

Understanding Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: A Review of its Reasons, Objectives and Ramifications

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Abstract

Years after the US invasion of Afghanistan, a question that is frequently raised is why Afghans opted to fight against the USSR and thus allow foreign interventions in the country. They refer to the 09-year war (1979-1989), which resulted in the death of 01 million Afghans and displacement of around 6 million more. The argument behind this question is that USSR had planned to use Afghanistan in transit to warm waters and not to conquer and destroy it the way it is now. This paper attempts to look for grounds of Soviet invasion and to ponder upon the consequences of their invasion — on Afghanistan and the region overall. It finds out that the ideological rivalry between USA and USSR led to cold war between the two where they focused on finding a buffer state for their antagonism. Afghanistan became victim of this rivalry. USSR invaded Afghanistan for preserving socialism and strengthening the communist bloc, which flabbergasted the world, and in reprisal labelled the invasion as a threat to world peace. The issue of warm waters was accurate in the sense of Soviet obsession with them, but not in case of the invasion of Afghanistan. Afghans resisted the Soviet invasion, and forced USSR to withdraw from Afghanistan. However, the woes of Afghans did not diminish following the withdrawal under the Geneva Accords, and Afghans did not succeed in establishing a peaceful and prosperous government. The reverberation continued after the breakdown of communist regime in Afghanistan, and Mujahideen fractions, who had fought against the USSR, turned their guns on each other for acquiring power. This pushed the country into a civil war and formation of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which had the US invasion of Afghanistan as its successor.

Keywords: Soviet Invasion, Saur Coup, Afghanistan, Warm Waters, Mujahideen, Geneva Pact, Civil War

Introduction

Historically, Afghanistan has remained of interest to invaders and conquerors. Their aim being to strengthen their grip on South Asia, they have either used power to suppress Afghans to become and remain loyal or have resorted to other means and methods for bringing tribal leaders to join hands with them.¹

Mughals Conquered Kabul, the present capital of Afghanistan, in 15th century in order to reach India. Their rule lasted in the region for almost three decades until Safavid Dynasty took over Herat province, in western part of Afghanistan, and moved towards Kandahar at the same time when Mughals were ruling Kabul.² Furthermore, the country has suffered due to its status as a buffer state during the Great Game between East India Company (Britain) and Czarist Russia during 19th century. Thereafter, the country underwent three wars against Britain in 1839, 1879, and 1919 respectively, also known as Anglo-Afghan wars.³ The story does not end here. Again, super powers of the time found Afghanistan's geo-strategic location conducive for their proxy wars. Only that this time the war was not a typical imperialist one, but an ideological conflict between the Communism and the Capitalism ensued.⁴

1.1 The Democratic Afghanistan under Dawood Khan

Ahmad Shah Durrani, commonly known as Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Architect-in-Chief of the modern Afghanistan and his successors ruled Afghanistan for 226 years until King Zahir Shah, was dethroned by Muhammad Dawood Khan on 17 July 1973 through a bloodless coup.⁵ Dawood established a republican form of Government and portrayed himself as a progressive nationalist and a pro-Socialist. He was inclined towards the Soviet Union in early days of his government. Once he acquired power with the assistance of Afghan Communists, mostly members of People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)⁶, he gravitated towards favoring them through offering appointments of key military and government posts and thus failed to form an inclusive government.⁷ Due to his progressive style of governance, he already had lost the support of clerics, tribal heads and rural population; who formed the pillars of power at the time. He received economic and military aid from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and during his first visit to Moscow in 1974, he acquired US\$ 428 million in assistance from the same. In return, he was asked to work more closely with Parcham Faction of PDPA and support Soviet foreign policy in the United Nations (UN) summits. This resulted in PDPA members occupying high-level government

offices and thenceforth targeting their opponents and religious circles alike.⁸

University campuses and government offices were transformed into platforms for ideological tussles between radical leftists “mostly educated in the west and Moscow” and radical rightists “mostly educated in Al-Azhar University and Madrassas inside the country”.⁹ Since leftists were ruling the country, rightists were targeted and imprisoned by Dawood while in order to avoid persecution, some of them fled to Pakistan in 1975.¹⁰

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, welcomed them to Pakistan and provided them sanctuaries. His purpose was to use the Afghan leaders for pressurizing Dawood and reciprocating his policy of supporting Pashtunistan issue. Despite meetings and agreements between Dawood and his Pakistani counterpart in 1976 and 1978, the country did not stop supporting and training Afghan *Mujhahideen*.

