

THE METHOD AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE GLOBAL PROXY WAR IN
AFGHANISTAN, 1979-1989

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Chapter 1: Question, Theory, Historiography, Material and Methodology.

"Bismarck fought 'necessary' wars and killed thousands, the idealists of the twentieth century fight 'just' wars and kill millions."

(A.J.P. Taylor 114)

Question

Few places throughout history have been as fraught with bloody conflict as Afghanistan. Revolutions have swept the country more than once, superpowers have waged proxy wars in the shadows of its mountains and the roots of inter-tribal conflicts go back centuries. In the last three decades it has seen bloodshed, caused both directly and indirectly, by among many others the Americans, Russians, Saudi's, Chinese and Pakistanis. The state has been a Cold War battleground from 1978 until long after the Soviet withdrawal in February 1989. A report issued in 2001 estimated that around 1.5 million Afghans had died in the almost two decades of conflict since the Soviet invasion, with another 5 million displaced refugees worldwide (Human Rights Watch 2000). A number which has undoubtedly grown larger since due to the U.S.-led 2001 invasion, intended to bring to justice Osama Bin-Laden and Al-Qaeda for the September 11th terror attacks.

Almost four decades of war have left Afghanistan virtually devastated. The country has become a fertile breeding ground for religious extremists and has recently seen an influx of Islamic State aligned soldiers, resulting in several deadly attacks in Kabul (Human Rights Watch 2017). Afghanistan is stuck in devastating loop of destruction from which escape seems increasingly unlikely. As recent as February, General John Nicholson requested additional forces be deployed in Afghanistan, inadvertently channeling the conclusion of much of the 1980s CIA analysis when he "described the current situation in Afghanistan as a "stalemate" (Ackerman). The War on Terror has become akin to the perpetual war waged in Orwell's *1984* while Afghanistan remains frozen in both time and conflict.

Yet more troops are unlikely to break the cycle. That is not to say there are no voices that call for introspection. Following the Manchester Concert attack, Corbyn stated "Many experts, including professionals in our intelligence and security services, have pointed to the connections between wars our government has supported or fought in other countries and terrorism here at home." (Stewart and Mason). Yet these voices are few and far between in a

21st Century climate that has seen many of a more hawkish persuasion rise to prominence. They argue for instance for rewriting Human Rights laws or shutting down free speech on the internet, as Theresa May did recently, rather than accept at least a partial responsibility for the structural destabilization of the Middle-East and the consequences arising from it (Griffin).

Fortunately the technological advances of the 21st Century combined with the bureaucratic tendency to record and save every piece of analysis created, places us in the perfect position to break these cycles simply by learning from our well-documented mistakes. In the case of the proxy war waged in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 these documents can be found online since January this year, specifically in the the Central Intelligence Agency's Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room.

Thus we arrive at the main research questions this paper intends to answer: How, if at all, did the CIA's analysis contribute to, and influence the, practical application of the proxy war policy commonly known as the Reagan doctrine? In this research I will endeavour to answer this question through application of qualitative analysis to a total of 1070 CIA documents, created between 1975 and 1992 and pertaining to Afghanistan during the Cold War. First this chapter will discuss International Relations theory, specifically the theoretical framework of Realism and Constructivism, which explain why the proxy war was waged and fundamental flaws in the CIA analysis respectively. Then a brief overview of prior relevant research will be provided, followed by a critical overview of the CIA documents which served as the main sources for this research. The methodology by which this research was conducted will be discussed. Chapter 2 will provide the historical context to the conflict. In chapter 3 a critical examination based on the documents will be provided of the method by which the clandestine agency waged its proxy war in Afghanistan, the CIA's analysis of the Mujahideen and its failure to predict the invasion. In-depth analysis of the CIA's media strategy, intended for selling the war domestically and internationally, will be offered. Finally an examination of the CIA's analysis of other states participating in the proxy war will be provided in light of IR theory. The epilogue will discuss the result of the Afghan conflict and the U.S. intervention. It will also discuss two 21st century proxy wars which share characteristics to the conflict waged nearly four decades ago.

Theory

There is some theoretical background required before we begin our analysis. First it is necessary to have a basic grasp of proxy wars. This is the method by which two countries engage in warfare without engaging each other directly. It is the strategy governing how the Soviet Union and the United States fought one another in Afghanistan during the Cold War, and as such is of paramount importance to this research. The Reagan doctrine will also be briefly discussed in this segment. Secondly International Relations theory in regards to proxy wars will be discussed to establish a more complete theoretical framework.

Proxy Warfare and the Reagan Doctrine

In his article *Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict* Mumford defines Proxy Warfare as “the product of a relationship between a benefactor, who is a state or non-state actor external to the dynamic of an existing conflict, and the chosen proxies who are the conduit for the benefactor's weapons, training and funding.” (40). Expanding this definition by incorporating Loveman’s work *Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention* leads to a more full understanding of the reasoning behind proxy wars. Loveman notes that the war partners’ “ideologies, motives and concerns may be different, even antithetical, but they share a mutual desire to oppose a common enemy” (32). He further notes several key elements, arguing that the ultimate goal of proxy warfare is to achieve a desired result “while avoiding direct participation in, and responsibility for, a conflict.”(32). He continues by asserting proxy wars can, and usually do, lead to an escalation in conflict “increasing the intensity, duration and viciousness of a conflict.”(33)

In the 21st Century, and to a lesser degree in the 20th, the fact that the U.S. supported moderates and fundamentalists in Afghanistan alike falls well within the realm of common knowledge. It is virtually undeniable that the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan fit perfectly the established framework of proxy warfare. In 2017, common sense and hindsight provide us with the ability see a causal link between the U.S. subversive efforts in Afghanistan and the beginning of the War on Terror, showing us clearly the potential downsides of waging a proxy war. Or as Groh notes in his doctorate *War on the Cheap? Assessing the costs and benefits of Proxy Wars*; “History, however, shows that pursuing interests in another country through the actions of a third party has mixed results. In some cases, an intervening state benefited greatly from supporting a proxy; in others, states incurred disastrous, unexpected

consequences and exorbitant costs.” (1). While Groh’s paper mostly focusses on the financial costs he does notes some relevant discoveries. For instance he discusses the difficulty of maintaining “policy coherence” in the face of covert action, noting; “During the execution of a covert policy, oversight will likely be very difficult and it is possible the government may not have a full understanding or control of what is going on at the operational or tactical level—both of which could adversely affect the efficacy of the policy.” (200).

He also notes a difference between ethnic and ideological conflicts, arguing that “Ethnic conflicts are not easily (cheaply) resolved via bargaining.” while “Ideological conflicts have more room for compromise.”(190). There is some relevance here to the Afghan conflict as it contained a curious mixture of ethnic and ideological motivations driving the insurgents, while the U.S. and their fellow benefactors were in large part motivated by ideological and security reasons. Finally Grohl notes “The cases also suggest that if an effective control measure is in place, proxy autonomy should be as high as possible and that limiting a proxy’s autonomy becomes vital when the objectives of the intervening state and its proxy are highly divergent.” (196). Grohl’s argument will be further evidenced in the upcoming chapter which discusses the U.S. intelligence communities dealing with, and analysis of, the Afghan insurgency.

