

8 Afghanistan and the politics of quagmire

A retrospective analysis of US policy

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Introduction

When viewed from a US standpoint, Afghanistan has been a major source of instability and security threats. Since the late 1990s, Afghanistan's Taliban government allied itself with the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, which generated several spectacular terrorist attacks, most notably the September 11, 2001 attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In response to these disasters, the United States and its allies sponsored the overthrow of the Taliban regime in late 2001 and the installation of a new Afghan government, under the tutelage of military forces from the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The Afghan war that resulted from these events has evolved into a quagmire for the United States, one that is now well into its second decade. It constitutes one of the longest single wars in the history of the US military. While the combat role was supposed to have officially ceased in 2014, thousands of US forces remain in the country.¹ The United States Air Force has continued strikes against insurgent targets, while there are frequent calls for US ground forces to resume combat operations. The combined long-term cost of the Afghan and Iraq wars has been estimated at US\$4–\$7 trillion.² These efforts have achieved little success: The Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Islamic State and a variety of other anti-government and anti-Western militias continue to operate in the country. Despite the interminable nature of the war and the lack of any clear objective, US officials believe that they cannot “abandon” Afghanistan, since this would damage the United States’ credibility as a superpower; but at the same time, there is no prospect that further intervention will produce a stable government in the foreseeable future.

It is the theme of this chapter that the present-day US quagmire in Afghanistan is the culmination of several decades of policy failures, which have substantially weakened international security and augmented terrorist threats. In what follows, I will present the historical background to the present-day quagmire, beginning with US interventions in the 1970s. Though many countries surely contributed to the chaotic situation in Afghanistan, this chapter will focus on US policy as a generator of chaos.

Origins of destabilization

Up until the late 1970s, Afghanistan played a marginal role in international relations. The country was widely viewed as remote and inaccessible, quite distant from the oilfields of the Persian Gulf or other genuinely strategic areas of the Middle East or South Asia, points that were underscored in declassified documents from the period.³ The country did, however, have one significant strategic feature: it had a long border with the Soviet Union (USSR), and several of the principal ethnic groups of northern Afghanistan – notably the Uzbeks and the Tajiks – also lived in large numbers on the Soviet side of the border. Given these facts, the Soviet government sought influence in the country, for defensive purposes, to establish it as a security zone on its southern frontier.

From 1954 to 1956, the USSR established a sizable aid program in Afghanistan. Officers in the Afghan army were often trained in Soviet academies, while considerable economic assistance was also provided. This aid program was viewed with indifference by most US officials, who made no effort to interfere with or to outbid the Soviets. Afghanistan was implicitly recognized as a Soviet sphere of influence. Official documents from this period emphasized that although Afghanistan remained somewhat dependent on Soviet aid, the USSR showed little interest in occupying the country or turning it communist.⁴ In 1967, a US academic wrote that “Soviet aid to Afghanistan has been immensely successful. . . . Even US officials are hard pressed to find major flaws.”⁵ With respect to the country’s overall significance, a 1973 article in the *Wall Street Journal* stated that Afghanistan seemed a “vast expanse of desert waste,” of little strategic value. The *Wall Street Journal* journalist wondered why “the Russians, or anyone else for that matter, would particularly want Afghanistan.”⁶

With regard to its stance in the Cold War, Afghanistan remained officially neutral, but with a pro-Soviet tilt. With regard to internal politics, however, communism held limited appeal. From 1965, there was a small communist party, the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), but it had few members and was riven by factional disputes. It seemed that the communists had no realistic prospect of gaining support among the conservative Afghan peasantry, who constituted the large majority of the population. A Soviet official, cited by anthropologist Louis Dupree in 1979 stated that “If there is one country in the developing world where we would like not to try scientific socialism at this point in time, it is Afghanistan.”⁷

Overall, Afghanistan was far from a utopia. It was one of the most isolated and underdeveloped countries in the world, with low life expectancy, high illiteracy, appalling treatment of women and girls, and periodic famines.⁸ And yet the period of Afghan history before 1978 did have one strongly positive feature: the country was not at war, and this circumstance of political stability might well have endured – except that the United States and its allies intervened in the country and upset the political balance.