By now, Dawood was not as flexible in his relations with communists of Afghanistan as they hoped for. He started shunting military officers into provinces and replaced them with religious and non-communist elements. By doing so, he tried to make his government inclusive but it fired back. His relations with Soviet Union deteriorated and reached its zenith in 1977 on his visit to Moscow where he not only rejected Brezhnev’s demand of expelling UN and NATO workers from Northern Afghanistan but also disagreed to working closely with Afghan communists. As soon as he returned, He announced his visit to USA.¹¹

USSR started looking for an alternative and suspicious murder of Meer Akbar Khyber¹² on 17th April 1978 in Kabul precipitated antagonism of communists against Dawood. PDPA accused Dawood for the murder and the funeral ceremony of Khyber was turned into anti-government demonstration of 10,000-30,000 people led by Noor Muhammad Tarakai and Babrak Karmal.¹³

1.2 Dawood Khan Toppled by Pro-Soviet Elements

On 25th April 1978, Dawood arrested communist leaders including Tarakai and Karmal but Hafizullah Amin, another staunch communist leader, remained out of bars. He started conspiracy against government and gathered pro-communist officers in the army and went for a military coup on 27th April 1978. The military besieged ARG, the Presidential Palace, with several hundred officers and 50 tanks. Dawood after putting-up a day’s resistance was killed with 39 members of his family on 28th April 1978.¹⁴ The coup, aka the Saur Revolution, succeeded and military council

took the charge of affairs. Aslam Watanjar and Abdul Qadir, who were military generals in the Afghan Army, and served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense respectively, announced on radio takeover of the government by PDPA and handed over government to the revolutionary council of PDPA on 30th April 1978.¹⁵ Dawood could not protect his government because of ambivalent policies in respect of right and left internally. He could not decide about his allies and thus, initially suppressed the rightists but later on started relocating leftists to provinces and sidelining them from power. In his last days, he appointed personal friends into government positions.¹⁶

A noteworthy point remains that President Dawood was neither a communist nor pro-USSR. He was a progressive nationalist “not ready to compromise on Pashtunistan Issue”¹⁷ and a Fabian socialist.¹⁸ He believed in bringing reforms gradually and tried to maintain balanced relations with both USA and USSR. However, USA was reluctant in keeping relations with Afghanistan. She was not ready to provide military aid to Afghanistan and refused selling arms to the Afghan government in 1948, 1951, and 1954. USSR, on the other hand, was ready to provide not only economic assistance but also military and political assistance to Afghanistan, even in relation to Pashtunistan Issue. These grounds convinced Dawood turn towards USSR.¹⁹

Although involvement of USSR in Saur Coup is denied and is regarded as a sudden action by Dawood and reaction by PDPA, the fact is that the Soviet advisers were present inside the Afghan military responsible for training and advising Afghan officers. In addition, the military officers who studied and/or were trained in the USSR were now followers of Marxist ideology and loyal to communism than Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Soviet Embassy in Afghanistan was in constant contact with Afghan communists, and provided them financial assistance for propagating and spreading communism and recruiting people into PDPA. This patronage and support strengthened PDPA lines in Afghanistan²⁰ but it did not end well for him or Afghanistan.

1.3 Khalq in Power: Tarakai as the New Afghan President

After the Saur Coup, Revolutionary Council of PDPA formed government. Tarakai was appointed as head of Politburo²¹ and President whereas Hafizullah Amin was his Deputy Prime Minister and Head of AGSA (*Da Afghanistan da Gato Satalo Idara* or Agency for Protection of Afghanistan’s Interest). The communist Regime led by the Khalq faction commenced suppressing their leftist opponents Parcham faction²² and

executed most of their workers and sent their leaders into exile, although as ambassadors. They also persecuted teachers, religious scholars, tribal heads, and the government officials of Zahir Shah and Dawood Khan era. Tarakai signed a Friendship Treaty with USSR on 3 December 1978, Article IV of which asserted, “the signatories shall consult each other and take by agreement appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries”.²³

The new government brought socio-economic reforms, which were radical and blasphemous in their nature more often than not. These reforms included, land reforms, banned mortgages, high rate of profits, and redistribution of land. The government seized lands of all those who owned more than 14 acres and distributed the same to landless. The government left out “In the name of Allah” from all government documents. Some of these reforms were not well received by the Afghan nation since they contended Islamic values and cultural norms.²⁴

The reforms failed due to opposition of the tribal heads and religious scholars and non-cooperation of the local population. The masses strongly opposed government and cut off their relations with government, at times even resorting to violence against the government. A soviet analyst quoted an Afghan cleric, who analyzing the grounds of strong opposition of the Afghan nation to the communist regime asserted that in Afghanistan, one should not challenge faith, honor and private property, but communists challenged all three of them.²⁵

