



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF UNITED STATES OF AMERICA INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN (1950-1992)

Unraveling the Path from the Cold War to the Afghan Jihad

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ABSTRACT: This research paper conducts a comprehensive analytical study of the intricate journey of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, delving into the historical trajectory from the Cold War era to the Afghan Jihad. The investigation spans decades, examining the geopolitical dynamics that shaped U.S. foreign policy in the region. By unraveling the complexities of this engagement, the paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the evolving motivations, strategies, and consequences associated with America's presence in Afghanistan. Drawing on a diverse array of primary and secondary sources, the study navigates through key events, diplomatic maneuvers, and strategic shifts that have defined this multifaceted relationship. Through a critical lens, the research sheds light on the interconnectedness of Cold War geopolitics and the subsequent repercussions that unfolded during the Afghan Jihad, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the broader implications for U.S. foreign policy and global affairs.

KEY WORDS: U.S. Involvement, Cold War, Afghan Jihad, Geopolitical Dynamics, Foreign Policy, Strategic Shifts, Diplomatic Maneuvers.

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is a tapestry woven with complex threads of geopolitical intricacies, strategic maneuvering, and historical reverberations. This research embarks on an analytical journey, meticulously unraveling the path that stretches from the Cold War era to the Afghan Jihad, seeking to untangle the nuanced layers that have shaped America's engagement in this pivotal region. By delving into the historical trajectory, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness between Cold War geopolitics and the subsequent evolution of events leading to the Afghan Jihad. As we navigate through decades of diplomatic decisions, strategic shifts, and geopolitical dynamics, the aim is not only to dissect the motivations and consequences but also to illuminate the multifaceted relationship that has emerged between the United States and Afghanistan. This research stands as a critical exploration, offering insights into the broader implications for U.S. foreign policy and its intricate role in shaping global affairs.

Before the Soviet invasion in 1979, the United States had relatively limited engagement with Afghanistan. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1935, but this relationship remained mostly dormant until the 1950s. During that decade, the United States began providing economic and military assistance to Afghanistan as part of its efforts to counter Soviet influence in the region.

The U.S. government viewed Afghanistan as a strategically important buffer state positioned between the Soviet Union and the Middle East, and it aimed to strengthen Afghanistan's ties to the Western world. However, the relationship between the United States and Afghanistan was complex due to Afghanistan's

non-aligned status. Afghanistan sought to maintain friendly relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, resulting in a certain level of suspicion and mistrust on both sides.

U.S. policy in Western Asia had been facing challenges following the Shah of Iran's fall and the ongoing hostage crisis. President Carter made it clear that the U.S. had a "moral obligation" to support the Afghan Mujahedin. While there were hawks in his administration, like National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and certain members of Congress, advocating for a more proactive stance, the initial U.S. response to the Soviet invasion was primarily driven by concerns about Pakistan's territorial integrity with Soviet troops on its borders. The invasion coincided with Indira Gandhi's significant electoral victory in India. When Gromyko publicly declared shortly thereafter in New Delhi that: "if Pakistan continues to serve as a puppet of imperialism in the future, it will jeopardize its existence and its integrity as an independent state;" (Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History*, 2011, p. 114). Pakistan's gravest concerns regarding the formation of a Moscow-New Delhi-Kabul alliance appeared to be validated.

Between 1989 and 1992, the United States was actively engaged in Afghanistan, primarily through its support for the mujahedin. The U.S. extended substantial financial and material assistance to the mujahedin via the CIA's Operation Cyclone program, which was specifically designed to bolster the Afghan resistance against Soviet forces. This support was framed within the broader context of the U.S. strategy to contain Soviet expansion and advance American interests within the region.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 was perceived as a significant triumph for the United States, and its backing of the mujahedin was regarded as a successful covert operation. However, following the Soviet withdrawal, the United States progressively reduced its involvement in Afghanistan, which ultimately contributed to the eventual collapse of the Afghan government and the ensuing civil war.

To add further complexity to the situation, the United States pursued its own regional and global interests. The U.S. had maintained a counter-interventionist policy, primarily guided by how it could serve the interests of the United States in its rivalry with the Soviet Union. This approach sometimes overshadowed considerations related to promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan, especially concerning the post-Soviet withdrawal scenario.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study on "An Analytical Study of U.S. Involvement in Afghanistan: Unravelling the Path from the Cold War to the Afghan Jihad" has been conducted through a meticulous examination of various sources. In addition to historical books, a diverse range of materials including journals, articles, newspapers, maps, and documentaries pertinent to the issue were scrutinized.

The research methodology employed in this article is qualitative in nature. The initial phase involved the comprehensive collection of sources relevant to the subject matter. Subsequently, a rigorous evaluation of their authenticity and credibility was conducted to ensure the reliability of the data. Once the raw materials were gathered, a systematic process of review, synthesis, refinement, and analysis was undertaken. This involved organizing and connecting various points related to specific topics and sub-topics in a logical manner. By employing a multi-faceted methodology, this research aims to offer a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the factors influencing U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, unraveling the intricate path from the Cold War to the Afghan Jihad.

III. AREA OF STUDY: AFGHANISTAN

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

IV. RESULTS

The text provides a comprehensive overview of the United States' engagement with Afghanistan before, during, and after the Soviet invasion in 1979. It traces the evolution of this relationship, emphasizing the geopolitical complexities and diplomatic challenges faced by both nations. The narrative covers key historical events, such as Afghanistan's alignment during World War II, its role as a buffer state in the Cold War, and the subsequent Soviet invasion.

The text highlights the nuanced dynamics of U.S.-Afghan relations, including the slow progress in establishing strong ties and the challenges faced by King Amanullah's modernization initiatives. It discusses Afghanistan's adept navigation as a buffer state, securing assistance from both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The significance of regional diplomacy, suspicions of external influences shaping Afghanistan's direction, and the U.S. response to the Soviet invasion are well-detailed.

The section on the U.S. response to the Soviet invasion explores the Cold War history, with Presidents Carter and Reagan playing pivotal roles. The covert aid, economic sanctions, and the introduction of Stinger missiles are presented as key elements influencing the Soviet withdrawal. The Geneva Accords and subsequent events leading to the involvement of key figures, the mysterious plane crash, and George Bush overseeing the conflict's final stages are also covered.