The election of Reagan in 1981 resulted in a change in U.S. foreign policy and its attitude towards the Soviet Union. During the election Reagan had campaigned on a tougher foreign policy in regards to the rival superpower. This is reflected by his State of the Union address in 1985 where he described the Soviet Union as the “evil empire” (Samuels 620). The result of this approach was what is commonly known as the Reagan Doctrine, under which the administration actively supported insurgents fighting against socialist and communist governments across the world. (Samuels 621). As the CIA documents will show, the Reagan doctrine likely drove and impacted the conclusions of the CIA’s analysis, rather than the analysis influencing the doctrine.

Proxy War and IR-Theory

There are three main theoretical frameworks within International Relations theory which attempt to explain the basis for how states interact with one another, two of which are relevant to this research. The theory most relevant to the waging of proxy wars is realism. While there are many different forms of realism, from classical to neorealism, there are some

unifying factors to be found within this diverse school of thought. Or as Dunne notes in *The Globalization of World Politics*; “Despite the numerous denominations, we argue that all realists subscribe to the following three S’s: Statism, Survival and Self-help.” (172). For realists the only true source of power is the state, they do not believe in the effectiveness of international organizations and instead focus on sovereignty and the power that flows from it. This stems from their belief that international relations are essentially anarchic in nature. As Williams summarizes, “State behaviour is driven by leaders’ flawed human nature, or by the preemptive unpleasantness mandated by an anarchic international system. Selfish human appetites for power, or the need to accumulate the wherewithal to be secure in a self-help world, explain the seemingly endless succession of wars and conquest.” (16).

Survival then is relatively self-explanatory. If the state is the ultimate power and force for good, its survival is paramount to the well-being of the world. Or as Dunne argues, “Survival is held to be a precondition for attaining all other goals, whether these involve conquest or merely independence.” (173). According to realists all actions are justified in securing this goal of survival. Dunne illuminates this concept further by providing the example of state responses to terrorism; “By way of an example, think of the ways in which governments frequently suspend the legal and political rights of suspected terrorists in view of the threat they pose to national security” (174). Finally, self help is a principle that culminates from a combination of statism and survival. If states are the only true power in the world, and international organizations are not effective, it stands to reason the only protector a state can truly count on is itself.

The second major theory, constructivism, is relevant to this research as it serves as a useful framework for explaining several flaws within the CIA analysis. As Dunne argues constructivism is not a theory particular to international relations, rather it is a “social theory” (154). Adherents to constructivism believe in a malleable international order with governing rules rather than an anarchic state. They argue that regulative rules are defined by constitutive rules, which is effectively a way of explaining their meaning, how rules are “revised through practice, reflection and arguments by actors regarding how they should be applied to new situations” (Dunne, 152). Constructivism also argues that factors such as culture and history shape what decisions actors make and how they perceive the world around them (Dunne 158).

Of these two theories it is realism which provides the best framework for explaining why and how the proxy war was waged. Throughout the following chapters we shall find that the Afghan conflict and the methods through which the various actors attempted to influence its outcome reflects in every way the realist school of thought concerning international relations. Constructivism will be essential in explaining some of the fundamental flaws within the CIA analysis.

Historiography

Since the end of the proxy war in Afghanistan and the beginning of the War on Terror there has been a resurgent interest in the Cold War conflict in Afghanistan, with each scholar taking a distinct approach in analysing the conflict. For instance Mamdani's *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* examines the conflict's impact on the rise of fundamentalist Islamic groups in Afghanistan and surrounding countries. Braithwaite's *Afghansy* takes a more historical approach, as well as providing an interesting look into the Soviet point of view regarding the conflict. Rizwan's *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* analyzes Pakistan's role in supporting the fundamentalists. To the best of my knowledge nothing has so far been written on the CIA documents created during the Afghan conflict. One possible reason for this is that the CIA database has come online as recent as January 2017. Prior to the creation of the searchable database research needed to be done at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, a significant inconvenience for those interested in the conflict. Another reason is that the documents were released relatively recently. Executive Order 13526 states that documents must be released after 25 years, which means the latest dated documents this research examines were published in 2014 (CIA.Gov). This paper then intends to contribute to the growing body of research by analysing these newly released documents in an effort to create a more complete picture of the conflict.

Material

The material analysed for this research paper are the documents created by the CIA during the proxy conflict in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1992. There is large variety within the documents themselves. There are for instance a relatively large number of newspaper articles in the database which contain custom notes or underlined sentences. The

most common form of documents found in the database are the Afghanistan Situation Reports, which analyse events which occurred in the week of publication as well as providing occasional background analysis on a wide range of topics relevant to the conflict. Other documents include memos on meetings, correspondence between CIA staff and satellite image analysis. The documents have proven to be particularly useful when combined with International Relations theory in both explaining why the proxy war was waged as well as clarifying the flaws in the CIA's analysis. However the documents contain very little practical information as to how the war was waged. As such prior conducted research as well as historical accounts will be used in analysing the method of the proxy war.

One significant issue which complicated the analysis is the large amount of redaction within the documents. For instance, names of the authors and analysts involved in creating the documents are often obscured so as to protect those involved from retaliation. As such the works cited list will either name the agency which created the document as the author, or, if unavailable, will note Author Unknown. The precise publication date of the document is noted before each citation within the text to allow for accurate cross referencing with the works cited list. Occasionally entire sentences have undergone redaction, such as in the document which describes a meeting between CIA director Turner and Katy McKay. This paper will use XXXX where this is the case to indicate redaction.

Another issue which complicated this research is with the database itself as occasionally the same documents are uploaded multiple times with separate entries, whereas other entries have no content. Also problematic to this research was the method by which documents were named. Many of the declassified documents bear identical names, some do not accurately reflect the content and others are simply called "untitled". It is also doubtful whether all documents created during the conflict are in the database. There is a strong likelihood, due to the lack of any documents indicating material and monetary support, that a number of documents are not incorporated into the database. Finally the process of gathering the information was made exceedingly more difficult by the lack of a sorting mechanism within the database.

Methodology

Most of the sources and information examined in composing this research will come from the CIA's Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. This database has

been created on January 17, 2017, previously documents were only accessible through visit to the National Archives in Maryland (CIA.Gov). Database search parameters were set to find all documents published between 29/12/1975 and 29/12/1992 containing the word “Afghanistan”. The method by which the resulting sources were analysed was through closed textual analysis of in total 1070 declassified and open source documents admitted to the CIA archive. Unfortunately the latest publishing date of documents resulting from the database search is 13/11/1989. This despite regulations which the agency itself states on their website; “The automatic declassification provisions of Executive Order 13526 (formerly EO 12958, as amended) require the declassification of nonexempt historically valuable records 25 years or older.” (CIA.Gov). In other words, documents should have been available up to 1992. Whether this is due to backlog in processing or simply because of the relatively short existence of the online database is at this point unclear.