The situation worsened with every passing day. From one side, the communist regime intensified the crackdown against their opponents, while from the other, local population accelerated their resistance against the government. Resultantly, a wave of migration to Pakistan commenced and more than 80,000 people had migrated to Pakistan by the end of 1978. Within two years, the regime had killed between 50,000 and 100,000 people mainly through AGSA.²⁶

Tarakai in response to the local resistance, especially after the Herat uprising in 1979, which resulted in the death of 25,000 people, demanded direct intervention by the Soviet troops. The Politburo however rejected the demand each time on the ground that Afghan society was religious and communism cannot be established there through coercion. They also believed that direct intervention, instead of normalizing the situation, would have catastrophic consequences. Even Tarakai’s minister, Hafizullah Amin was unhappy with intervention by the Soviet troops.²⁷

1.4 Tarakai vs. Amin Rivalry and Brezhnev's Rage

Relations between Tarakai and Amin strained on holding governmental positions. Amin blamed Tarakai for failure in implementing government policies, whereas Tarakai accused Amin of nepotism. Tarakai, while returning from Havana, stayed in Moscow and secretly met Brezhnev as well as Babrak Karmal, the exiled Parcham leader who was stripped off his Afghan citizenship a year ago by Tarakai. They conspired against Amin and agreed to replace him with Karmal. Amin somehow found out about the conspiracy and killed Tarakai by suffocating him in September 1979. Amin acquired power and proclaimed himself as President and the Party leader on 16 September 1979.²⁸

When Amin killed Tarakai, Brezhnev deemed it a personal insult. Amin summoned Soviet ambassador Puzanov into his office and accused him of conspiracy against him. He also did not accept Moscow's invitation to discuss domestic issues of Afghanistan and acted as if he was an independent ruler. Furthermore, Amin had issues with USSR regarding prices of natural gas, which they imported since 1968 from Afghanistan at a price less than the market rate.²⁹

Hafizullah Amin, a nationalist leader, tried to modify his cabinet and made his government more inclusive by including non-communists, religious scholars, and people from different ethnic groups. He started appearing in religious places, reaching out to people directly, and condemning the atrocities committed by AGSA under Tarakai's regime.

Although USSR accepted Amin as President, he was not a favorite. Moscow was suspicious of Amin, as a graduate of USA, and his policies which had many dimensions. Meanwhile, Amin was putting efforts to balance relations with other countries including the USA. Even when he was Deputy Prime Minister, he consistently met Adolf Dubs, the US Ambassador to Afghanistan. He tried to normalize relations with Pakistan as well. He was strongly against military intervention of USSR in Afghanistan and thus proposed that Soviet military advisers, who were in Afghanistan, should operate under authority of the Afghan government. USSR regarded Amin as a CIA agent and did not feel comfortable with any of these developments, which contributed to the deterioration of his relations with USSR who was not in the habit of leaving enemies unpunished.³⁰

2 Soviet Invasion and its Aftermath

Brezhnev believed that "every communist country had the right to intervene whenever and wherever socialism was under siege".³¹ He meant

to highlight, like most of other communists and his predecessors, that communism did not believe in national barriers and a global proletariat revolution was essential for establishing communism all over the world. On this pretext, he, on 12 December 1979, ordered his troops to go ahead and affirmed the invasion of Afghanistan.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was, *prima facie*, unjust, because communism's main theme was resistance against capitalist exploitation. The struggle of communists was against the free market, cosmopolitan industries and multi-national corporations, which, in their view, exploited laborer and extracted surplus value through their labor power. Afghanistan did not fulfil this criterion, because it was not a capitalist country and people lived a primitive life whereas society had almost a feudal structure. Most importantly, the conservative Afghan society was not ready to welcome foreign ideals, including communism, or accept existence of foreign troops in Afghanistan and therefore, the invasion was strongly opposed.

USSR does not agree with terming their interference as invasion, they believe that they were, relying on the Friendship Treaty signed in 1979 with Tarakai, invited to Afghanistan. In other words, they argue that USSR had intervened by invitation. The fact however is that exponents of USSR's military presence in Afghanistan were Tarakai, already dead, and Karmal, living in exile, whereas Amin, who was against Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, was ruling the country, therefore, there was no point of intervention by invitation. Moreover, Article 4 of the Friendship Treaty was ambiguous since it stated, "signatories shall consult each other and take by agreement appropriate measures³² to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries".