During 1973–1974, US, Iranian, and Pakistani intelligence agents all began covert operations in Afghanistan, which supported Islamist groups seeking to overthrow the Afghan president, Mohammad Daoud. This little-known operation has been documented by Cordovez and Harrison in their authoritative study.⁹ The attempted overthrow failed but served as a warning to the Daoud government. From the US standpoint, the covert action marked a fundamental shift in policy toward Afghanistan, which up to this point had refrained from any destabilizing activity. The most likely motive for the 1973–1974 intervention was the need to showcase US power, to make up for perceived weakness resulting from a lackluster war effort in Vietnam.¹⁰

The Western interventions continued over an extended period and assumed both carrot and stick roles. The “stick” had already been used in 1973, with the attempted overthrow of President Daoud. But this was followed up with a carrot: in 1974, the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Pahlavi, offered Daoud a substantial foreign aid package which would exceed what the Soviets were providing. This aid offer sought to move Afghanistan away from the Soviets and into a more pro-Western orientation. The Iranian aid program was strongly encouraged by US officials. Daoud accepted the offer, and a US\$2 billion package was to be dispersed over the following years. In exchange, Daoud indeed began moving Afghanistan into a more pro-Western direction, and his military officers were trained at academies in Egypt and India.¹¹

One of the key effects of the aid program was to encourage a gradual crackdown against the communist PDPA,¹² which occurred in phases. On this issue, once again, Daoud acceded to Western pressure. In early 1978, top communist leaders were imprisoned by Daoud, possibly as a prelude to their execution. The arrests fully destabilized the country: pro-communist officers in the Afghan Air Force led a military uprising against Daoud, which aimed at freeing the PDPA leadership. Several days of disorder ended with the overthrow of the Daoud regime, the release of the communists from prison, and their installation as the new government of the country. Contrary to widespread belief at the time, there is no evidence that the Soviets (who never really trusted the local communists) supported the coup.¹³ The new PDPA regime immediately declared that their takeover constituted the “Saur Revolution,” which would transform Afghan society. The communist takeover would in turn produce a disastrous civil war.

The United States and its allies played no direct role in this coup, but their policies certainly helped to make it possible. When US officials authorized covert interventions aimed at moving Afghanistan out of the Soviet orbit, they risked upsetting the delicate political balance that had kept Afghanistan a peaceful country; they set in motion a series of events that ultimately ended with the 1978 communist takeover. This takeover in turn generated decades of civil war and external intervention, a state of affairs that continues to the present day. US policies played a decisive role in destabilizing

Afghanistan and, when viewed over the long term, in laying the groundwork for the later rise of Al-Qaeda.

Popular resistance and Soviet invasion

After their takeover, the newly installed communists inaugurated a major reform program, and their reforms included a redistribution of arable land to the peasantry and a series of measures aimed at achieving equality of the sexes. The communists also began a mass literacy campaign, which was aimed especially at women and girls, who had previously been neglected by the educational system. Although the reform program may have been laudable in principle, it was carried out in an arrogant and heavy-handed manner. Any resistance to the reforms was met with violence and repression. These factors all helped to trigger widespread opposition, especially in the rural areas, where the communist party had always lacked support. The anti-communist opposition was composed of several separate organizations which never achieved any centralized command structure and functioned in loose coalitions, based on a common agenda of anti-communism and Islamic fervor. There is no doubt that the Mujahidin guerrillas, as they were collectively known, achieved widespread popular support, at least initially.¹⁴

The resultant 1978–1979 civil war in Afghanistan presented Soviet officials with a dilemma. On the one hand, the USSR publicly embraced their Afghan comrades as legitimate communists and ideological allies. The Soviet military sent aid and several hundred advisors and trainers to Afghanistan, who supported the government's counter-insurgency efforts against the Mujahidin. On the other hand, Soviet officials privately realized that the Afghan communist party was poorly led and that their rashly implemented reform programs helped to trigger the popular uprising. The Soviets sought to moderate the communists and to reduce the influence of some of the more impetuous figures in the party, notably the foreign minister, Hafizullah Amin, who was considered particularly hard-line. But contrary to popular belief, the Soviets had no interest in invading the country during this period. Previously secret documents have now become available, and they show repeated statements by Soviet officials that they could not send regular combat forces into Afghanistan, because this would entail becoming engaged in civil war, fighting on behalf of an unpopular government against a mass insurgency.¹⁵ The new documents leave no doubt that at least initially, the USSR accepted the possibility that their Afghan comrades might fall from power, but the Soviets would not send their troops to save them.