In the conclusion, the text evaluates the U.S. engagement between 1989 and 1992, acknowledging strategic successes but highlighting policy shortcomings. The celebration of the Soviet withdrawal contrasts with the progressive U.S. disengagement, contributing to the collapse of the Afghan government and the onset of a devastating civil war. The unintended consequences, including the rise of extremist elements and the emergence of the Taliban, are discussed. The absence of sustained U.S. involvement is emphasized, leading to severe consequences for the Afghan people and the broader international community.

Overall, the text provides a detailed and well-structured analysis of the historical events, geopolitical dynamics, and long-term consequences of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan during this critical period.

V. DISCUSSIONS

A. Early American Engagement in Afghanistan Pre-World War II

Before the Soviet invasion in 1979, the United States had relatively limited engagement with Afghanistan. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1935, but this relationship remained mostly dormant until the 1950s. During that decade, the United States began providing economic and military assistance to Afghanistan as part of its efforts to counter Soviet influence in the region.

The U.S. government viewed Afghanistan as a strategically important buffer state positioned between the Soviet Union and the Middle East, and it aimed to strengthen Afghanistan's ties to the Western world. However, the relationship between the United States and Afghanistan was complex due to Afghanistan's non-aligned status. Afghanistan sought to maintain friendly relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, resulting in a certain level of suspicion and mistrust on both sides.

Nonetheless, driven by persistent British pressure and wary of historical Russian ambitions, King Amanullah was eager to establish strong ties with the United States. Initially, there was some receptiveness in Washington. President Warren G. Harding received Wali's diplomatic mission on July 26, 1921, which marked U.S. recognition of Afghanistan's independence. President Harding also promised to seriously consider the question of establishing U.S. diplomatic representation in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, progress on this front was slow for several years. Nevertheless, diplomatic contacts with the United States commenced in 1922 when an Afghan ambassador arrived in Washington to present his credentials to President Warren G. Harding (Saikal, 2004, p. 64).

The United States' reluctance to support Afghanistan was a significant setback for King Amanullah. He not only felt deeply disappointed but also believed that he was being denied a crucial international source of support for his efforts to free Afghanistan from the traditional Anglo-Russian rivalry. He saw this support as essential for enlisting outside capital, economic and technological assistance, and expertise for his modernization initiatives.

The United States did not officially declare support for Afghan independence until a decade later, and full diplomatic relations with Afghanistan were not established until 1942. The first U.S. diplomat to serve as ambassador to Afghanistan was Cornelius Van H. Engert. He lobbied Washington, albeit with limited success, for a modest aid program to Afghanistan.

At the outset of World War II, Afghanistan briefly considered aligning with Germany. However, once the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Moscow and London launched an invasion of Iran and applied pressure on Afghanistan and its surroundings. This effectively put an end to any flirtation with the Nazis. When the Soviets and the British demanded the expulsion of all German agents and diplomats from Afghanistan, Prime Minister Mohammad Hashim Khan reluctantly complied and sent the Germans home (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 11).

A. Post- World War II American Involvement in Afghanistan

During the initial three decades of the Cold War, Afghanistan functioned as a buffer state positioned between the two antagonistic superpowers. King Amanullah and his ministers demonstrated adept diplomacy as they navigated between these superpowers to secure economic and military assistance from both.

The United States contributed to a substantial agricultural production project in the Helmand River Valley between 1946 and 1953. However, the United States was reluctant to sell arms or provide military aid to Afghanistan, primarily due to its emerging alliance with Pakistan. In 1948, when the Afghan government requested military assistance from President Harry Truman, Secretary of State George Marshall dismissed the request with a query, asking: "Who's the enemy?" (Poullada, 1995, p. 142).

Rather than establishing a substantial relationship with Kabul, Washington chose to cultivate a strong partnership with Pakistan. Pakistan actively sought support from the United States against both Afghanistan and India, and it aligned itself closely with the U.S. and the United Kingdom during the Cold War to secure military aid and diplomatic backing.

In 1954, Pakistan became a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which aimed to extend the containment strategy against the Soviet Union into Asia. Additionally, in 1955, Pakistan joined the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), which established a linkage between NATO and SEATO, creating a containment network around the Soviet Union and its then-ally, Communist China (Reidel, *Avoiding Armageddon: America, India, and Pakistan to the Brink and Back*, 2013, p. 55).

During the 1950s, the United States emerged as the primary supplier of weapons to Pakistan, and Pakistan was warmly embraced as a member of the "Free World" by the Eisenhower administration. In stark contrast, Afghanistan received a message in 1954 that the United States would withhold arms assistance until the Pashtunistan dispute with Pakistan was resolved (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 12).

The Soviets astutely recognized and seized the opportunity presented in Afghanistan. As the United States leaned towards Pakistan, the Soviet Union inclined towards Afghanistan. In 1950, Moscow and Kabul entered into a barter agreement, trading Afghan wool and cotton for Russian oil, and this trade rapidly expanded.

When Pakistan joined SEATO and CENTO, becoming a key U.S. ally, Afghanistan looked to the Soviets for military support. In 1955, Daoud Khan inked a \$3 million arms deal with Moscow's ally, Czechoslovakia, and in 1956, a more substantial \$32.5 million arms deal was struck with the Soviet Union, which included the purchase of T-34 tanks and MiG-17 jet fighters. Intensive Soviet training programs for the Afghan army and air force commenced, resulting in a significant number of Afghan officers having received training in the Soviet Union by 1973, estimated at around a quarter to a third of all officers (MacEchin, 2007, p. 2).

By 1979, the Soviet Union had extended more than \$1 billion in military aid and \$1.25 billion in economic assistance to Afghanistan. In contrast, total U.S. aid amounted to less than half a billion dollars, with a little over \$25 million allocated for military assistance.

The Soviets were responsible for constructing the road connecting Kabul to the northern part of the country, as well as the road along the Soviet border. They also played a pivotal role in the development of the Bagram air base, situated north of Kabul. American aid, on the other hand, focused on building roads connecting Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran, as well as a significant airfield in Kandahar.

Daoud Khan's government skillfully leveraged the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States to secure as much aid as possible from both superpowers. However, the Soviets enjoyed an advantage due to their geographic proximity to Afghanistan and their non-support for Pakistan. In 1957, King Zahir undertook a state visit to Moscow to express gratitude to the Soviets for their assistance (Wahab & Yongermen, 2007, pp. 125-127).

In 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower made a historic visit to Kabul, becoming the first sitting U.S. President to do so. This visit was part of a broader trip that included stops in India and Pakistan. However, the significance of the trip was overshadowed by a crisis with the Soviet Union.