It is not clear as to what does "preserving territorial integrity of the countries" exactly mean. Preserving against whom? If preserving against outsiders, USSR was in itself an outsider whereas Afghanistan did not face any threat by the time from other countries. In case, it referred to preserving from the Afghan resistance, then why did USSR target their action against a communist ally, Amin? In addition, USSR itself violated the Treaty since it did not consult Amin prior to invading Afghanistan.³³

They also claim that ideological resistance against the pro-communist government was getting powerful and thus posed a threat not only to the communist regime in Kabul, it could threaten the security of southern border of USSR. Therefore, in order to get rid of the existing threat of 'rightist radicalism', as they call it, they deemed it vital to intervene

militarily in Afghanistan and defuse the 'common' threat. The reality is that the militant uprising was not as strong as claimed by USSR and in no position to topple the regime in Kabul mainly because it was not organized and not supported by any foreign country.³⁴ It is safe to claim that the Soviet invasion in fact pushed the uprising to become strong, orderly, and able to attract attention and assistance of the Muslim world and capitalist bloc.

It is also claimed that Soviet Union intervened because of Amin's growing shift towards and cordial relations with USA. Actually, he was a western educated politician and therefore, USSR was conscious of his relations with USA to an extent that it thought Amin might turn Afghanistan into a hub of imperialism. Amin however was a nationalist leader like Dawood Khan, and thus wanted to preserve neutrality in Afghan foreign relations and to maintain sovereignty of Afghanistan. That is why he not only established relations with USA, but with countries in the region. In addition, relations between the Afghan government and USA strained after abduction and murder of the US Ambassador, Adolf Dubs, in 1978 by the Parcham faction of PDPA.³⁵

Afghan historian, Dr. Mohammad Hassan Kakar, denounces the grounds and justifications provided by USSR for invasion of Afghanistan. He claims that USSR invaded Afghanistan to extract and utilize its natural resources and wealth for the main purpose of improving their stagnant economy as well as strengthening policies of international communism.³⁶

Aslam Watanjar, general in the Afghan army and Deputy Prime Minister following the Saur Coup, Asadullah Sarwari, Head of AGSA during Tarakai regime, and Sayed Mohammad Gulabzoy, another Afghan army general, accompanied the Soviet forces and were guiding and assisting them in targeting Tajbeg palace, where Amin was present. The Red Troops killed the guards first and then assassinated Amin with some of his family members, who was already poisoned by a Russian cook. Pro-Amin officers did not oppose the Soviet troops due to presence of influential communists like Watanjar, Sarwari and Gulabzoy in their ranks as well as due to the faith they had in USSR and communism.³⁷

Following Amin, Karmal announced collapse of Amin's regime and regarded it as violent and repressive one. He assured the people that a democratic regime would replace the same. He legalized multi-party system, ordered the release of political prisoners, announced non-interference in customs and traditional affairs. The pro-government tribal heads were exempted from confiscation of lands. As part of the

redistribution of land scheme, priority was given to families that would send their sons to army and, finally, he tried to re-establish religion under auspices of the state authority, what is referred to as “religion became in the service of the state”.³⁸

Despite these and other reforms as well as Karmal’s efforts to achieve support of the masses, he did not keep his promises and turned out to be more brutal and loyal to Soviets as compared to earlier communist presidents. Hence, people all over the country continued their opposition to the Soviet invasion and the pro-Soviet government. In 1980, the *Allah u Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest) movement started all over the Kabul where people chanted *Allah u Akbar* from their roofs every night and the entire Kabul echoed with anti-government slogans.³⁹

2.1 Global Response to Invasion

This situation astonished the entire world, especially the USA and reactions started pouring in from different quarters. US President Jimmy Carter regarded the attack as extremely serious threat to peace and violation of the UN Charter. US government-imposed sanctions on USSR and put the strategic Arms Limitation Talks II on hold. They also reduced contracted shipments of grains to USSR from 25 to 08 million tons and boycotted 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Other countries followed the boycott.⁴⁰ President Carter, the American geopolitical thinker A.T. Mahan, American media and analysts described the invasion as part of the long-standing Soviet desire to reach warm waters and the Persian Gulf and achieving strategic superiority. President Carter announced that any assault on the Persian Gulf would be retaliated with militarily.

Irrespective of the veracity of these claims, it has been a fact that beginning with, Czarist Russia had always been in search of reaching the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. The major reason for this policy being that Russia was then surrounded by ice whereas it needed a route for its trade and therefore it was imperative to have access to “Ice-free sea” or warm waters.⁴¹ This would have allowed them easily connect with South Asia, dominate the region and strengthen the socialist block.⁴² The Russian craze for warm waters disappeared from the Anglo-American political writings posts World War I because the successors of Czarist Empire were left with diminished territory, resources and naval forces. However, during the World War II and subsequent cold war period, the Russian drive for warm waters made it back to the discourse and the same was propagated by western media, politicians, Pakistani officials and *Mujahideen*, especially, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. They claimed that the motive

behind invasion of Afghanistan was Soviet imperialist intention of reaching Indian sub-continent, specifically Pakistan, and warm waters. General Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan chanted slogans of *jihad* of Afghanistan, [is] defense of Pakistan. The fact remains that it was an ideological conflict between capitalism and communism. Soviet foreign policy says nothing about the warm waters and Brezhnev in early 1977 declared that USSR was not in quest for superiority, and rejected any first strike.⁴³