Chapter 2: Context

“Regimes planted by bayonets do not take root.”

(Reagan 101)

Before we arrive at this paper's analysis of the CIA documents it is essential to establish the historical background to the events of the Afghanistan proxy war. Understanding what is written in the files requires at least a cursory knowledge of the events leading up to the Soviet invasion. To this end this chapter will focus on establishing the historical context required. First a short overview will be offered of major Cold War events between 1945 and 1978, as well as a consideration of what led to the falling out between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Secondly this chapter will discuss the history and state of Afghanistan, providing a broad overview of 20th century events surrounding the state. This section will also go into detail on Khan's coup which ousted Shah, as well as the Saur revolution where Khan himself was removed from office by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Then an examination will be offered into the historical grudges and considerations that led to the participation of non-aligned nations, such as China and Pakistan, in providing aid to the Afghan insurgency. Finally a brief history of the CIA will be established, specifically on the events that resulted in the weakened state the agency found itself in prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Cold War

Ask a dozen scholars when and why the Cold War began and you will receive a dozen conflicting answers. In the early years of the Cold War there were two basic schools of thought regarding what led to the deterioration between the superpowers. The orthodox school of thought, the dominant theory in the West, put blame squarely on the Soviet Union which they considered “as a hostile, expansionist power” (Lightbody 1). Lightbody notes this is reflected by the National Security Agency in early 1950, which argued that “the aim of the Soviet Union was nothing less than, ‘absolute authority over the rest of the world.’” (1). Those who argued the contrary, that the West was primarily to blame, were called revisionists. They “identified the Atlantic Charter of 1941 as an attempt at Pax Americana

that made the Cold War inevitable. Instead of Stalin being expansionist and hostile, he was merely defending the Soviet Union against US policies that were designed to undermine communism.” (Lightbody 3). While this dichotomy appears attractive it is ultimately irrelevant who set in motion the power struggle that would dominate the latter half of the 20th century politics.

Yet despite escalating tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States the two nations never came to direct blows. This was due to an invention that since its inception has dominated and transformed the realm of international relations; the nuclear bomb. With it came a precarious and unstable balance held in place by the ideas of mutually assured destruction and nuclear deterrence. The idea of nuclear deterrence is perhaps best described by Waltz, the founder of neorealism and a proponent of horizontal nuclear proliferation. He argued that no-one was likely to use nuclear weapons offensively simply because “Decisions to use nuclear weapons may be decisions to commit suicide.” (3). Since both the U.S and the Soviet Union had contingency plans in case of a nuclear first strike, the Emergency Rocket Communications System (ERCS) and Deadhand respectively, the drawbacks would theoretically be equivalent to the benefits for whomever began nuclear war (Blair 241, 244). This then is the main reason for the Afghan proxy war as well as several other such wars which raged during the Cold War. Nuclear deterrence forced the superpowers to cautiously and covertly work to deny the other successful accomplishment of geopolitical interests.

Indeed such proxy wars were frequent in the Cold War era. Take for instance the U.S. support for the contras in Nicaragua. The leftist Sandinistas had overthrown the Somoza government through popular revolution, one of the largest nations in Central America, yet remnants of the Somoza national guardsmen began fighting back through guerilla warfare. (Peace 1). The U.S. was fearful of a Soviet friendly government so close to home and decided to intervene. As Peace notes; “The CIA began working with these counter revolutionaries. In early 1981 and assumed full control the following year... the contras destroyed economic assets, attacked rural villages, and killed or kidnapped civilians deemed pro-Sandanista. The CIA also undertook military actions on its own, bombing oil storage tanks and mining Nicaraguan harbors” (1-2). Similarly the Soviet Union provided aid to the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné independence movement in their struggle against Portugal during the 1960’s, offering “support for the training of fighters and the supply of weapons” (Mendy and Lobban 407).

Yet in the 1970's the Cold War had begun to show signs of thawing. The height of tensions was reached during the Cuban Missile Crisis in late October 1962, the closest the world has come to nuclear annihilation. After the crisis a period commonly described by scholars as detente began. Or as Lightbody describes; "Both the United States and the Soviet Union were shaken by the Cuban Missile Crisis, which took the world to the brink of nuclear war. The mood was for détente and safeguards to limit the escalating arms race" (65). Yet this period of rapprochement during the superpowers did not last. Several factors resulted in a continuation of Cold War hostilities such as the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, the Soviet and Cuban intervention in Angola and the United States withdrawal in Vietnam, widely seen as a victory for communism (70). Lightbody argues that "The death knell of détente with the Soviet Union was finally sounded by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, which rekindled the dormant fears of Soviet expansionism" (70).

Afghanistan

The first half of the 20th century saw an era of prosperity for Afghanistan. In the 21st however, the 9/11 attacks and terrorism and Afghanistan have been inextricably linked. Yet there was a relatively long period during the last century when the country continued modernization efforts set in motion in the late 19th century by Abdur Rahman Khan (Braithwaite 15).

Khan became Emir of Afghanistan in 1880 after the Second Afghan War and set the country on its path to the 20th century, as Braithwaite notes in his excellent history *Afghansy*, "He set up the rudiments of a modern state bureaucracy, modernised and financed his army with the help of the British" (15). His successors continued this path and Afghanistan prospered as a result. Amanullah, who succeeded Khan's son after his assassination, came to power in 1919 and began a campaign of social reform and established "a Council of Ministers, promulgated a constitution, decreed a series of administrative economic and social reforms. Plans for the emancipation of women, a minimum age for marriage and compulsory education" (Braithwaite 15-16). This ultimately resulted in his exile when religiously conservative tribesmen rose up, burned down the Jalalabad palace and marched on Kabul (Braithwaite 16).

Khan was succeeded by Nadir Shah, who after a brief tenure ending in assassination was succeeded by his son Zahir Shah, who would rule until the revolutions of the 1970s

(Braithwaite 16). Shah continued propelling Afghanistan forward on its path to modern democracy. Braithwaite describes this period as the golden age of Afghanistan, when Emir Shah “introduced a form of constitutional monarchy with freedom of speech, allowed political parties, gave women the vote, and guaranteed primary education for girls and boys. Women were allowed to attend the university and foreign women taught there.” (16). Universities were founded that would educate many, among which those who would later become the leaders of the Mujahadeen. Yet, as evidenced by both history and future events, those of a more religiously conservative nature were neither reached by nor happy with many of these reforms. The reforms faced strong opposition of the tribal villages and were never fully accepted, halting Afghanistan’s progress. (Braithwaite 19).