The crisis emerged when an American U-2 spy plane, originating from a covert base in Peshawar, Pakistan, was shot down over Soviet territory in 1960. This incident exposed Pakistan's role as a major hub for United States espionage activities against the Soviet Union. Pakistan hosted not only a clandestine Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) air base but also a significant facility for National Security Agency signals intelligence collection.

Additionally, in the late 1950s, the CIA began conducting missions to support anti-communist Tibetan rebels operating within Communist China. These missions were launched from an air base in East Pakistan, which was provided by the Pakistani army (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 13).

In 1961, Daoud Khan initiated a crisis with Pakistan, primarily centered on the Pashtunistan issue. In response, President Ayub Khan of Pakistan took measures to address the situation. These actions included the closure of Pakistan's consulates and the suspension of trade with Afghanistan.

President John F. Kennedy of the United States intervened, urging Ayub Khan to exercise restraint and avoid further escalation of the conflict with Kabul. Following Kennedy's diplomatic efforts, the Shah of Iran hosted a tripartite meeting in Tehran, with the support of the United States. As a result of these negotiations, Ayub Khan agreed to reopen the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In a positive development, King Zahir of Afghanistan ceased the dissemination of anti-Pakistan propaganda and took a significant step by traveling to Washington to meet with President Kennedy in September 1963. This visit marked a historic occasion as it was the first time an Afghan head of state had visited the United States, signifying an effort to improve relations between the two nations (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014).

The Shah of Iran played a pivotal role in regional diplomacy during this period. He extended a generous promise to Daoud, offering Afghanistan a substantial ten-year aid package amounting to \$2 billion. Furthermore, the Shah of Iran acted as a mediator and successfully facilitated a *détente* between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In 1978, the Shah of Iran went even further, presenting Daoud with a tempting proposal. He offered a \$3 billion aid program to Afghanistan, contingent upon Daoud's willingness to recognize the Durand Line as a permanent border. In exchange, Pakistan would commit to discontinuing all support for Afghan dissidents. Daoud expressed his readiness to consider this significant offer (Tariq, 2008, pp. 118-119). A crucial diplomatic itinerary was set for the Shah of Iran and President Daoud in 1978. The Shah of Iran had plans to visit Kabul in June of that year, while President Daoud was scheduled for a high-profile visit to Washington to meet with President Jimmy Carter in September (MacEchin, 2007, p. 4). The Soviets grew increasingly convinced that Iran and the CIA were effectively influencing Daoud and steering Afghanistan away from their sphere of influence (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, pp. 15-16).

C. Evolution of American Strategy in Afghanistan Post-Soviet Invasion

U.S. policy in Western Asia had been facing challenges following the Shah of Iran's fall and the ongoing hostage crisis. President Carter made it clear that the U.S. had a "moral obligation" to support the Afghan Mujahedin. While there were hawks in his administration, like National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and certain members of Congress, advocating for a more proactive stance, the initial U.S. response to the Soviet invasion was primarily driven by concerns about Pakistan's territorial integrity with Soviet troops on its borders. The invasion coincided with Indira Gandhi's significant electoral victory in India. When Gromyko publicly declared shortly thereafter in New Delhi that: "if Pakistan continues to serve as a puppet of imperialism in the future, it will jeopardize its existence and its integrity as an independent state;" (Rasanayagam, 2011, p. 114). Pakistan's gravest concerns regarding the formation of a Moscow-New Delhi-Kabul alliance appeared to be validated.

a- Jimmy Carter's Impact and Contribution

Carter was the architect of the covert program aimed at aiding the mujahedin in Afghanistan during the 1980s. He also took the decisive step of committing the United States to respond vigorously to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, instructing the CIA to initiate the supply of weapons to the mujahedin. Carter played a pivotal role in establishing the clandestine U.S.-Pakistani-Saudi coalition that provided funding and weaponry to what he termed the "Freedom Fighters" in Afghanistan. In the early days of 1980, Carter was responsible for the major strategic choices regarding the war, including arming and financing the mujahedin, utilizing Pakistan as a base for their operations, enlisting Saudi support, and conceptualizing Afghanistan as the Soviet Union's Vietnam (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 93).

In May 1979, Brzezinski issued a cautionary message to the president, stating that: "if the Soviets came to dominate Afghanistan, they could promote a separate Baluchistan, which would give them access to the Indian Ocean while dismembering Pakistan and Iran" (Brzezinski, 1983, p. 427). Carter also received briefings from the CIA on April 4 and May 23, 1979, regarding the situation in Afghanistan. The April briefing focused on maps illustrating the spread of mujahedin strength, while the May briefing highlighted

the growing opposition to the communist regime. The CIA's assessment at that time was that the Soviets were unlikely to intervene directly.

After discussions with his national security team on July 3, 1979, Carter authorized a limited CIA covert action to provide non-lethal assistance to the Afghan mujahedin. This project primarily involved propaganda and psychological warfare operations, with no weapons initially provided. Carter allocated half a million dollars to kick start the project, marking the beginning of the CIA's collaboration with the ISI to support the mujahedin (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 99).

The Soviet invasion came as a surprise to President Carter, as the CIA's earlier assessment that the Soviets would not deploy a substantial number of their own troops in Afghanistan had proven to be incorrect. Brzezinski cautioned the president that, regardless of the Soviets' initial motives for the invasion, once they were inside Afghanistan, their ambitions could expand, especially considering the prevailing instability in Iran and Pakistan. Brzezinski's assessment of the invasion was as follows: "could produce a Soviet presence right down on the edge of the Arabian and Oman Gulfs" (Haqqani, 2013, p. 245). In order to counter the Soviets effectively, it was crucial to increase both financial support and the delivery of arms to the mujahedin in Afghanistan. This needed to be done through a coordinated covert action campaign involving Islamic nations. Additionally, efforts should be made to secure the support of China, as well as key European allies like the United Kingdom and France. Furthermore, it was essential to reinstate military and economic development aid to Pakistan to strengthen their role in the resistance effort (Haqqani, 2013).

President Carter chose to implement economic sanctions against the Soviet Union, which included halting grain sales and technology sharing, revoking fishing rights, limiting negotiations on cultural, trade, and commercial matters, canceling planned visits to the Soviet Union, and implementing varying standards for trade and technology transfer that would disadvantage the Soviets and benefit China. These sanctions were officially announced in January 1980. In addition, President Carter decided to approve a new covert operation conducted by the CIA. This operation aimed to provide lethal weapons to the mujahedin through the Pakistani government, and President Carter signed the authorization for this on January 29, 1980 (Kux, 2001, p. 252).