It was not only USA and the Muslim countries that condemned the invasion and expressed their solidarity with Afghanistan. the UN Security Council too demanded USSR to immediately withdraw from Afghanistan and respect the sovereignty of the country. Two UN Resolutions were passed for this purpose, which were vetoed by USSR.⁴⁴

2.1 Jihad to Counter Soviet Invasion

Afghans stood against the Soviet invasion and started fighting against the regime in Kabul. Since the government was also committed to suppress the resistance, it resorted to force forcing people to leave Afghanistan looking for refuge in the neighboring countries. The wave of refugees, which started following the *Saur* Coup, accelerated after the invasion. General Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan embraced the refugees and established various refugee camps for them. He claimed that he was helping the Afghans due to the link of Islamic brotherhood between them and Pakistan, but the fact was that he intended, and actually did, use the Afghans to fight the communist regime in Afghanistan. He convinced President Carter, who was reluctant initially, to help Afghan resistance and to use his influence for encouraging other Muslim countries to support the resistance both diplomatically and financially.⁴⁵

Pakistan started training *Mujahideen* different camps⁴⁶ divided into seven groups.⁴⁷ The reason for not bringing all people under a strong command and single authority was that Pakistan did not want a single authority to command *jihad* and build a strong government after withdrawal of USSR,⁴⁸ in case that happened.⁴⁹

2.2 The Final Moments

Brezhnev died in 1982 to be replaced by Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko respectively, both had a brief tenure due to their ailing health. The war during Chernenko intensified mainly due to his approach that he could solve the conflict through force. In response, USA accelerated their assistance to *Mujahideen* and provided them around 2,300 Stinger missiles. This is considered the turning point in the battlefield, since *Mujahideen* were able to shoot down soviet helicopters and airplanes. However, after

Soviet withdrawal, USA was concerned with its re-collection because around 600 Stinger missiles were missing out of which around hundred were allegedly secured by Iran. This was the reason these stingers were repurchased from the *Mujahideen* for US\$ 70,000-150,000 each. This became a good means of business and livelihood for some of the *Mujahideen* commanders.⁵⁰

3 Decision of Withdrawal

Following Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Party and headed the state from 1985-1991. Since Gorbachev did not believe in international revolution, downplayed the importance of class struggle in international relations, and emphasized on mutual security and role of Politics in resolving disputes, he proposed tremendous changes in foreign policy of USSR. Unlike his predecessors who believed in international communism and pumped money for the purpose of propagating the ideology, Gorbachev opted for the path of peace and reconciliation⁵¹ and decided to withdraw Soviet troops. In 1986, he announced immediate withdrawal of 8000 Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Overall, the cost of war to both the countries was immense. USSR lost more than 13,000 soldiers, while 35,000 others were wounded. They spent approximately between US\$ 07 to 12 billion each year on war. The casualties to Afghan side were tremendous, one million lives were lost, three million wounded, and six million forced to leave their country while the country lost its infrastructure, legitimacy and centrality.⁵²

To contain the damage, he replaced Babrak Karmal with Dr. Najeebullah, former Head of Khad (*Khadamaat-e-Itla'ati Dawlat*). After being appointed as President, Najeeb followed National Reconciliation Policy, summoned a Loya Jirga in November 1987, approved new constitution, multi-party system and announced a uni-lateral cease-fire for six months, which was extended later on to 12 months.⁵³

Gorbachev's decision for withdrawal paved the way for Geneva Accords. Although the informal negotiations for the Accords commenced in Geneva in 1982, Pakistan was reluctant to cooperate. The grounds for such reluctance, *inter alia*, was that Pakistan did not want to recognize the communist regime in Afghanistan in case the negotiations were successful. In addition, it would have lost the aid flowing in for distribution between the *Mujahideen*. In view of the above, Geneva conference accelerated after 1986 when Gorbachev acquired power and decided to withdraw from Afghanistan.⁵⁴

The Geneva Accords were finally signed on 14th April 1988 by the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Afghanistan as parties, whereas USSR and USA were guarantors of the Accords. It was agreed that Soviet Union would withdraw all their forces from Afghanistan within 10 months.⁵⁵ The withdrawal officially began on 15th May 1988 and ended by 15 February 1989.