What seems to have changed Soviet attitudes was a covert intervention by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which was approved by President Jimmy Carter on July 3, 1979. President Carter's national security directive on that date authorized the delivery of "cash or non-military supplies" to the Mujahidin.¹⁶ This covert aid program began *before* the Soviets invaded the country, not afterward. It seems highly likely that President Carter

undertook this action with full knowledge that the Soviets would discover it and that such aid would exacerbate the long-standing Soviet fears that the United States was seeking influence in Afghanistan as a means of threatening the USSR itself.¹⁷

One of the strongest advocates of this covert operation was the president's influential national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who would later present the action as a *deliberate* provocation of the Soviets, taken with the knowledge that it was likely to trigger an invasion. Brzezinski's revelation would come during a 1998 interview with the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*,¹⁸ which I present in translation (my emphasis added throughout):

Question: The former director of the CIA, Robert Gates, stated in his memoirs¹⁹ that the American intelligence services began to aid the Mujahidin in Afghanistan six months before the Soviet intervention. In this period, you were the national security advisor to President Carter. You therefore played a key role in this affair. Is this correct?

Brzezinski: Yes. According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the Mujahidin began during 1980 – that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. But the reality, closely guarded until now, is completely otherwise: indeed, it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president, in which I explained to him that *in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.*

Q: Despite this risk, you were an advocate of this covert action. But perhaps you yourself desired this Soviet entry into the war and looked for a way to provoke it?

B: It wasn't quite like that. *We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.*

Using surprisingly blunt language, Brzezinski stated that the covert operation was undertaken with the knowledge that it “increased the probability” of a Soviet invasion and that the president was informed of this danger. To be sure, Brzezinski qualifies these statements by claiming that “we didn't push the Russians to intervene” when he was pressed on the issue by the French journalist; but this denial appears pro forma and is contradicted by other statements, made elsewhere in the interview (“We knowingly increased the probability that they would” invade). When viewed in full, the interview strongly implies that Brzezinski wished to provoke the invasion – with full support from the president.

Brzezinski's wish was realized on December 24, 1979, when Soviet commandos helped spearhead a large-scale Soviet invasion and occupation of

Afghanistan,²⁰ which lasted almost a decade. The US decision to support the Mujahidin likely influenced the Soviet decision to invade, which was a reversal of the long-standing Soviet policy not to send combat troops into Afghanistan. Shortly after the invasion, the Soviet press justified the action as a response to “unwarranted interference by imperialist forces in the internal affairs of Afghanistan,” which presented the danger that the country would be “transformed into a staging ground for the preparation of imperialist aggression against the Soviet Union.”²¹ In this case, the Soviet fears of “imperialist aggression” were exaggerated, but they also contained an element of truth, as the Brzezinski interview suggests.

The occupation of Afghanistan which resulted from the invasion invigorated and intensified the Mujahidin insurgency, which was no longer against merely local Afghan communists but now also an invading foreign power. The extended jihad that resulted from this situation shredded the social fabric of the country, but it also helped to lay the groundwork for making Afghanistan a regional and global generator of instability, an unfortunate status that the country still holds today.

America and the Afghan war during the Reagan presidency

President Ronald Reagan continued the US aid to the Mujahidin guerrillas that had begun during the Carter administration. The aid program gradually evolved from a relatively small-scale project into one of the largest covert operations in the history of the Cold War. Afghanistan became the main proving ground for the Reagan Doctrine, which sought to roll back perceived gains by Soviet allies across the globe, through covert and paramilitary means.²² At the time, public debate surrounding the Reagan Doctrine focused primarily on its application to civil wars in Central America; but these were merely sideshows in comparison with the Afghanistan operation, which became the central arena of armed conflict during this final, decisive phase of the Cold War.