President Carter pledged assistance to Pakistan in addressing the threat "from the north" and committed the United States to safeguarding the Persian Gulf against external aggression. Furthermore, the U.S. decided to participate in a boycott of the summer Olympics in Moscow as a symbolic condemnation of the Soviet invasion. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was among the early and enthusiastic proponents of arming the mujahedin and endorsing the Olympic boycott. She and her cabinet strongly supported Carter's resolute response and advocated for the swift supply of weapons to the mujahedin. In a briefing regarding Saudi Arabia's involvement in January 1980, Thatcher was informed that: "Muslim money is already flowing and may be sufficient" (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 105).

Brzezinski's mission was successful in both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia; the Saudis consented to match the United States' funding for the mujahedin, and the ISI-CIA-GID partnership was solidified. Brzezinski also pursued another diplomatic avenue, engaging with China. Earlier in the administration, Brzezinski had played a central role in President Carter's diplomatic efforts to establish relations with China. Now, he endeavored to persuade China to provide aid to the mujahedin. China ultimately agreed, and by the conclusion of the war, Chinese aid had exceeded \$400 million. Approximately 300 Chinese advisers participated in training mujahedin fighters at ISI camps in Pakistan. The Chinese employed weapon systems that closely resembled Soviet arms, aligning with the principle of maintaining plausible deniability (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 107).

The initial shipment of arms, primarily consisting of 303 Enfield rifles, reached Pakistan on January 10, 1980, just two weeks after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The initial objective was to "harass the Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan." What had previously been a non-lethal aid program initiated six months earlier now transformed into a strategy aimed at gradually wearing down the Soviet Union through a prolonged conflict (Cogan, 1993, p. 79). The arms selected for this covert operation were carefully chosen to ensure that they couldn't be traced back to the United States, allowing the operation to remain clandestine and giving the president "plausible deniability" regarding the existence of a secret war. Carter preferred weapons of Soviet origin so that if they were discovered in the possession of the mujahedin, it would appear they had been captured on the battlefield. By the end of Carter's presidency, the covert war in Afghanistan was fully operational. All the key strategic elements were in place, and the CIA, ISI, GID, along with British MI6 and other organizations, were actively supporting the "freedom fighters" in their battle against Soviet forces (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 104).

b-Reagan's Influence and Contributions

Ronald Reagan, who was elected president in November 1980 with a mandate to restore American prestige and influence, was prepared to take a more assertive stance. Despite some skepticism among his advisers about the military capabilities of the mujahedin, Reagan directed the CIA to do whatever it could to support them. He appointed William J. Casey as the head of the CIA. Casey, a devout Catholic, held strong religious convictions that significantly influenced his worldview. He firmly believed that the cold war represented a moral struggle of good against evil, with God pitted against the devil. Reagan shared this black-and-white perspective on the conflict.

Reagan and Casey aimed to utilize the CIA in waging a global war against what they saw as the "evil empire." Their objective went beyond mere retaliation for the Soviet Union's actions in Vietnam or bogging it down in conflicts; they aspired to decisively win the cold war, defeating the Soviets once and for all. Reagan had criticized Carter's response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as too feeble rather than too robust. He had ridiculed sanctions on grain sales, arguing that "pigs, cows, and chickens" had not invaded Afghanistan, and contending that American farmers should not bear the cost of confronting the Soviet Union (Jordan, 1982, p. 101).

The objectives of the covert Afghan wars remained relatively modest during the early 1980s. CIA officers overseeing the operations were primarily focused on creating difficulties and inflicting casualties on Soviet troops, rather than aiming for their outright defeat. Until approximately 1985, the CIA's Afghanistan team held the belief that a superpower had effectively conquered another third-world nation, and this conquest appeared irreversible. There was little hope of expelling the Soviets at that time. Instead, the primary aim was to escalate the costs associated with the Soviet occupation, not necessarily to bring it to an immediate end. Some individuals within the agency expressed concerns about the ethical implications of prolonging a losing war and the toll it would take on the Afghan people. However, the prevailing sentiment among many was a desire for revenge due to the scars left by the Vietnam War (Reidel, *Avoiding Armageddon: America, India, and Pakistan to the Brink and Back*, 2013, p. 113).

In April 1982, Casey embarked on a journey to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to personally assess the clandestine conflict in Afghanistan. This initial trip marked the beginning of a yearly tradition, with Casey making springtime visits to meet with President Zia in Pakistan and King Fahd in Saudi Arabia. During these meetings, Casey aligned his perspective with Zia's and Fahd's assessment that Moscow's ultimate objective was to establish a foothold on the Indian Ocean and gain control over the vital oil flow from the Persian Gulf.

Casey's sessions would commence with detailed briefings on the latest U.S. intelligence concerning the Soviet Union, its global activities, and the status of the 40th Red Army. Additionally, he would provide Zia with intelligence updates regarding India's military capabilities, a subject of deep interest to the Pakistani leader. During these discussions, Zia would assert that India was Moscow's ally and underscored the significance of this alliance "the Soviets might well provoke an Indian invasion of Pakistan just to distract the Pakistanis from helping the Afghans. So he needed more weapons to defend Pakistan against India. And Casey agreed" (Persico, 1990, pp. 312-313).

Zia harbored deep concerns that an excessively robust support for the mujahedin could potentially lead to his worst-case scenario: a coordinated effort by the Soviet Union and India to disintegrate Pakistan. In this context, his apprehensions were weighted more heavily towards India, particularly given the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Consequently, during the initial years of the Reagan administration, Zia refrained from exerting pressure on the United States and Saudi Arabia to escalate their involvement in the Afghan war. In line with the previous Carter administration's approach, Reagan also adhered to a policy of providing arms that could credibly be argued not to originate from the United States (Gates, 1996, pp. 320-321).

Reagan's second term marked a significant turning point in the clandestine war in Afghanistan. After four years of relative stagnation, the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia jointly determined in the mid-1980s to escalate their efforts against the Soviets and substantially increase their support for the Afghan resistance. Several factors coalesced to bring about this shift, ultimately shaping the course of the conflict. Foremost among these was a change of heart by Zia, who in 1985 decided to intensify the conflict. After half a decade of warfare, Zia became convinced that the risk of a Soviet invasion had diminished. Soviet troop levels had stabilized, and the Soviets were too occupied with the mujahedin to seriously contemplate an invasion of Pakistan. Furthermore, with the ascent of Gorbachev to power in March 1985, following Cherenkov's death, it appeared less likely that the Soviets would pursue an aggressive invasion (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, pp. 117-118).