4 Civil War

Mujahideen were left out, since they were neither part of the negotiations nor the Geneva Accords, and therefore they did not agree to honor terms of the Accords. Soon after the withdrawal of USSR, USA lost interest in Afghanistan and did not play any role in building a centralized government in Kabul. The Soviet backed Dr. Najeeb remained in power. Hence, the country plunged into civil war where *Mujahideen* continued fighting with support from Pakistan. An attack was planned and executed on Jalalabad, the center of eastern Nangarhar province, but the government forces defused the attack by killing 1,000 fighters pushing them back from the city.

Dr. Najeeb's government sustained for longer than expected and lasted until 1992. He, at least apparently, followed the policy of national reconciliation, formed his own party "Hezb-e-Watan" and was ready for making a coalition government with *Mujahideen*. They however thought that they were already winning the war militarily and USSR had withdrawn from Afghanistan, therefore, opting for reconciliation was a strategic mistake, which they should avoid. Instead, they were thinking about forming a 'genuine' Islamic State and therefore demanded Dr. Najeeb's resignation, especially when he was a communist, was a puppet, in their view, and had killed and tortured *Mujahideen*.

Dr. Najeeb had to engage with *Mujahideen* as well as take care of the internal rivalry between Khalq and Parcham. His ally Abdul Rashid Dostum⁵⁶ switched side once and formed an alliance with Professor Burhan Uddin Rabbani, whereas his General Shah Nawaz Tanai⁵⁷ conspired against him and joined hands with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar for a coup in 1990. Tanai's attempt failed and he therefore escaped to Pakistan in a Military Helicopter; where he was welcomed and officially regarded as an ally of Hekmatyar.⁵⁸

Stucked between rightist and leftist rivalries as well as dying out support from Russian Federation, Dr. Najeeb was unable to manage the situation and therefore, he agreed to resign from his post on 18th March

1992. UN Envoy Benin Sevan announced a handover of Government from Dr. Najeeb who took sanctuary at UN compound.

Mujahideen rushed towards Kabul on 24 April 1992 after signing the Peshawar Accord according to which Sibghatullah Mojaddedi had to head an interim government for 2 months followed by Burhan Uddin Rabbani as head for a term of 04 months, to be followed by general elections.⁵⁹ This dream did not see the light of day, however. No general elections were held and Millions of Afghans who were waiting for an Islamic, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan were all belied with intra-*Mujahideen* wars. There were *Mujahideen* commanders and foot soldiers who disapproved the situation prevalent post-Soviet withdrawal and during Dr. Najeeb's government so they put down their weapons and returned to their homes. Nevertheless, some did not.

The country went into anarchy and was divided between warlords belonging to different *Mujahideen* party or group. Each periphery was a safe haven for specific group of *Mujahideen* trying to conquer and capture Kabul. *Mujahideen* Commanders started persecuting common people, forced marriages were rampant, looting people was a norm, rape and extrajudicial killings were normal. The country remained in the same situation of warlordism until Taliban captured Kabul in 1996.⁶⁰ They conquered almost 90% of the country by 2001 They formed a complete theocratic regime and regarded their Government as "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)". People, tired of the lawless and miserable situation prevalent during *Mujahideen* times, welcomed the Taliban. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates recognized the IEA. USA, who had put the Afghan issue at the backseat after the withdrawal of USSR, also seemed optimistic about them, but the optimism of people and the world did not last longer. Taliban harbored Al-Qaida and other radical elements who had declared *jihad* against the world. Then 9/11 happened and the whole world, led by USA, re-directed their focus to Afghanistan. It is due to the events in New York and Washington DC that USA and its allies invaded Afghanistan. The course of events suggests that the history is repeating itself.

5 Conclusion

The Soviet invasion proved disastrous for both USSR and Afghanistan. Their assumption of controlling Afghanistan by subjugating the *Mujahideen* and normalizing the situation in favor of communists within two years were miscalculated. That is why once entered Afghanistan, they remained

here for more than nine years and had to make compromises for a safe withdrawal.

Mujahideen, assisted by USA and others, did a tremendous job. They resisted the invasion, ensured withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan, assisted in ending the cold war, transforming the world from a bipolar world into a unipolar capitalist world, and helped the US take revenge for its defeat in Vietnam, but they could not collect the fruit of their efforts for Afghanistan.

USSR failed in protecting, let alone expanding, socialism and was disintegrated into smaller states. They also could not save Afghanistan from the 'rebels' resisting the communist rule in Kabul, or from Islamic militancy, as they would call it, instead, their invasion of Afghanistan precipitated religious extremism not only in Afghanistan but around the world. Triumph of the *Mujahideen* in Afghanistan was deemed an indication and symbol by Muslims in different parts of the world.

