory: CIA's Covert Afghan War," *The Washington Post*, July 19, 1992, p. 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 2.

to them. However, the CIA continued to train multiple ISI teams to plan the rebels' operations within Afghanistan.

The trained teams would accompany the rebels into Afghanistan in order to supervise the attacks that were planned, which targeted fuel depots, airports, bridges, and electricity towers.⁸² The operations officers of the CIA stationed in Pakistan helped the ISI set up schools for the rebels to train them in urban sabotage, secure communications, guerilla warfare, and the use of heavy weaponry.⁸³ Moreover, Pakistan's support and excessive distribution of U.S. aid to Hekmatyar's party resulted in them using their weapons on rival moderate groups within the mujahidin, who did not share Hekmatyar's radical ideology.⁸⁴

Pakistan also stood behind Hekmatyar instead of Afghan civilians who wanted to unite under the leadership of the former king, Zahir Shah; General Zia and his conservative military officials preferred having a fellow conservative and Muslim ally ruling Afghanistan, with U.S. officials eventually yielding to their demands.⁸⁵ Thus, Pakistan played a tremendous role in the radicalisation of specific groups within the mujahidin, the selective distribution of aid, and Afghanistan's instability in the region given its continued support for ultra-religious factions in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Afghanistan After the War: The Original Iraq

Following the Geneva Accords signed in 1988 and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Gorbachev issued that any foreign assistance sent to developing nations would be

⁸² Ibid, 5.

⁸³ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁴ Evans, *Lessons from the Last War*, 16.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 16.

based on specific social and economic reforms. However, congressional pressure forced Reagan to continue supporting the mujahidin even after the withdrawal and that as long as the USSR continued aiding the Afghan government so too will American support for the mujahidin continue. Reagan promised General Zia that the U.S. will support the rebels' ascent to power. Pakistan and Afghanistan also agreed to refrain from interfering in each other's territories and allow the refugees to voluntarily return to Afghanistan.⁸⁶

Based on National Security Directive 3, dated in 1989, the U.S. would work closely with Pakistan to ensure that the factions within the mujahidin are united, that a peaceful succession and transfer of power will occur, that a civil war would be avoided, and that the new Afghan government would not be messianic-Islamic or tied to the USSR or Iran.⁸⁷ However, with the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1990, the U.S. shifted its focus and resources on protecting its allies and interests in the Gulf region, leaving behind a civil war that brewed in Afghanistan until 1992 and the entry of Taliban in 1996.

In this context, President Bush completely stopped sending funds to the mujahidin due to their inability to reach a settlement on the future leader of Afghanistan. The withdrawal of both the Soviets and Americans from Afghanistan created a power vacuum that could only be filled with violence given the past decade of war, and with Hekmatyar receiving the bulk of American funding and his hunger for power, he invaded Kabul in 1992 but was eventually pushed out by other rival factions within the mujahidin.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid, 18.

⁸⁷ "National Security Directive 3," National Security Directive 3 § (1989), 1.

⁸⁸ Marvin G. Weinbaum, "War and Peace in Afghanistan: the Pakistani Role," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 1 (1991): pp. 71-85, https://doi.org/10.2458/azu_acku_pamphlet_ds371_2_w45_w37_1991, 77.

With most factions exhausted from in-fighting and fighting the Soviets, Afghanistan was vulnerable to attacks from foreign militias. The Taliban were able to invade Kabul in 1996, and the only faction left that could oppose them was the Jamiat-e Islami who were in conflict with the Taliban from 1996 until 2001, when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks with the help of several mujahidin factions, including Jamiat-e Islami and Harakat-e Islami.

Moreover, with the withdrawal of U.S. aid, Arab Afghans and Saudis entered the Afghan scene. Arab Afghans were a group of Arabs and Muslims from across the globe who decided to join the mujahidin in their fight against the Soviets, calling it *jihad* or holy war. They began to purchase lands in destroyed villages and buy the loyalties of tribes, with the eventual outcome being the rise of al-Qaeda, with the Saudi Osama Bin Laden as its head. As such, William Webster said, “We walked away from it; we should not have walked away.”⁸⁹

The sudden vacuum left in the wake of the Soviet and American withdrawal – resulting in a divided state and fighting militias – can be compared to the current state of Iraq following the U.S.’ withdrawal in 2008. The withdrawal left Iraq a weak state submerged in ethnic and sectarian conflict between multiple factions and rising terror groups, including factions of al-Qaeda and ISIS – the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Until today, fighting between the Afghan government and Taliban has remained, with thousands of casualties and displacements among civilians. The Afghan government has not been able to secure its legitimacy nor its sovereignty, since it does not have a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence or force, with multiple militias in the state wielding arms. Moreover, the U.S.’ presence in both Iraq and Afghanistan are similar, with hundreds of troops stationed there yearly in the U.S.’ ongoing War on Terror.

⁸⁹ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, p. 422

Conclusion

This Senior Study sheds a new light at the Soviet-Afghan War by focusing on the roles played by both the CIA and ISI in creating heavily armed, religious militias without checking their powers after the end of the War, resulting in an increased opportunity for extremism to turn into terrorism and freedom fighters into civil war combatants and eventually terrorists. Furthermore, the intents of the U.S. were not to protect human rights, as Carter focused on, or to bolster Afghan self-determination, but rather it focused on containing Soviet power regardless of the ultimate outcome in Afghanistan, as mentioned in National Security Directive 166.

The arguments of this Senior Study are reinforced by the review of relevant literature and analyses of primary documents. They focus on the fluctuations of U.S-Soviet relations between four periods: détente, containment, rollback, and a new world order after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In addition, the arguments also focus on the role that the U.S. played in supporting the mujahidin with the help of Pakistan, and how the lack of review of Pakistani measures may have resulted in opening the field for terrorist groups to flourish.

When it comes to the hypotheses of this Senior Study, the analysis finds that the U.S. is more likely to utilise multiple ways to check Soviet influence in the region, including colluding with and supporting non-state actors and using its key regional allies' help in containing Soviet interference. Regarding the second hypothesis, the findings of this Senior Study show that American foreign policy in the region was unsuccessful when it comes to ensuring that funding and aid were sent to moderate groups; instead, military aid was diverted to extremist and radical groups, which led to in-fighting between factions and their eventual development of anti-American and anti-Western sentiments (which some leaders already held, like Hekmatyar). Such groups'

anti-U.S. rhetoric may have ultimately led to their involvement into or support for terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda and Taliban, respectively.

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and U.S. intervention following the invasion has resulted in a fractured state, millions in casualties and refugees, and a rise in terror groups following the power vacuum that was left after their withdrawal. However, the role that Pakistan played in the situation increased the religious indoctrination of certain groups within the mujahidin. In addition, Pakistan had favoured radical Islamist groups over nationalistic groups, fearing a revival of nationalistic tendencies within its own tribes. The support that the U.S. supplied the mujahidin with, from money to weapons to training, has heightened the power of such groups and their ability to resort to violent tactics in their bid for power. Combining military funding with extremist ideologies would surely result in increased cases of violence and ethnic or civil war, as well as terrorism.

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