On Pakistan's other border, the political landscape had also undergone a transformation. Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31, 1984, marked a significant shift. Her son, Rajiv, succeeded her in office. While

Zia had regarded Indira as a formidable adversary, given her role in dismembering Pakistan during the 1971 war, he viewed Rajiv as less substantial, often characterizing him as a playboy and lightweight. Moreover, Reagan's reelection likely bolstered Zia's confidence.

In 1985, Zia took the bold step of authorizing the ISI to deploy the British Blowpipe surface-to-air missile system to assist the mujahedin. This decision marked a departure from his previous policy of maintaining plausible deniability, as he willingly assumed the risk that the ISI's involvement in the conflict might come to light. In January 1986, Zia surprised the United States by requesting Stinger missiles. During a conversation with Casey, Zia emphasized that "this is the time to increase the pressure" on the Soviets. The following month, Casey informed Zia that a first installment of 400 Stinger missiles would be provided. This move signaled the end of the old United States policy of maintaining plausible deniability by exclusively supplying weapons of Soviet origin to the mujahedin.

Changes were also occurring in Moscow, driven by the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. Unlike his predecessors, Gorbachev had played no role in the decision to invade Afghanistan. Moreover, he possessed a keen awareness of the Soviet Union's inherent weaknesses, particularly its ailing economy. Recognizing that the war was sapping both Soviet military and economic resources and in need of resolution, Gorbachev opted to provide the military an opportunity to demonstrate its ability to achieve victory. This led to a significant military offensive in 1987 aimed at defeating the mujahedin. Interestingly, this offensive coincided with the arrival of substantial quantities of Stinger and Milan missiles and a notable increase in the CIA's budget (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, pp. 122-123).

Gorbachev was actively working to pave the way for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. During a summit with Reagan in Washington in December 1987, Gorbachev publicly declared that the Soviets would complete their withdrawal over a twelve-month period. While he aimed to put an end to external support for the mujahedin, he did not insist on a political settlement that would ensure the communists remained in power after the departure of Soviet troops (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014).

However, Gorbachev was cautious about the potential repercussions of a hastily executed withdrawal, especially in terms of its impact on other Soviet global commitments. One of the commitments that weighed heavily on Gorbachev's mind was the Soviet alliance with India, a key partner in South Asia. Gorbachev had developed a strong rapport with Rajiv Gandhi, who was concerned about the prospect of a triumphant and resurgent Pakistan, confident in its ideological victory and instrumental in the defeat of the formidable Red Army. Rajiv feared that such a scenario would lead to increased trouble for India. In fact, during a meeting with Gorbachev shortly after Gorbachev's summit with Reagan in October 1986, the Indian prime minister expressed his concerns, referencing the CIA and ISI covert war against the Soviets, stating that: "it will be much worse for the region if imperialism succeeded in strangling the revolution in Afghanistan" (Kalinovsky, 2011, p. 185).

The previously stagnant negotiations in Geneva concerning Afghanistan took on renewed significance as the Soviet Union signaled its willingness to withdraw. Gorbachev actively pursued an agreement that would put an end to all external military support for the warring factions in Afghanistan. While the United States was primarily focused on expediting the Soviet withdrawal, Zia, while equally eager to see the Soviets depart, held a keen interest in shaping Afghanistan's post-Soviet landscape. Zia sought substantial assurances that the communist regime would also be removed from power, a demand that Moscow resisted. Consequently, the Geneva talks predominantly revolved around whether there would be any restrictions on the supply of arms to the conflicting parties once the Soviet combat forces withdrew. Reagan maintained his stance that the flow of arms to the mujahedin should continue even after the departure of Soviet forces (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 124).

On April 14, 1988, the Geneva Accords were signed by the respective Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, the United States, Pakistan (Eduardo Zain Noorani), and Afghanistan (Abdul Wakil), with the United Nations overseeing the process. Notably, these four delegations did not convene together for the signing ceremony. Within the accords, there were various aspirational commitments, including pledges by Afghanistan and Pakistan to honor each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The principal agreement outlined a timetable for the commencement of the Soviet troop withdrawal, slated to initiate on May 15, 1988, and conclude by February 15, 1989 (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014).

The mujahedin did not significantly impede the Soviet withdrawal process. Many of the mujahedin commanders, including Massoud, had already shifted their focus towards planning for the post-Soviet period and were eager to conserve their resources and firepower for the anticipated battle for Kabul. In a covert effort that frustrated their client Najibullah, the Soviets engaged in discreet cooperation with

Massoud to ensure that their withdrawal from Afghanistan proceeded with minimal disruption. To maintain Najibullah's support, the Soviets increased economic aid to Afghanistan in 1988 and 1989, delivered additional arms, and retained Soviet specialists and advisors in Kabul and other urban centers to provide assistance to the Afghan communist regime (Braithwaite, 2011, pp. 294-296).

The U.S. intelligence community had compiled a dedicated national intelligence estimate in March 1988, outlining their projections that: "the Kabul regime will not long survive the completion of Soviet withdrawal, even with continued Soviet assistance. The regime may fall before withdrawal is complete" (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 125). However, that evaluation ultimately proved inaccurate. Some scholars have proposed that Gorbachev may have still chosen to withdraw from Afghanistan even without the introduction of the Stinger missile in 1986 and subsequent weapons systems. They point to Gorbachev's meeting with Babrak Karmal in 1985 as evidence of this possibility. While this argument holds some merit, it's probable that Gorbachev's initial inclination to seek an exit was substantially reinforced by the Soviet Union's mounting setbacks on the battlefield, particularly as a result of the intensified warfare in 1986 and 1987 (Braithwaite, 2011, p. 143).

Several key figures in this story had passed away. Zia and Akhtar met their demise in a mysterious plane crash on August 17, 1988. Prior to the plane crash, Hamid Gul had taken over from Akhtar as the head of the ISI. Benazir Bhutto had assumed the role of prime minister, and her civilian government was on a confrontational path with the military. Reagan managed to survive and complete his term in office in January 1989. His successor, and former vice president, George Bush, would officially oversee the final stages of the conflict against the Soviet troops (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 172).

D. American Strategy Post-USSR Withdrawal from Afghanistan

Between 1989 and 1992, the United States was actively engaged in Afghanistan, primarily through its support for the mujahedin. The U.S. extended substantial financial and material assistance to the mujahedin via the CIA's Operation Cyclone program, which was specifically designed to bolster the Afghan resistance against Soviet forces. This support was framed within the broader context of the U.S. strategy to contain Soviet expansion and advance American interests within the region.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 was perceived as a significant triumph for the United States, and its backing of the mujahedin was regarded as a successful covert operation. However, following the Soviet withdrawal, the United States progressively reduced its involvement in Afghanistan, which ultimately contributed to the eventual collapse of the Afghan government and the ensuing civil war.