Afghanistan was a relatively poor but a peaceful country before the invasion, but the invasion destroyed and shattered the politics, administration, society, culture, values and economy of the country. The aftershocks of decay in politics, governance, and society can be observed in the fact that Afghanistan is at the top of every bad list, like the one gauging insecurity, corruption and opium production. This is mainly due to interference and invasion of USSR.

Notes and References

- ¹ Shaista Wahab, Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 64-67. (Hereinafter, Shaista, *A Brief History*).
- ² *Ibid.*, 68-70.
- ³ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan (USA: Greenwood Press, 2007)*, 76-91.
- ⁴ William C Green, The Historic Russian Drive for a Warm Water Port: Anatomy of a Geopolitical Myth. *Naval War College Review*, 46:02 (1993), 80-102.
- ⁵ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 113
- ⁶ PDPA was formed by Noor Mohammad Tarakai in 1965 with 30 members, having Marxist-Leninist views, and was split a year later into Khalq and Parcham, headed by Noor Mohammad Tarakai and Babrak Karmal respectively.
- ⁷ Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 102.
- ⁸ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 132.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-128.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.
- ¹¹ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 131-132.

- ¹² Meer Akbar Khyber was leftist Intellectual, and Leader of Parcham Faction of PDPA. For details, see, Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 103.
- ¹³ Both Tarakai and Karmal were heads of fragmented Factions of PDPA, which were Khalq and Parcham, who later became presidents of the country too.
- ¹⁴ Mohammad Hassan Kakar believes that Dawood was killed along with 18 family members.
- ¹⁵ Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 103.
- ¹⁶ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 134-135.
- ¹⁷ Territory, once part of Afghanistan, was ceded from it through an Agreement in 1893 signed by Amir Abdurrahman Khan and Henry Mortimer Durand. After partition of India 1947, the land of Pashtunistan went to Pakistan, and this was not acceptable to Afghans. Through a Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) in 1949, Afghanistan regarded the Pashtunistan territory as independent from Pakistan. Dawood Khan supported Pashtuns to acquire their freedom. This was the reason Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan looked for ways of engaging Dawood Khan so that he will forget about Pashtunistan. For further details, see, Shaista Wahab, *A Brief History*, 129-136.
- ¹⁸ Fabianism is an English School of Democratic Socialism, which originated in London in 1884, to bring reforms gradually and through democratic means, not means that are revolutionary. For details, see: O. P. Gauba, *An Introduction to Political Theory* (Delhi: Mayur paperbacks, 7th edn., 2018).
- ¹⁹ Azhar Javed Siddiqui, Khalid Manzoor Butt, *Afghanistan-Soviet Relations during the Cold War: a Threat for South Asian Peace*, *South Asian Studies*, 29:02 (2014), 622.
- ²⁰ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 134-135.
- ²¹ Political bureau is Executive Committee for Communist parties in countries having communist government.
- ²² PDPA split into Khalq and Parcham in 1966, former headed by Noor Muhammad Tarakai and later by Babrak Karmal. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 106-107.
- ²³ Siddiqui and Butt, *Afghanistan-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, 625.
- ²⁴ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 140-142.
- ²⁵ David C. Gompert, Hans Binnendijk and Bonny Lin, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, 1979*, In *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn* (USA: Rand Corporation, 2014), 134.
- ²⁶ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 143-144.
- ²⁷ Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion*, 55.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-65.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 62-63.
- ³¹ David C. Gompert, et al., *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, 129. Emphasis added.
- ³² Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion*, 72-74.
- ³³ Hassan Kakar, *The Afghan Soviet War*, 77-97.
- ³⁴ Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion*, 68-69.
- ³⁵ Hassan Kakar, *The Afghan Soviet War*, 94-96.
- ³⁶ Hassan Kakar, *The Afghan Soviet War*, 94-96.
- ³⁷ Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion*, 35-43.
- ³⁸ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 155-157.
- ³⁹ Hassan Kakar, *The Afghan Soviet War*, 126-142.
- ⁴⁰ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 158-159.