Out of the universities sprang political societies such as the communist Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which would play a large role in the events leading up to the coups and revolutions of the 1970s and would eventually rule Afghanistan (PDPA hereafter). Daud, Zahir Shah’s cousin and, for a brief time, Prime Minister, started a coup with help of the PDPA that deposed the Shah in July 1973 (Braithwaite 31). He set about undoing the work of his relative instantly. As Braithwaite states; “ Daud abolished the monarchy and declared himself President and Prime Minister [...] More forceful than Zahir, Daud ruled with a rod of iron. The freedom of the parties and the students was curtailed. A former prime minister died mysteriously in prison. There were hundreds of arrests and five political executions, the first in more than forty years (31). Yet like his predecessors, Daud’s rule would be short and end in tragedy.

On the 27th of April 1978, President Daud and his family were murdered by the PDPA in what would later be called the ‘Saur Revolution’ (40-41). The PDPA took power and a new communist state was born. Resistance against the communist regime grew steadily throughout 1978 and came to a boiling point in Herat on 15 March, 1979.

“Peasants of the neighbouring villages. [...] moved towards the city carrying religious slogans and brandishing ancient rifles [...] destroying the symbols of Communism and the state as they marched. They were rapidly joined by the people of Herat itself. ... they stormed the prison, sacked and torched banks, post offices, newspaper offices and government buildings. They tore down the red flags and the portraits of Communist leaders. They beat people not wearing traditional Muslim clothes. Party officials, including the

governor himself, were hunted down and killed. That evening there was dancing in the bazaars.” (Braithwaite 6-7).

The city was briefly lost, and quickly retaken. Yet the spark of revolution had been lit. The following months would see more uprisings and Amin requested help from the Soviet Union in the form of military support to quell them. Soviet troops and material were gradually moved to Afghanistan in an effort to keep the regime in power. Yet due to internal events between Amin and several members of his cabinet, resulting in several deaths of leaders favored by the Russians, the Soviets began to suspect Amin had been recruited by the CIA. Braithwaite casts doubt about whether this was true, or simply a convenient excuse for the military intervention. He argues there is no evidence to support this and that it was denied by the CIA station chief when asked by ambassador Dubs (79-80). Regardless on the 10th of December the order to move the Soviet troops that were to invade Afghanistan to the border was signed, and on the 25th they crossed (Braithwaite, 79, 86). Two days later, on the 27th, the Soviets assaulted the palace where Amin was staying and executed him (Braithwaite 92). Thus the stage was set for a civil war that would tear Afghanistan apart. The foundations were laid for an insurgency and conflict that would shape the world for decades to come.

The CIA in the 70's

Paradoxically, the CIA is perhaps the single most famous, or infamous, clandestine intelligence agency in the world. The agency has a long history which its website proudly traces back to the Office of Strategic Services established in World War 2 (CIA.gov). The webpage describes the agency's creation by Truman in 1947 and then instantly moves forward 57 years to the restructuring efforts by George W. Bush in 2004. Judging solely by the website one would be inclined to belief that nothing particularly noteworthy happened in those 20th century years in between. There is good reason for the CIA to omit much of its history between those two years, as in the wake of the Watergate scandal revelations came to light that it hadn't been living up to its noble World War 2 roots.

In June 1972 there was a break-in at Washington, D.C.'s Watergate. Specifically, the Democratic National Committee offices were compromised by five burglars directed by President Nixon to wiretap the offices (Hosanksy 1). As the scandal unfolded Nixon desperately attempted to cling to power, directing several federal agencies, among which the

CIA, to defend them (Hosanksy 1). The effect of Nixon's attempt to have the CIA put a halt to the FBI's investigation was twofold. In the wake of Watergate two commissions were created in an effort to establish CIA oversight, the Church committee and the Pike committee, in the senate and the house respectively. Knott argues this had several effects that weakened the CIA's capabilities. He claims that "The damage done to the CIA by this congressional oversight regime is quite extensive. The committees increased the number of CIA officials subject to Senate confirmation, condemned the agency for its contacts with unscrupulous characters, prohibited any further contact [...] Insisted that the United States not engage or assist in any coup which may harm a foreign leader, and overwhelmed the agency with interminable requests for briefings" (Knott). The committees would eventually become permanent (Knott).

The second effect was an attempt by the CIA's director to create a report documenting the agencies misdeeds. While the CIA had themselves not been involved in the Watergate events, two former employees, James McCord and E. Howard Hunt were (CNN 1972). The scandal prompted James Schlesinger, the CIA's director in 1973, to ask his agents for information on "all operations that were "outside" the agency's legal charter." (DeYoung and Pincus). The evidence of these illegal CIA activities would be collected in a report and brought to the attention of the Justice Department a few months later by Schlesinger's successor Colby (DeYoung and Pincus). The files showed the intelligence agency had conducted several illegal domestic activities. In 2007 these documents were declassified, bringing to light within its 702 pages illegal acts such as an attempt to enlist the Maffia in an assassination plot on Fidel Castro, spying on American domestic journalists, large scale mind-control experiments on unwitting subjects involving LSD and the imprisonment of a KGB defector (Family Jewels 2).

In 1975 the CIA saw the creation of "Team B". The idea for "Team B" was proposed by Ford, who wanted a voice within the CIA which would "at least appear to be adopting a harder line" on the Soviet Union (Diamond 46-47). This idea was accepted despite the concerns and opposition of CIA Director Colby, who was replaced by the more enthusiastic George H. W. Bush (Diamond 47). The team was filled with members who are best described as hawkish. Richard Lehman criticised this decision, arguing that "experienced analysts, who were themselves divided on issues relating to the Soviet threat, were put up against "a team

of howling right-wingers” (Diamond 48-49). He goes on to describe a presentation by the team as “all full of things that were nonsense but which sounded good” (Diamond 49).

In conclusion during the 1970s the CIA saw scandals which rocked the agency and damaged its ability to conduct independent covert operations. Aspects of CIA behaviour in those years came to light which irreparably damaged the clandestine agency’s reputation. The decade saw the introduction of a team with the specific purpose of providing a hard line voice within the CIA. It also saw the establishment of the Church and Pike committees, which Knott argues damaged the CIA to the point of being unable to perform its basic duties. Knott goes further and argued in the wake of 9/11 that the committees “would do well to begin by acknowledging their own culpability in crippling the agency.” However, the next chapter will show the CIA was and remains far from crippled.

Chapter 3: CIA Documents Analysis.

*It could be that we are deliberately furnishing just enough aid to keep the insurgency alive
but short of victory.*

In that case, the Afghans are paying a heavy price for their role in global balance of power.