To add further complexity to the situation, the United States pursued its own regional and global interests. The U.S. had maintained a counter-interventionist policy, primarily guided by how it could serve the interests of the United States in its rivalry with the Soviet Union. This approach sometimes overshadowed considerations related to promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan, especially concerning the post-Soviet withdrawal scenario.

This aspect was manifested in the United States' policy priorities and the distribution of weapons to the mujahedin. The U.S. funneled arms through Pakistan, specifically through the ISI, and primarily to those Afghan factions that had received ISI's endorsement. In the pursuit of broader geopolitical goals, Afghanistan's long-term stability and the potential consequences of this strategy on the country were not always given the full attention they merited (Burke, 1990, p. 247). No effective mechanism was established to assess the qualifications and future utility of these individuals. The issue of how to allocate the weaponry was entrusted entirely to the ISI, granting it the discretion to favor specific groups or individuals as it saw fit.

Within this backdrop, one of the most detrimental elements in the Afghan resistance came into existence: the extremist group known as HIIH (Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin). Hekmatyar, positioning himself as a radical Islamist, had always been a compliant ally of the ISI. The ISI had bolstered his party, not out of genuine ideological alignment, but rather to facilitate Pakistan's control over the Afghan resistance and to position itself favorably to install its chosen clients in Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal. As a consequence, Hekmatyar not only emerged as the most power-driven and single-minded strongman but also distinguished himself as the mujahedin leader with the best-equipped and most affluent forces (Saikal, 2004, p. 204).

Due to his limited popular support, Hekmatyar became a destabilizing influence during the jihad against the Soviet occupation and, subsequently, the most disruptive force following the downfall of communist rule in Afghanistan. Despite numerous admonitions from knowledgeable analysts of Afghan politics and the British government, dating as far back as 1986, the United States consistently disregarded the ISI's allocation of a significant portion of its weaponry to Hekmatyar (Cheristensen, 1995, p. 87).

The Soviet Union successfully withdrew its troops by February 15, 1989. While Moscow attempted to present its departure as a dignified withdrawal, the United States swiftly claimed credit for orchestrating one of the most significant humiliations the Soviets had faced in the post-World War II era. Following the attainment of this objective, the United States' interests in Afghanistan began to wane markedly.

The annual U.S. military aid to the Mujahedin gradually diminished, declining from approximately \$600 million at the height of the Afghan conflict to less than \$280 million immediately after the Soviet withdrawal, and ultimately to nothing by 1992. There was limited effort to redirect U.S. resources and support toward either establishing conditions and mechanisms for a relatively peaceful transfer of power to the mujahedin or addressing the humanitarian needs of the Afghan population during a transitional period. The United States seemed eager to expedite its exit from the Afghan predicament (Saikal, 2004, pp. 204-205).

In 1980, the United States recognized that the Afghan people's struggle against the Soviets aligned with its regional interests. Consequently, the United States extended financial and military support to Afghan resistance groups, including the provision of heat-seeking anti-air missiles commonly referred to as Stingers. Despite being viewed as a friendly government by many Afghans, particularly during the Soviet invasion, U.S. policy toward Afghanistan encountered significant setbacks due to internal dynamics within the U.S. government. Consequently, U.S. policies regarding Afghanistan experienced numerous strategic shortcomings:

To begin with, during the Soviet invasion, the primary objective of U.S. policy in Afghanistan was unequivocal: to counter the Soviet threat to regional and national security interests. Both the Carter and Reagan administrations entrusted the CIA with the mission of supporting the anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan. Notably, the CIA allocated over \$3 billion in U.S. aid to aid in the effort to repel the Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

Under the leadership of Robert Gates, the CIA relied heavily on General Zia and his circle within the Pakistani military establishment, particularly the ISI, to make pivotal decisions regarding U.S. involvement. Unfortunately, the CIA overlooked the possibility that Zia and the ISI might pursue objectives that diverged from U.S. national security interests or the well-being of the Afghan people. For instance, due to misinformation provided by the ISI, the CIA erroneously regarded Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as the most popular mujahedin leader. In reality, Hekmatyar was preoccupied with orchestrating assassinations of his political rivals and engaging in conflicts with other mujahedin factions rather than focusing on combating the Soviets and the Communist regime in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, Hekmatyar supported Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War, and his party was implicated in the Iran-Contra scandal at the local level. Additionally, his party served as a conduit for many Islamic extremists from around the world, including individuals involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York (Nojumi, 2002, pp. 196-197).

Secondly, despite the Geneva Accord imposing an arms embargo on Afghanistan as a condition for the Soviet forces' withdrawal, the CIA continued to supply mujahedin groups engaged in a struggle for control over Kabul against the Najibullah regime. Most of these arms and ammunition supplies were directed by the ISI towards Hekmatyar, who was actively preparing for a military takeover of Kabul. The ISI, through its strategic manipulation, convinced the CIA that Washington was supportive of such a military conquest. This collaborative effort between the CIA and ISI undermined the authentic framework of political negotiations established in Geneva, which aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar, in coordination with the ISI, launched an extensive military offensive with the objective of securing a route from Jalalabad to capture Kabul. However, this ill-conceived military operation resulted in a significant number of casualties while the Najibullah regime remained intact. Consequently, this failed military endeavor not only embarrassed the CIA for relying on the ISI's misguided analysis of the Afghan situation but also thwarted the National Commanders Council's efforts to foster unity and national-level cooperation in conducting organized military campaigns to gain control of cities held by the Kabul regime, all while minimizing casualties.

Simultaneously, the UN-facilitated political dialogue aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution was thrown into disarray due to the military operation spearheaded by the ISI and Hekmatyar. This operation created a climate of confusion and mutual distrust among the armed political factions. In another significant turn of events, the ISI, Hekmatyar, and General Tannai collaborated in an attempt to stage a military coup against Najibullah in March 1990.

This military coup had dire consequences, leading to a deep division within the Afghan armed forces along ethnic lines. Subsequently, these ominous developments dragged Afghanistan into a devastating civil war, characterized by ethnic strife, which eroded the strength of the Kabul regime and ultimately resulted in

the collapse of the state and the fragmentation of central government authority in Afghanistan (Nojumi, 2002).

a- Policies under the Administration of President Bush

George Bush assumed the presidency during a period of significant global transformation, as the Cold War, which had dominated international politics for five decades, was rapidly drawing to a close. In early 1989, Afghanistan remained a pivotal issue as the Soviet withdrawal and the covert war were ongoing. However, as often was the case, Pakistan attracted more attention in the United States.