Military intervention in Afghanistan was spearheaded by the CIA, which funneled large quantities of light weapons and other supplies to Mujahidin guerrillas, who operated from bases along border areas in Pakistan, with headquarters located in the northwest Pakistani city of Peshawar.²³ The military support was undertaken in close cooperation with the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate, Pakistan’s own intelligence agency, and with the intelligence agencies of China and Saudi Arabia. Though the arms supplies were distributed to several Mujahidin groups, some of the largest quantities went to the Hisbi Islami group led by Gulbadin Hekmatyar, generally regarded as the most violent and religiously extreme of all the guerrilla leaders. According to a friendly account of the Afghan resistance, “The methods of [Hekmatyar’s party] are severe indeed; torture and execution are commonly used to deal with those who oppose the party line.”²⁴ Hekmatyar’s group became deeply involved in international narcotics trafficking.²⁵

None of these details were allowed to interfere with the US arms supplies. Indeed, there was also an extended propaganda effort supported by the US government which sought to glorify the anti-Soviet jihad.²⁶ President Reagan declared March 21, 1983, as “Afghanistan Day,” which celebrated the “valiant and courageous Afghan freedom fighters.”²⁷ In the United States, the Afghan operation was exceptionally popular and received strong support from both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, who often vied for the image of being the more supportive of the Mujahidin, giving the overall program considerable clout and exceptionally high levels of funding.²⁸

The weapons supply program during the 1980s constituted yet another illustration of policy blowback, and it directly contributed to the later problem of Islamic extremism, associated with Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. US policy in Afghanistan contributed to the rise of terrorism in three ways. First, the United States actively recruited idealistic Muslims throughout the world to join the jihad in Afghanistan to augment the manpower of the Mujahidin. The recruitment was undertaken directly by US government agencies or by allied states working in collaboration with the United States.²⁹ The possibility that these Muslim expatriates would turn against the United States was simply disregarded. Osama Bin Laden himself was “recruited by the CIA” in 1979 to support the Afghan War according to *Le Monde*.³⁰ An analysis in *Jane’s Intelligence Review* noted that Bin Laden “worked in close association with US agents” during the 1980s.³¹ US officials have strenuously denied any past cooperation with Bin Laden, but there is considerable evidence against this view, from a range of respected sources.³² Many of the Mujahidin guerrillas who were supported by the CIA would later evolve into the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.³³ John Cooley notes in his classic study of terrorism that Al-Qaeda terrorism was “planned, engineered and in some cases carried out by CIA-trained veterans of the 1979–89 Afghanistan War, or those schooled or influenced by them.”³⁴

Second, the United States openly encouraged the radical ideas of the Mujahidin, which helped lay the ideological basis for later anti-US terrorism. Beginning in 1986, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the writing of textbooks for Afghan refugee children living in Pakistan. These textbooks glorified violence, which was presented as integral to Islamic theology. One of these USAID-funded textbooks taught Afghan children the letters of the Persian alphabet: “*Alif* is for Allah . . . *Ti* is for rifle . . . *Jim* is for Jihad.” The schoolbooks also contained such illustrative phrases as “The Mujahidin missiles rain down like dew on the Russians,” “Shakir conducts jihad with the sword,” and “God becomes happy with the defeat of the Russians.”³⁵ After the 2001 terrorist attacks, Western politicians would routinely condemn the indoctrination of Muslim youth in Madrassas in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are widely viewed as propaganda centers and generators of terrorism. During the 1980s, however, US officials encouraged such indoctrination and indeed financed the publication of extremist materials.

Third, the United States and allied states encouraged Mujahidin fighters to use terrorist methods against their enemies – which would later be directed against Western targets. Specifically, the Pakistani ISI trained the Mujahidin to use car bombing as a technique of war, and they did so with full knowledge and approval of CIA personnel who worked closely with the ISI. In principle, the car bombing campaign targeted Soviet soldiers and officials in Afghanistan, but the bombings also killed large numbers of Afghan civilians as well.³⁶ Car bombing is of course a classic terrorist practice. Many of the weapons delivered to the Mujahidin – such as the shoulder-launched Stinger anti-aircraft missile – had considerable potential as instruments of terrorism. Reagan administration personnel recognized that their support for the Mujahidin risked future terrorism, but they readily accepted this risk;³⁷ in doing so, they contributed to post-Cold War turmoil. Steve Coll commented that the infrastructure of Al-Qaeda terrorism, including “the specialized camps, the sabotage training manuals, the electronic bomb detonators” had been built with US and Pakistani support.³⁸