Jay Peterzell¹

This chapter will discuss and analyze the CIA documents obtained through the FOIA database. This will be done through five sub chapters, each discussing a particular aspect of the files. First we will examine the CIA analysis during the last months of 1979, prior to the Soviet invasion. We will use the documents to establish a timeframe, as well as the circumstances which led to the massive intelligence failure surrounding the Soviet invasion which shocked the United States. Then we will take an in-depth look at how the CIA judged the Mujahideen fighters they were supporting, offering an overview on CIA analysis of the moderate and fundamentalist factions. The third subchapter will discuss the methods through which the CIA supported the Mujahideen. Then an examination will be offered of the CIA's domestic and international media efforts regarding the insurgency. Finally the CIA's analysis of the efforts of other nations in supporting the Afghan insurgents will be examined.

The Soviet Invasion

When the Soviets invaded in 1979 it took the world, and the CIA, by surprise. In the following months many questions would be asked regarding the circumstances surrounding the failure to predict the invasion. Had the intelligence community been asleep at the wheel? Was President Carter informed of the events that would unfold prior to the invasion? Who was to blame? In an article found in the CIA database, written barely three weeks after the invasion, a Washington Post reporter wrote a damning report blaming President Carter based on intelligence sources. "The Professionals who watch Soviet moves have a disturbing explanation for the invasion of Afghanistan, but their superiors aren't likely to submit it to the White House. The reason: Nobody wants to hand President Carter an analysis that blames him for precipitating the Soviet intervention" (Anderson)².

¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00965R000100420043-1.pdf>

² <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00965R000100170155-5.pdf>

Yet documents in the database show the CIA had been paying attention, and had considered the possibility of a full-scale invasion, though their analysts did not believe an invasion was likely to happen. Evidence of this can be found in a memo to the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI hereafter), written on the 1st of June 1979 after an earlier analyst meeting. The memo states “The general view expressed was that the local Afghan security situation was continuing to deteriorate, and that the levels of assistance the Soviets are providing do not appear to be reversing this trend [...] while no analyst would rule out the possibility that the Soviets might then opt to send in ground combat forces, the majority... seemed increasingly to feel that if worse came to worst, the Soviets would probably not do so” (Assistant National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE 1-2)³.

On the 10th of August, a memorandum was issued by Doug MacEachin outlining three Soviet options in Afghanistan (2)⁴. The memorandum posited that either the Soviets could continue sending aid, commit a limited number of troops to secure the capital or commit large combat forces “for the purpose of inflicting major military defeats on insurgent forces and recapturing much of the territory now in rebel hands (MacEachin 2). The memo concluded the second option was most likely to happen in the near future, yet also argued this may well escalate into option three, “Once having undertaken the increase in military units, however, the Soviets are likely to find themselves being drawn to the large operation despite whatever resolve they might have to avoid it” (MacEachin 2). The memo called for an Alert Memorandum to be issued as “its use clearly indicates the Community’s intent to “warn” as opposed to “report” “(MacEachin 3).

The Alert Memorandum would be issued by DCI Turner over a month later, on the 14th of September (Turner)⁵. Based on these memos, issued relatively long before the Soviet invasion, one might very well argue the CIA had been closely monitoring the situation. However the date of Turner's alert memorandum coincides with another document in the CIA database, sent by MacEachin on the very same day, detailing evidence of Soviet troop movement to Afghanistan (3)⁶. This provides some indication that the CIA, despite having considered the possibility, did not take a potential invasion as a likelihood until troop

³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000300110036-7.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000100200018-6.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP81B00080R001400120001-3.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000300030006-9.pdf>

movement began. The final document relevant to Afghanistan before the invasion was created by MacEachin on the 13th of December. It did not add much to the assessments created six months prior, but did accurately predict coming events; “another step toward rectifying the situation would be to produce a more effective, cohesive regime in Kabul [...] This suggests that ultimately Amin will have to go. His replacement, however, is unlikely to be chosen on the basis of acceptability to the insurgents.” (MacEachin (3))⁷.

The documents support the idea that the CIA was actively assessing and monitoring the situation in Afghanistan. However the agency still failed to accurately predict the likelihood of a full scale Soviet invasion. Yet I would argue this is mainly due to their method of interpretation and analysis which has some rather glaring faults. The CIA’s analysis presumes two basic underpinnings which are flawed at best. These flaws can be effectively explained through application of International Relations theory.

The first assumption is that the Soviet Union identified and saw the escalating situation in Afghanistan in the same way the intelligence community did. While Realists may argue that situations are objective, in this case the Constructivist approach could have likely helped them more accurately predict the Soviet Union’s response. Dunne notes two elements of constructivism which are relevant to this particular case. The first is the “socially constructed nature of actors and their identities and interests” (158). Effectively a more constructivist approach might have helped the CIA take into account the inherent differences, stemming from distinct identity, between the American and Soviet perceptions regarding Afghanistan. The second element as described by Dunne considers the social construction of “knowledge - that is, symbols, rules, concepts and categories - shapes how individuals construct and interpret their world” (158). The United States had faced a counterinsurgency war in Vietnam and knew first hand the horrors that came with it, whereas the Soviet Union lacked this experience. The trauma from the Vietnam conflict may very well explain, at least in part, the failure to accurately assess the likelihood of a Soviet invasion.

There is evidence in the documents which potentially supports that a constructivist approach to analyzing the potential for invasion was at least attempted. The *Soviet Options in Afghanistan*⁸ memo notes that “psychological factors and the Soviet big power self-image is

⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000300170019-0.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000100200018-6.pdf>

likely to influence the decision making process at least as much if not more than the political considerations” (5).

The second underlying assumption is based on one of the major flaws in realism, and indeed much of International Relations theory, the idea that states act rationally. As Dunne argues; “Neo-realists who reduce international politics to microeconomic rational choice or instrumental thinking [...] Minimize the idiosyncratic attributes of individual decision makers and the different cultural and historical factors that shape politics within a state.” (138). In other words, the CIA presumed the Soviet Union would make their decision based solely, or at least mainly, on rational considerations. The *Soviet Options in Afghanistan*⁹ memo repeatedly notes why a Soviet invasion is unlikely to succeed, for instance arguing that “The chance for a Soviet-engineered change in the Kabul government which could both protect Soviet interests and [...] Defuse the insurgency appears to have been overtaken by events” (2)¹⁰. Another example is found on the same page describing the likelihood of further Afghan army defections, and yet another describes the negative consequences for Moscow in the international arena (2).

In conclusion the CIA did not fail to foresee a possible invasion, warning of the possibility as early as six months in advance, though it did take the agency a month to issue the alert memorandum called for by analysts. One can only speculate whether the memorandums concurrent timing with the troop movement reports was coincidental or not. Where the agency did stumble however was in the analysis of the likelihood of the invasion occurring by relying too heavily on their own perception of events. A constructivist explanation for this allows for the argument this may well have been a result of their own experience with the horrors of a similar counterinsurgency war in equally unfamiliar and hostile terrain. As argued above through contrast with the realism theory, they also attached too much weight to rationality, assuming the cost outweighing the benefits would deter the Soviet Union from invasion.