On November 16, 1988, Benazir Bhutto emerged victorious in Pakistan's first relatively fair and free elections in a decade, securing the position of prime minister. After assuming office, Bhutto was informed by the ISI that the mujahedin would swiftly triumph once the last Soviet troops departed Afghanistan in 1989. The CIA presented President George Bush with a similar assessment. However, events did not unfold as predicted. Surprisingly, the Afghan government in Kabul, which did not fall until 1992, outlasted the Soviet Union itself.

Early in his administration, Bush extended an invitation to Bhutto for a formal state visit in Washington, marking the first such honor of his presidency and a testament to the high regard in which he held her. During this visit, he reassured her that the CIA would continue to supply arms to the mujahedin and that Pakistan would retain U.S. support. However, the U.S. policy, which had contributed to the defeat of the Soviets, remained on autopilot, driven by a desire to swiftly topple the Afghan government next. Regrettably, this strategy ultimately proved unsuccessful (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 129).

The primary factor behind this failure can be attributed to a strategic misjudgment made by Hamid Gul, who had assumed the role of the new ISI director. Gul opted to transition the mujahedin from guerrilla warfare to conventional warfare, a decision that received concurrence from the CIA due to the absence of Soviet forces. The initial target of this shift in strategy was the city of Jalalabad, where a prolonged siege unfolded.

However, this siege turned out to be a grave miscalculation. The mujahedin were ill-prepared to wage a conventional military campaign against an adversary equipped with artillery, tanks, Scud missiles, and air forces. The Afghan government's army successfully held off the mujahedin, and the ensuing stalemate engendered bitter disputes and accusations among various factions within the mujahedin (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014).

During Benazir Bhutto's tenure as Prime Minister, Pakistan's relationship with India grew increasingly tense, primarily due to the unresolved issue of Kashmir, and the two countries appeared to be on the brink of conflict. To defuse the escalating situation, President George Bush dispatched Bob Gates to the region in May 1990. By the end of his diplomatic mission, tensions had started to subside.

However, once the immediate crisis had passed, Pakistan's military and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan moved to remove Bhutto from power, citing allegations of corruption involving Bhutto and her husband, Asif Ali Zardari. Subsequently, new elections were called, and the ISI actively supported Nawaz Sharif's bid for office. According to Husain Haqqani, Hamid Gul orchestrated the anti-Bhutto campaign on behalf of the military, which included making allegations that Bhutto had "strong Zionist links" and was excessively pro-American (Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, 2005, p. 220).

Prior to Nawaz Sharif assuming office, the United States-Pakistan relationship suffered a significant setback. In October 1990, President George Bush reported to Congress that he could not provide certification that Pakistan was adhering to U.S. requests to refrain from crossing the nuclear threshold. Consequently, all U.S. foreign assistance to Pakistan was immediately suspended.

Pakistan contended that, with the Soviets in retreat, the United States no longer deemed their country as essential. It was acknowledged that the U.S. had been aware of Pakistan's nuclear ambitions during General Zia's era but had chosen to feign ignorance and not impose sanctions, citing Pakistan's crucial role in the Afghan conflict as a reason for the leniency (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 131).

Nawaz Sharif, the new Prime Minister of Pakistan, had strong ties to General Zia and found himself thrust into the complex situations of the Afghan and Kashmiri conflicts. However, unlike his predecessors, he lacked the support of the United States, which had been pivotal for Zia and Benazir Bhutto. Sharif heavily relied on the ISI, the military and religious parties to maintain his political position.

Under Sharif's leadership, the ISI was led by General Javid Nasir, an avowed Islamist who was eager to pursue both the conflicts in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Nasir advocated for a proactive approach in these regions. However, in April 1992, the Afghan situation reached a critical point when General Dostum defected to the mujahedin. This defection led to the rapid collapse of the Afghan government from within,

ultimately resulting in the mujahedin capturing Kabul (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014).

The United States eventually turned its back on Afghanistan for the following decade, a move that would prove to be a significant mistake. This neglect had severe consequences, both for the Afghan people who suffered greatly and for the broader international community. The vacuum left by the absence of U.S. engagement allowed warlords and the ISI to exert control, creating a hostile environment that would later give rise to extremist groups such as al Qaeda.

At this point, U.S. influence with the mujahedin was primarily tied to the provision of weapons, but by 1992, the arms program had come to an end. Moreover, the mujahedin had amassed a considerable arsenal, and Saudi Arabia was providing substantial financial support. Given these circumstances, the mujahedin and their ISI backers were not inclined to heed U.S. envoys who were advocating for a negotiated settlement between the mujahedin and the communist forces.

Peter Tomsen, who served as Bush's special envoy to Afghanistan after 1989, made earnest efforts to facilitate a settlement, but he faced significant challenges and had limited leverage, particularly with Pakistan, once the aid relationship had been severed (Tomsen, 2011, p. 231).

The Afghan conflict persisted even after the departure of Soviet forces. Both Washington and Moscow continued to supply arms and ammunition to the mujahedin and communist factions for an additional three years. However, as time passed, the interest of both superpowers waned. Afghanistan subsequently plunged into a protracted and devastating civil war, initially between the mujahedin and the Kabul government forces, and later among various mujahedin factions.

This ongoing conflict eventually paved the way for the emergence of a new force: the Taliban, which gradually gained control over significant parts of the country. Despite numerous strategies and efforts to secure victory in the war, none succeeded in bringing about a definitive resolution. The situation remained in a state of flux, with no clear endgame in sight. It wasn't until the tragic events of the September 11th attacks that the United States found itself drawn back into Afghanistan, initiating yet another protracted conflict with no clear end in sight (Reidel, *What We Won: American's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989*, 2014, p. 128).

VI. FINDINGS:

The findings of the research paper are presented as follows:

- Evolution of U.S.-Afghan Relations (Pre-Soviet Invasion):

The relationship underwent a slow and complex evolution, initially driven by strategic concerns in the 1950s to counter Soviet influence. Challenges arose due to Afghanistan's non-aligned status and efforts to maintain friendly ties with both superpowers. King Amanullah's eagerness to establish strong ties faced setbacks due to U.S. reluctance, leading to slow progress.