Continued blowback after the Soviet withdrawal

During the course of the occupation, the Soviets became increasingly sophisticated in their methods. They realized that their local Afghan client, President Babrak Karmal, appeared to be an unpopular puppet with limited support. In 1986, Soviet officials orchestrated a policy shift that entailed the removal of Karmal and his replacement by the former security chief, Mohammad Najibullah, who was first installed as head of the communist party and then, a year later, as president. Initially, it was widely believed that Najibullah was another feckless Soviet client, but over time, he proved to be surprisingly effective and even popular. He cast himself as a religious Muslim and an Afghan nationalist. Many Afghans who had no sympathy for communism gradually came to respect Najibullah, as someone who was more reasonable than the fanatical Mujahidin and who was doing a reasonably good job governing the areas that were under government control.³⁹ Urban women appreciated the communists’ traditional support for gender equality, and they became a special source of political support. Najibullah’s increasing success reassured the Soviets that his government might be able to survive without foreign troops.

In 1988, the major parties to the war, including the United States and the Soviet Union, signed the Geneva Accords, which laid the basis for the full Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan.⁴⁰ The USSR would continue to provide supplies to the communist government but would no longer use its own troops. The troop withdrawal was completed in early 1989, and President Najibullah used the occasion to bolster his nationalist credentials. At his insistence, the PDPA largely abandoned communism, renaming itself the Homeland (*Watan*) Party. At the same time, the various Mujahidin groups continued to lose popularity, due to their reputation for sectarian

infighting, violence and corruption. Najibullah inaugurated a process of national conciliation, which sought to bring in more moderate elements of the opposition into his government, to broaden its political base while isolating the more intransigent guerrilla groups. The president called for elections to be supervised by the United Nations.⁴¹

In short, there was a brief period when a political compromise might have been achieved, under the direction of President Najibullah, which would have involved the former communists, combined with some of the more moderate (or at least more opportunistic) elements among the opposition. In 1990, the *New York Times* reported that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev had proposed a general settlement of the Afghan War, which would have entailed a symmetrical cutoff of all Soviet aid to Najibullah and US aid to the Mujahidin. However, the newly inaugurated Bush administration declined to accept the proposal or to deal with Najibullah.⁴² It seems likely that US officials were influenced by the overall atmosphere of ebullience and triumphalism that attended their victory in the Cold War, symbolized by the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This attitude of triumph appears to have influenced policy in Afghanistan, where the United States sought an outright military victory by the Mujahidin forces, which the CIA continued to support. Given the prospect of continuing US funds, the Mujahidin saw little incentive to work with Najibullah, which impeded efforts to form a broad-based government and wind down the war.

Throughout his remaining time in power, Najibullah sought American cooperation in achieving a political settlement. He repeatedly warned that a Mujahidin victory could generate instability throughout the region. In an interview with *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Najibullah "raised the specter of Islamic fundamentalism," which would generate disorder.⁴³ While meeting with a visiting US academic, he stated that "Afghanistan in extremist hands would be a center of instability."⁴⁴ In the *International Herald-Tribune*, Najibullah declared that "If fundamentalism comes to Afghanistan, war will continue for many years. . . . Afghanistan will be turned into a center of terrorism."⁴⁵ The concerns about Islamic extremism would prove to be well-founded.

Soviet aid to the Najibullah government finally ceased in 1991, just before the collapse of the Soviet state itself, which occurred at the end of the year.⁴⁶ The cutoff of the Soviet aid led to the collapse of the Najibullah government in 1992. The Mujahidin guerrillas finally stormed into Kabul in triumph. For ordinary Afghans, however, this overthrow brought the chaos that many had long feared. The Afghan war now entered a new and more deadly phase as the various Mujahidin factions fought with each other, turning Kabul for the first time into a major battleground. The new level of chaos might have been avoided if the United States had been willing to support elections and the formation of a coalition government, as proposed by Najibullah, but this route was blocked by the Bush administration, which was bent on total victory.