- ⁴¹ Soviet foreign policy after Bolshevik Revolution in 1919 revolved around establishing international communism. It was declared, “We shall establish workers’ and soldiers’ council in Berlin and Warsaw, in Paris and London and the might of the Soviet will one day extend throughout the whole world”. Soviets too were not reluctant in using resources of the Soviet Union to speed up the global revolutionary process. The revolution in the west failed and did not succeed the way Lenin had predicted. That is why USSR proposed the policy of coexistence and started establishing trade ties with neighboring countries, like Turkey, Afghanistan and Central Asia. This approach remained in practice until Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. For details, see, John Van Oudenaren, *Understanding Soviet Foreign Policy (USA: NDU, 1990)*, 2-10. In addition, by the 1970s, USSR had reached the warm water ports in allied countries such as Somalia and Aden, and had replaced Britain as the most influential power in India, so they did not need Afghanistan as a pathway for these goals. For further details, see, Shaista, *A Brief History*, 149.
- ⁴² Hassan Kakar, *The Afghan Soviet War*, 112-113. Anglo-American analysts have described in their writings that Peter-the Great had the intention of reaching warm waters and controlling the region. A. T. Mahan regarded warm water as an evident need for Russia. This desire for reaching Indian Ocean led to Russian expansion to its Southward borders, which led to two Anglo-Afghan Wars in 1839 and 1879. This entire episode is regarded as Great Game. For details, see, William C Green, *The Historic Russian Drive for a Warm Water Port: Anatomy of a Geopolitical Myth*, *Naval War College Review*, 46:02 (1993), 83.
- ⁴³ Oudenaren, *Understanding Soviet Foreign Policy*, 13.
- ⁴⁴ Hassan Kakar, *The Afghan Soviet War*, 110-111.
- ⁴⁵ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 159.
- ⁴⁶ The triangle, USA, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, played a tremendous role in the Afghan *jihad* against USSR where the first two countries provided Financial Aid and military equipment; the last one trained the *Mujahideen* in its camps.
- ⁴⁷ Iran Also Supported some rebellious groups mostly Hazara Shiite. For details, see, Zalmay Khalilzad. *Anarchy in Afghanistan*, *Journal of International Affairs*, 51:01, *South Asia: The Challenges of Statehood* (1997), 41.
- ⁴⁸ Khalilzad, *Anarchy in Afghanistan*, 41.
- ⁴⁹ The seven *jihadi* groups formed in Pakistan included: *Hezb-e-Islami* led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar; *Jamiat-e-Islami* led by Professor Burhan Uddin Rabbani, *Harakat-e-Inqilab-e-Islami* led by Maulavi Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi; *Ettihad-e-Islami* led by Professor Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf; *Islami Hizb* led by Maulavi Muhammad Younus Khalis; *Mahaz-e-Milli-e-Islami* led by Pir Sayed Ahmad Geelani; and *Jabha-e-Nijat-e-Milli* led by Pir Sibghatullah Mojaddedi. Hekmatyar, Rabbani and Khalis were inspired by prominent Islamic scholars Sayed Qutb and Hassan Al-Banna of Egypt and were thus followers of Muslim Brotherhood (*ikhwan al-Muslimun*). Nonetheless, *Jamiat* was moderate compared to *Hizb-e-Islami*, whose leader Hekmatyar was also a concern for USA due to his radical and extremist views. Sayyaf was a graduate of Al-Azhar University, but seemed more inclined towards Wahhabi school of thought and was thus assisted more than others by Arabs. Beside these groups, other factions among *jihadi* groups were moderate in their ideology, and their main motive was Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Some had an additional

purpose as well—bringing back the exiled King Zahir Shah to the throne, a wish that Hikmatyar and Sayyaf both strongly opposed. For details, see, Zalmay Khalilzad, *The Envoy: from Kabul to White House: My Journey through a Turbulent World* (US: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 81. See also, Chintamani Mahapatra, *The Afghan Turmoil: Problems and Prospects*, *India International Centre Quarterly*, 24:01 (1997), 135.

⁵⁰ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden from Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (US: Penguin Books, 2004), 336-337.

⁵¹ Oudenaren, *Understanding Soviet Foreign Policy*, 1-46.

⁵² Chintamani Mahapatra, *The Afghan Turmoil: Problems and Prospects*, (*India International Centre Quarterly*, 24:01 (1997), 131-143.

⁵³ Shaista, *A Brief History*, 168-170.

⁵⁴ Khalilzad, *Anarchy in Afghanistan*, 42.

⁵⁵ Siddiqui and Butt, *Afghanistan-Soviet Relations During the Cold War*, 627.

⁵⁶ Dostum an ethnic Uzbek. He was a communist general at the beginning of the Soviet invasion, he is known for switching sides towards the triumphant ones, that is why he left Dr. Najeeb in 1992 and formed an alliance with Rabbani, and later Hekmatyar.

⁵⁷ Shah Nawaz Tanai was radical leftist and member of Khalq faction of PDPA, he attempted a coup when the relations between Khalq and Parcham were strained, and Dr. Najeeb, who belonged to Parcham, started trials of Khalq members.

⁵⁸ Hassan Kakar, *The Afghan Soviet War*, 582-585.

⁵⁹ Khalilzad, *Anarchy in Afghanistan*, 43-44.

⁶⁰ Taliban were formed in 1994, spearheaded by Mullah Omer who was designated as *Amir ul Mo'minin* (leader of the Muslims), and started fighting the *Mujahideen* and others in southern and western parts of Afghanistan, until they conquered Kabul and were then toppled by the US post events of 9/11.