- Cold War Dynamics (1950s-1980s):

During the Cold War, Afghanistan skillfully navigated its role as a buffer state between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It secured economic and military assistance from both superpowers, with the U.S. contributing to agricultural projects but hesitating on military aid due to its alliance with Pakistan. Afghanistan turned to the Soviet Union for military support, resulting in significant arms deals, and by 1979, Soviet aid surpassed U.S. contributions.

- Key Events and Diplomatic Maneuvers:

Diplomatic maneuvers played a crucial role, including King Zahir's visit to Moscow and President Eisenhower's historic visit to Kabul. The 1960 U-2 incident exposed Pakistan's role in U.S. espionage activities. Daoud Khan leveraged the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, receiving assistance from both superpowers. Regional diplomacy, facilitated by Iran's Shah, played a crucial role in easing tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

- U.S. Response to Soviet Invasion (1979-1989):

President Carter initiated covert aid to the Afghan mujahedin in 1979, focusing initially on non-lethal assistance. After his election, Reagan took a more assertive stance, directing the CIA to support the mujahedin with lethal weapons. The covert war, facilitated by a U.S.-Pakistani-Saudi coalition, aimed to escalate costs for the Soviet Union. The introduction of Stinger missiles in 1986 proved pivotal, impacting Soviet military strategies. Gorbachev's rise to power and a changing global landscape influenced the decision for a Soviet withdrawal outlined in the Geneva Accords in 1988.

- Post-Soviet Withdrawal (1989-1992):

U.S. active engagement between 1989 and 1992 was marked by strategic successes and subsequent policy shortcomings. Progressive U.S. disengagement contributed to the collapse of the Afghan government

and the onset of a devastating civil war. The pursuit of broader geopolitical goals, reliance on the ISI for arms distribution, and the unintended empowerment of figures like Hekmatyar led to destabilization and the rise of extremist elements. U.S. withdrawal and neglect in the following decade allowed warlords and the ISI to exert control, setting the stage for the emergence of the Taliban. The absence of sustained U.S. involvement had severe consequences for the Afghan people and the broader international community. The complex interplay of regional dynamics, strategic misjudgments, and shifting global priorities left Afghanistan in turmoil, ultimately drawing the United States back into a prolonged conflict following the tragic events of the September 11th attacks.

VII. CONCLUSION

The United States' engagement with Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion in 1979 underwent a slow and complex evolution. Initially driven by strategic concerns during the 1950s to counter Soviet influence in the region, the relationship faced challenges due to Afghanistan's non-aligned status and efforts to maintain friendly ties with both superpowers.

Despite King Amanullah's eagerness to establish strong ties with the United States, progress was slow, and the U.S.'s reluctance to fully support Afghanistan proved to be a significant setback for the king's modernization initiatives. It was only a decade later, in 1942, that the United States officially declared support for Afghan independence, establishing full diplomatic relations. The outbreak of World War II further shaped Afghanistan's alignment, with a brief consideration of aligning with Germany countered by geopolitical pressures from the Soviets and the British.

This historical context underscores the nuanced dynamics that characterized the early stages of U.S.-Afghan relations, highlighting the geopolitical complexities and the evolving nature of international diplomacy during this period.

In the initial three decades of the Cold War, Afghanistan skillfully navigated its role as a buffer state between the United States and the Soviet Union, securing economic and military assistance from both superpowers. The U.S. contributed to agricultural projects but hesitated to provide military aid due to its alliance with Pakistan.

As Pakistan aligned closely with the U.S., Afghanistan turned to the Soviet Union for military support, signing significant arms deals. By 1979, the Soviet Union had extended substantial aid to Afghanistan, surpassing U.S. contributions. Geopolitical advantages, including proximity and non-support for Pakistan, gave the Soviets an edge.

King Zahir's visit to Moscow and President Eisenhower's historic visit to Kabul underscored diplomatic maneuvers. The 1960 U-2 incident over the Soviet Union exposed Pakistan's role in U.S. espionage activities. Daoud Khan leveraged the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, leading to assistance from both superpowers.

Regional diplomacy, facilitated by Iran's Shah, played a crucial role in easing tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, by 1978, suspicions grew that external influences, particularly from Iran and the CIA, were shaping Afghanistan's direction, setting the stage for the complex events that unfolded in the subsequent years.

The U.S. response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan under Presidents Carter and Reagan marked a significant chapter in Cold War history. President Carter initiated covert aid to the Afghan mujahedin in 1979, focusing initially on non-lethal assistance. Reagan, after his election, took a more assertive stance, directing the CIA to support the mujahedin with lethal weapons. The covert war, facilitated by a U.S.-Pakistani-Saudi coalition, aimed to escalate costs for the Soviet Union.

Carter's economic sanctions against the Soviets and covert aid laid the foundation, while Reagan's administration significantly intensified support. Reagan's commitment to a moral struggle against the "evil empire" shaped the covert operations. The involvement of key figures like Zbigniew Brzezinski, William J. Casey, and the CIA, along with diplomatic efforts to engage China and bolster Pakistan, played crucial roles.

As the conflict evolved, the introduction of Stinger missiles in 1986 proved pivotal, impacting Soviet military strategies. Gorbachev's rise to power and a changing global landscape influenced the decision for a Soviet withdrawal. The Geneva Accords in 1988 outlined terms for withdrawal, with the mujahedin strategically planning for post-Soviet Kabul. The story concludes with key figures passing away, the mysterious plane crash involving Zia and Akhtar, and the transition to George Bush overseeing the final stages of the conflict in 1989.

In conclusion, the United States' active engagement in Afghanistan between 1989 and 1992, primarily supporting the mujahedin against Soviet forces, was marked by strategic successes and subsequent policy shortcomings. While the U.S. celebrated the Soviet withdrawal as a triumph, its progressive disengagement contributed to the collapse of the Afghan government and the onset of a devastating civil war. The pursuit of

broader geopolitical goals, reliance on the ISI for arms distribution, and the unintended empowerment of figures like Hekmatyar led to destabilization and the rise of extremist elements.

The U.S. withdrawal and neglect in the following decade allowed warlords and the ISI to exert control, setting the stage for the emergence of the Taliban. The absence of sustained U.S. involvement had severe consequences for the Afghan people and the broader international community. The complex interplay of regional dynamics, strategic misjudgments, and shifting global priorities left Afghanistan in turmoil, ultimately drawing the United States back into a prolonged conflict following the tragic events of the September 11th attacks. The history of this period underscores the intricate challenges and long-term consequences of foreign interventions and disengagements in complex geopolitical landscapes.

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