Amid the disorder that attended Najibullah's overthrow, a new Islamist organization was gradually cobbled together in the early 1990s from the membership of the various guerrilla groups: the Taliban. With support from Pakistan's ISI, the Taliban was able to capture Kabul by 1996 and gradually consolidated its hold over most of the country. During this phase of the war, the United States had largely disengaged, although Pakistan remained a key player.⁴⁷ The horrific character of the Taliban's rule has been widely discussed (though in many respects, they were not that much different from some of the Mujahidin groups that the United States had previously supported). They then became a base of operations for international terrorism, directed by Al-Qaeda.

But the Taliban extremists did have one positive feature: their rule inaugurated an era of relative stability for Afghanistan in between periods of intense warfare. The Taliban established effective rule over almost 90 percent of the country by 1999;⁴⁸ only the remote northeastern region remained outside central control. The country appeared to be moving toward a more stable political equilibrium (albeit a highly repressive one). In late 2001, however, the United States and allied countries orchestrated the overthrow of the Taliban and shattered the incipient stability. A new Afghan government was then installed by the victorious Americans, led by Hamid Karzai; meanwhile, the Taliban and associated militias retreated to the rural areas of Afghanistan, where they resumed guerrilla warfare, a state of affairs that continues today. Al-Qaeda and later the Islamic State were able to operate in remote areas of the countryside. The terrorist presence emanating from Afghanistan – the original reason for the US intervention in the first place – was never subdued. The overthrow of the Taliban had the effect of further destabilizing the country and intensifying the violence, with little prospect of resolution.

Conclusion

The nearly four decades of war in Afghanistan has been a tragic event, most notably for the people of that country. But it has also been a tragedy for the interventionist powers, who sought unsuccessfully to exert control and have paid a heavy price for doing so, both in lost lives and in wasted resources. In this chapter, we have focused on the role of the United States, which helped to create the military quagmire so evident today. US officials may complain about the corruption of the Afghan government, the ineffectiveness of its army, and the interminable nature of the resulting war.⁴⁹ In the end, however, the United States bears much of the blame for having taken so many interventionist actions, over a long period of time, to destabilize that country. If Afghanistan is now in a state of chronic disorder, this is a state of affairs that the United States helped to create. The Afghan experience of the past forty years might be taken as a cautionary tale by US officials, regarding the extreme risks posed by foreign intervention, covert operations, and regime change.

Notes

- 1 For a recent overview of the war, see Sarah Almkhatar and Karen Yourish, More than Fourteen Years after US Invasion, the Taliban Control Large Parts of Afghanistan, *New York Times*, April 19, 2016.
- 2 Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz, "Rewriting the Rules of the American Economy," Part 2, *Democracy Now*, October 27, 2015, www.democracynow.org/2015/10/27/nobel_laureate_joseph_stiglitz_on_rewriting_the.
- 3 US National Security Council, Memorandum of Discussion at the 228th Meeting of the National Security Council on December 9, 1954, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1983), Africa and South Asia, vol. XI, Part 2; and US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Program Assistance for the General Area of China, January 16, 1950, 335, *Declassified Documents microfiche series* (1979, 33A).
- 4 U.S. Department of State, Intelligence Report: The Future of Soviet-Afghan Relations, May 29, 1956, *Declassified Documents Microfiche Series* (1983, 351B).
- 5 Marshall I. Goldman, *Soviet Foreign Aid* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 122–123.
- 6 Peter Kann, Do the Russians Covet Afghanistan? If so, It Is Hard to Figure Why, *Wall Street Journal*, December 27, 1973.
- 7 Louis Dupree, Afghanistan Under the Khalq, *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 28, no. 4 (1979), 50.
- 8 For useful background, see Fred Halliday, Revolution in Afghanistan, *New Left Review*, no. 1/112 (1978).
- 9 Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14–16.
- 10 Regarding perceived US weakness as a motive for intervention during the mid-1970s, see John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: Norton, 1978), 43.
- 11 The covert operations and the Iranian aid program are discussed at length in Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14–21.
- 12 Selig S. Harrison, The Shah not Kremlin Touched off Afghan Coup, *Washington Post*, May 13, 1979.
- 13 Odd Arne Westad, Prelude to Invasion: The Soviet Union and the Afghan Communists, 1978–1979, *International History Review*, Vol. 16, no. 1 (1994), 51; and Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27–28.
- 14 Fred Halliday, War and Revolution in Afghanistan, *New Left Review*, no. 1/119 (1980).
- 15 I discuss these Soviet documents in detail in David N. Gibbs, Reassessing Soviet Motives for Invading Afghanistan: A Declassified History, *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (2006).
- 16 US White House, Finding Pursuant to Section 662 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, Concerning Operations in Foreign Countries Other than those Intended Solely for the Purpose of Intelligence Collection, July 3, 1979, from Counsel Cutler Papers, Box 60, Folder Central Intelligence Agency Charter, 2/9–29/80, Carter Presidential Library.
- 17 Such fears were expressed for example in the memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 507–508. Regarding the larger context of Soviet decision-making regarding the 1979 invasion, see Artemy Kalinovsky, Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan: From Intervention to Withdrawal, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 11, no. 4 (2009).