The Mujahideen

The name Mujahideen comes from the Arabic “mujāhidūn”, its literal translation is “those engaged in jihad” (Britannica). During the Afghan insurgency Mujahideen was used

² <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP83B01027R000100200018-6.pdf>
¹⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00287R000101240001-5.pdf>

as a term to collectively describe the distinct factions waging guerilla warfare against the Soviets. The term is deceptive in that it implies the factions were united in common goals and methods during the conflict. This could not be further from the truth. The mujahideen faced great internal division on such vital matters as religion, their envisioned future for Afghanistan and their sentiments towards their Western backers. Conflict was regular between the factions, who often raided or attacked other groups who were ostensibly their allies in the common struggle against the Soviet Union. This conflict was especially common between the fundamentalist and moderate factions.

On January 3 1980 a research paper created by the National Foreign Assessment Center was put into circulation. The paper, called *Tribalism versus Communism in Afghanistan: The Cultural Roots of Instability*¹¹, took a decidedly constructivist approach in analyzing the relevance of the Afghani culture to the new conflict. Many of its conclusions are still relevant today. For instance it notes that “topography and Afghan cultural mores militated against the formation of a strong central government and even against a strong union of the tribes themselves. The only characteristics common to the tribesmen are martial values, an egalitarian tradition, a theologically unsophisticated version of Islam, and a distrust for authority.” (1). The paper identifies a culture perfect for guerilla warfare, it specifically notes the Pashtun code, consisting of “revenge, hospitality [...] the martial tradition. Every man must be strong enough to protect his interests [...] Gold, women, and land [...] Pashtun boys do not play war games, but from a very early age are trained by their male elders in military skills such as stalking and the use of arms.” (3). Finally it notes “Afghanistan’s culture, geography, and history have fostered an intense dislike of foreign interference” (5).

In the early years of the conflict there was very little mention of the distinct groups of mujahideen fighters. The next major document providing analysis of the insurgents in the CIA database was created in May 1983 and is called *Afghanistan: Goals and Prospects for the Insurgents*¹². It posits that “The Afghan resistance is divided into hundreds of different groups” and proceeds to categorize them as the Islamic fundamentalists, the moderates and unconnected warbands (1). The paper also notes there is little consensus amongst the groups

¹¹

https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/digital_library/cos/142099/33/cos_142099_33_05-Afghanistan_1979-1980.pdf

¹² <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84S00556R000200080004-3.pdf>

on the future of the nation. The fundamentalist groups distrust the west, noting this is “most marked in the sometimes open hostility of Gulbuddin, but also evident in statements by other leaders [...] That the United States is using the resistance for its own purposes or is withholding help because it distrusts Islam.” (4). It further notes conflict between insurgent groups, specifically “Gulbuddin’s efforts to eliminate rival insurgent leaders” (5). It also shows that as early as 1983 the intelligence community saw that “conflicting political views in the resistance are irreconcilable” (11). It was not until 1985 however that the intelligence community truly began examining the groups they were supporting.

Distrust of the West is a recurring theme in the documents, yet it appears the intelligence community was of the opinion this was a benefit rather than a negative. An Afghanistan Situation Report¹³ created on 24 September 1985 notes “The fundamentalists [...] Tend to be anti-Western as well as anti-Communist. They are the strongest forces in the resistance [...] because anti-US rhetoric from resistance leaders like Gulbuddin provides the alliance with an aura of independence, it might be wise for the US to promote such criticism occasionally and quietly.” (5-6). An analysis on *Afghanistan-US: the Alliance at the UN*¹⁴ created on 24 October 1985 reiterates this, stating “Because Gulbuddin is known for his anti-Western as well as anti-Communist views, the delegation is less likely to be viewed as a tool of the United States.” (2). According to an Afghanistan Situation Report¹⁵ issued on the 17th of December 1985 these anti-Western views were also propagandised by insurgent radio based in Iran which “stridently attack the Afghan Government as well as the United States” (11). Yet this too was considered to not be an impediment to aiding the insurgents, as the analysts state in the same report that “An improved insurgent media effort would, in our view, increase international attention to the resistance and raise somewhat the public relations cost of the war to the Soviets” (11).

Talking points of a meeting¹⁶ held on the 10th of July 1986 further notes that “resentment toward the United States, which reporting by XXXX our missions in Pakistan indicates is running high” (4). The first time negative consequences of a potential fundamentalist regime in Afghanistan were noted was on the third of March, 1988. The paper

¹³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000506930001-3.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000507030001-1.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000507180001-5.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP91B00874R000100200011-8.pdf>

titled *USSR: Withdrawal from Afghanistan*¹⁷ states “US interests in the region would suffer if a radical fundamentalist regime replaces the current regime [...] Particularly if ties with Iran were closer than we expect. We believe that the symbolism of a victory by a Muslim resistance over a superpower will give a shot in the arm to International Islamic extremists. We also see a risk that some factions within Afghanistan will work with radical Islamic groups elsewhere.” (12).

These documents are evidence of the fact that in the first few years of the Soviet invasion and the subsequent U.S. support for the insurgency, the intelligence community did not consider it necessary to analyse or at least consider the long term effects of their actions. By the time the first true analysis began of the distinct insurgent factions five years of funneling arms, aid and funds through Pakistan had passed. This implies it was the Reagan doctrine which drove the analysis rather than the other way around. There was little reason for the CIA to analyse long term consequences or gather intelligence on those they were supporting prior to the proxy war beginning, as the course of action had already been set by the Administration. Indeed it would take another three years before the CIA began considering the potential geopolitical consequences.

This is not to say the U.S. did not foresee issues in the peace process in advance. For instance in the Afghanistan Situation Report¹⁸ of 22 April 1986 the intelligence community notes on the moderates that they “favor returning to power Afghanistan’s traditional elites, including former King Zahir Shah.” (9). In the same report they note this would be unacceptable to the fundamentalists, who “advocate an Islamic state and restructuring Afghanistan’s traditional political and social institutions. Most blame former King Zahir Shah for the conditions that led to a Communist coup and would reject a role for him in any future government.” (10). This sentiment had been well documented, for instance the situation report¹⁹ issued on the 23rd of August 1983 notes that “Fundamentalist alliance leader Sayyaf has told journalists in Islamabad that “we will kill” former King Zahir Shah “as soon as he sets foot on Afghan soil.” in response to rumors of the King’s return” (2). The CIA had also observed infighting between the distinct mujahideen groups, noting in an Afghanistan

¹⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP09T00367R000200120001-3.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86T01017R000202260001-8.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP10C00522R000100250001-2.pdf>

Situation Report published on 5 May 1987²⁰ that “Gulbuddin has ordered interdiction of Masood’s supply lines, attacks on his forces, and interference with his operations against the Soviet and Afghan regime forces.” (12).

In conclusion the U.S. support for the Afghan insurgency was not deterred by the views of those who were supported. The anti-Western views held by the largest and strongest fundamentalist groups were not considered to be an issue until the war had been well underway. In fact the documents show the U.S at least considered promoting these views in an effort to plausibly maintain the insurgents were not a U.S tool. The timeline of the analysis, as well as its conclusions, appears to at least imply that the goal was not to steer or inform the Reagan doctrine, but rather the doctrine influenced the analysis. The intelligence community did note relatively early on that an eventual peace process would be fraught with difficulty due to the conflicts and ideological disagreements between the moderate and fundamentalist factions. The first mention of the potential long term geopolitical consequences of the CIA’s support for the mujahideen did not come from analysts, but rather from a journalist writing for the Economist. In the article *Stuck in Afghanistan*²¹, found in the CIA database, the author notes “There are dangers in increasing arms aid to rebels [...] It could commit the arms supplies over-closely to an Islamic fundamentalist movement that may turn out to be as inimical to western interests as Ayatollah Khomeini’s in Iran.” (13).

Supporting the Mujahideen.

Even in the early months of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan it was a well-known secret the CIA supported the Mujahideen insurgency. Yet one wouldn’t be able to tell this from the files in the CIA FOIA database. There is little to no information on the details regarding arms deliveries, the sharing of intelligence or funding to the insurgents. As such this particular subchapter will be brief and provide an examination of secondary sources in an effort to identify which measures were taken to support the rebels.

The CIA had been essential in supplying the Afghan insurgency with detailed intelligence regarding Soviet troop and vehicle positions. Mohammed Yousaf, a brigadier in the Pakistani secret service (ISI), details the involvement of the CIA and the events of the Afghan insurgency in his book *The Bear Trap: The defeat of a Superpower*. He notes “The

²⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP96R01136R001302260003-3.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP96R01136R002605320041-7.pdf>

richest military contribution of the CIA to the Afghan war was in the field of satellite intelligence through photographs. Nothing above ground was hidden from the all-seeing satellite. The pictures [...] showed up tanks, vehicles, bridges, culverts and damage caused by bombing or rocket attacks with a clarity that amazed me. It made both the planning of operations and the briefings of Mujahideen commanders a comparatively simple business.” (61). While there is no evidence in the database of the CIA sharing this information with the insurgents and the Pakistani ISI, there are detailed maps and troop movements reports in the database. Several documents detail troop placement around key areas of interest, such as in the *Disposition of Soviet Air Forces in Afghanistan and in the USSR along the Afghanistan Border*²² report created in August 1980.

There are also no official documents in the CIA database detailing weapon shipments to the holy warriors. The only mention found on U.S material support for Afghanistan is in a Washington Post news article²³ on the claims by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. It describes an interview with Sadat on NBC, where he stated “Let me reveal this secret. The first moment the Afghani incident took place, the U.S. contacted me here and the transport of armaments to the Afghanis started from Cairo on U.S planes.” going on to claim the U.S had been “very generous”. (Washington Post 1981). This is supported by Yousaf who states in his book that “the CIA’s tasks in Afghanistan were to purchase arms and equipment and arrange their transportation to Pakistan; provide funds for the purchase of vehicles inside Pakistan and Afghanistan, train Pakistani instructors on new weapons or equipment; provide satellite photographs and maps for our operational planning; provide radio equipment and training and advise on technical matters.” (62).

On the matter of funding the insurgency Yousaf notes that “A high proportion of the CIA aid was in cash. For every dollar supplied by the US, another was added by the Saudi Arabian government. The combined funds running into several hundred million dollars a year, were transferred by the CIA to special accounts in Pakistan under the control of ISI.” (53-54). Yet here too we find no mention of the funding in the CIA database. However there is evidence in the documents supporting the CIA considered the effects of both an increase and decrease in U.S. aid. For instance in the *Afghanistan: Prospects for the Resistance*²⁴

²² <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80T01782R000100270001-7.pdf>

²³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00552R000605720020-1.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86T00302R000400570001-8.pdf>

report of 4 October 1983 one line states “should foreign support for the resistance increase, bands already fighting would become slightly more effective [...] Nevertheless the insurgents would have difficulty in using new kinds of some weapons, and the primitive insurgent logistic system would set certain limits on the flow of arms.” (7). In the *Afghanistan, the War in Perspective*²⁵ report written in 1989 the CIA implicitly admits to funding and aiding the insurgents, the only time this occurs in the 1070 total of files; “A unilateral US cutoff of support to the resistance would alter the military balance in favor of the regime [...] Mutual cuts by the United States and Soviet Union (negative symmetry) would be unpopular with the resistance but ultimately more damaging to the regime” (2-3).

The United States and CIA aid to the Afghan insurgency has been well documented, yet if one were to take the CIA files only circumstantial evidence and implications of it occurring can be found. For those interested in further information on the funding and aid to the mujahideen I highly recommend *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story* by Robert M. Gates.

Media and Propaganda

The CIA and the American media have been in conflict more than once during the 20th century. For instance they have regularly surveilled American journalists during the 1960s (Family Jewels 5)²⁶. A substantial number of the documents concerning Afghanistan are news reports with paragraphs or names of interest underlined. The documents show an agency obsessed with criticism on its activities. Media and propaganda also played a role in the Afghan conflict and insurgency as this subchapter will show.

The number of newspaper articles criticising or defending the CIA, containing no apparent relevance to intelligence gathering activities, is surprising. For instance the database contains a letter²⁷ sent in by Barry Goldwater, then Senate Intelligence committee member, written on March 1979 defending the CIA (6). In a staff meeting memorandum²⁸ with Director Lehman on 14 September 1979 “good fallout from recent press focus on intelligence” is discussed, along with a potential TV presentation by ABC which could “help

²⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP94T00885R000100220001-4.pdf>

²⁶ https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001451843.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP99-00498R000100160007-0.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84B00130R000600010140-4.pdf>

the public to better understand the intelligence process” (1). This sensitivity to the press and criticism is often reflected by the underlining of specific paragraphs, such as in the case of the *Reaping the Whirlwind*²⁹ article in which appeared in Newsweek on the 21st of January, criticising and calling for the resignation of CIA director Stansfield Turner (Will 1). Yet another example can be found in a Washington Times³⁰ article of April 4th 1986 which contains two double underlined names of House and Senate opponents, stating “The Reagan administration considers Rep. Lee Hamilton [...] To be its major hurdle to supplying arms to resistance forces.” and “In the Senate, David Durenberger [...] Has also expressed reservations about covert programs.” (O Leary and Brand 1).