- 18 From Les Révélations d'un Ancien Conseiller de Carter: "Oui la CIA est Entrée en Afghanistan avant les Russes . . ." *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 15–21, 1998. Translated by William Blum and David Gibbs. Emphasis added.
- 19 See Robert Michael Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 146–147.
- 20 For a detailed history of the Soviet invasion and occupation, see Rodric Braithwaite, *Afghansty: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979–89* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 21 A. Petrov, Limited Soviet Military Contingent, *Pravda*, December 31, 1979, translated in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, January 1980. Another reason for the invasion was the consolidation of power by Hafizullah Amin, who was long distrusted by the Soviets. See David N. Gibbs, Reassessing Soviet Motives for Invading Afghanistan: A Declassified History, *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (2006), 255–257.
- 22 James M. Scott, *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), chap. 3.
- 23 The most detailed study of this operation is in Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).
- 24 Gérard Chaliand, *Report from Afghanistan* (New York: Penguin Press, 1982), 56.
- 25 Described in Alfred W. McCoy, Jr., *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2003), chap. 9.
- 26 Richard Bernstein, For Journalism Dean, Questions about Objectivity, *New York Times*, November 3, 1987; and US Media Accuracy "Relaxed" on Afghanistan, *MERIP Reports*, no. 89 (1980), 6.
- 27 President Ronald Reagan, Proclamation 5033: Afghanistan Day, March 21, 1983, *American Presidency Project*, University of California, Santa Barbara, www.presidency.ucsb.edu.
- 28 For a generally positive account of the Congressional support for war, see George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (New York: Grove Press, 2007).
- 29 John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).
- 30 Veronique Maurus and Marc Roche, L'Homme le Plus Redouté des Etats-Unis, Longtemps Entrâiné par la CIA, *Le Monde*, September 15, 2001. Quote translated from the French.
- 31 Al Venter, America's Nemesis: Usama Bin Laden, *Jane's Intelligence Review* (October 1, 1998).
- 32 Regarding Bin Laden's close US connections during the 1980s, see Luke Harding, Chasing Monsters: The Americans Helped Create the Terrorist Bin Laden, Now They Try to Destroy Him, *Guardian*, November 24, 2000, 2001; and Andrew Marshall, Terror "Blowback" Burns CIA, *Independent*, November 1, 1998.
- 33 Some of the closest US allies, including Hekmatyar, would later work directly with Al Qaeda. See US Designates Hekmatyar as Terrorist, *Dawn* (Karachi), February 20, 2003, www.dawn.com/news/83014.
- 34 John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 193.
- 35 See Craig Davis, "A" is for Allah, "J" is for Jihad, *World Policy Journal*, 90, 93 (Spring 2002).
- 36 Mike Davis, *Buda's Wagon: A Brief History of the Car Bomb* (London: Verso, 2008), chap. 13.

- 37 That US officials were aware of a terrorist threat is repeatedly noted in Alan J. Kuperman, The Stinger Missile and US Intervention in Afghanistan, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, no. 2 (1999), 223, 232, 235.
- 38 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 145.
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