There is some circumstantial evidence to be found the CIA attempted to counter this narrative through the use of groups, specifically the Committee for a Free Afghanistan. There are several articles and interviews in the CIA database with the executive director of the committee, Karen McKay, such as a Washington Times article of 12 September 1985 called *What Afghan Freedom Forces Seek*³¹. While this appears unconnected to the CIA there is also the instance of a letter³² sent to Director Casey on 16 March 1984 which states “XXXX just returned from Pakistan. She accompanied XXXX to meeting with you 25 January; XXXX also present. She has a group of Mujahideen arriving in D.C. this afternoon and they will be here all next week. She wondered if you wanted anyone from the Agency to meet with the Mujaheddin while they are here.” (1). The fact that McKay is a former army officer and had once been accused by a different Afghan lobbying group of being “a CIA front” does little to substantiate the evidence, yet the connection remains (Cryle 329). Other groups may also well have been enlisted to the end of domestic and international persuasion, such as the National Endowment For Democracy. This particular group appears underlined in the CIA database through a New York Times article³³ published on June 1st 1986. The article argues the group is funded by the CIA through a connection with the Director “John Richardson, who was president in the 1980s of Radio Free Europe, which was funded by the C.I.A” (Shipler 1).

²⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP99-00498R000100190082-4.pdf>

³⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00965R000200720001-3.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00552R000403970001-9.pdf>

³² <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88B00443R001500030117-3.pdf>

³³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00806R000200740001-7.pdf>

One document found in the CIA database called *Senior Interagency Group Meeting on Afghanistan*³⁴ created on February 20 1986 describes the creation of the “Afghan Media Project.”. It was intended to “Help establish an independent Afghan News Agency” which was to be headed by Sabahuddin Kushkaki, who was then working as Director of an unspecified National Endowment for Democracy project (5). The document notes that “Although a vigorous Afghan News Agency is clearly desirable, from the very outset it should be established - and most important be perceived - as an autonomous Afghan entity, not merely an instrument of the United States” (6). Considering the previously established link between the CIA and the National Endowment for Democracy it appears likely it was indeed intended as an instrument of the United States.

Other examples of the CIA attempting to influence domestic media to achieve a goal can be found in a *Memorandum For The Record*³⁵ created on the 29th of January 1980. The memorandum discusses a meeting between the Secretary of Defense and Turner, in which they discuss Soviet use of chemical weapons. The Secretary notes the “evidence was rather thin” yet they had “deliberately leaked the possibility of its use.” to the press (1). It notes Turner then “suggested that he or the Deputy Secretary respond on television to a question about whether the Soviets have used chemical warfare”, ostensibly to “try to forestall actual use by the Soviets”. The memo continues that “they didn’t think the SCC subcommittee under Schecter for publicizing what the Soviets were doing [...] Was active enough” (2). In other words the CIA at the very least helped shape the domestic media narrative surrounding Afghanistan.

There were also some efforts to both create and supply propaganda in Afghanistan and bordering regions. Yousaf notes that “William Casey was thus the first person seriously to advocate operations against the Soviets inside their own territory. In his view the ethnic, tribal and religious ties of the people [...] Should be exploited. He suggested to General Akhtar that perhaps a start could be made by smuggling written propaganda materials” (118). This was done despite CIA analysis which argued the Soviet effort to do so was ineffective. CIA analysis in *Afghanistan: Resisting Sovietization*³⁶ posited that written propaganda was useless as “the national literacy rate is below 10 percent” (9). Yousaf had discussions on

³⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88G01116R000300380001-7.pdf>

³⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP81B00401R002300060001-3.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00314R000400020005-2.pdf>

which material to send with a CIA psychological warfare experts “who recommended several books describing Soviet atrocities against Uzbeks.” (121). He describes deciding against it however, instead sending “copies of the Holy Koran that had been translated into Soviet Uzbek. We persuaded the CIA to obtain 10.000 copies” (121).

In summary there is at least some evidence to be found within the database surrounding the CIA’s domestic and international media efforts. There are several documents which point to a potential link between the CIA and two non-profit groups, one of which is connected to the establishment of a media organization in Afghanistan. Director Casey likely instigated propaganda efforts inside the Soviet Union's border. Finally the CIA at least appears to have been actively monitoring its critics during the Afghan conflict as evidenced by underlined paragraphs in several news articles found in the database.

A Global Proxy War

The United States, its intelligence agents and Pakistan were far from the only outside agitators during the Afghan conflict. Documents from the CIA show the involvement of a wide range of other states such as Iran, China and Saudi Arabia each with distinct motivations. It also serves as evidence for several aspects of the Realism theory within International Relations. This subchapter then will deal with the CIA analysis of other outside agitators and their motivations and actions in aiding the mujahideen insurgency.

The most important and influential state which aided the rebels against the Soviet backed regime was undeniably Pakistan. A memorandum on a staff meeting³⁷ held on the 31st of August 1979 shows that President Zia had begun requesting the aid of the United States several months prior to the Soviet invasion in a call to Ambassador Hummel (1). Much of the nations North-Western border is shared with Afghanistan and many of the refugees fleeing the escalating conflict had come to Pakistan. Pakistan also had much to fear from their eastern neighbour India, with whom a memorandum³⁸ on the morning meeting of 29 June 1979 notes “Given that they have fought two wars with Pakistan in the last 15 years and that the military balance is even more in their favor than before, they will be strongly motivated to prevent Pakistani acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability by military force.” (1).

³⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP84B00130R000600010145-9.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP81B00493R000100080001-4.pdf>

Essentially Pakistan's cooperation with the United States offered them benefits that may well have been essential to their survival and security. As the analysis paper *Pakistan: Steadfastness on Afghanistan*³⁹ notes; “Pakistani leaders view the Soviet presence in Afghanistan as a strategic threat. They believe XXXX the Soviets want to gain permanent overland access to the Persian Gulf [...] They are concerned that Moscow will collaborate with India to neutralize and divide Pakistan.” (1). The partnership with the United States offered them the security they required in exchange for very little. It would also ensure that the United States would not push back, at least publicly, against Pakistan’s budding nuclear weapons program. The insistence on relative autonomy by the insurgents would also ensure the ISI could freely divide weapons and arms amongst the mujahideen, favoring those who were effective and on good terms with the Pakistani government. Towards the later years of the conflict President Zia would face increasing external and internal pressure, from the Soviets and the dissatisfaction with the approximately 3 million Afghan refugees respectively, to resolve the Afghan conflict.

Strangely very few documents in the CIA database detail the support offered by Saudi-Arabia. For instance the Saudi’s are only briefly discussed in the previously mentioned paper *Pakistan: Steadfastness on Afghanistan*. It states that “Pakistan’s current policy on Afghanistan receives strong support from conservative religious parties at home and vital friends abroad such as Saudi Arabia.” (2). Yousaf notes Saudi aid several times however, such as the help provided by Prince Turki in attempting to unite the separate insurgent factions, the strong Saudi support to the fundamentalists led by Sayaf and the nation’s status as “a bountiful source for funds” (28, 29, 43). He notes that “For every dollar supplied by the US, another was added by the Saudi Arabian government” (53). Yet it is hard to find any mention of the aid or perspectives of the longtime United States’ allies in the database.

The second largest Communist state in the world, China, also provided support and aid to the Afghan insurgents. One analysis paper in the CIA database, *China’s Afghanistan Policy: The Pakistani Connection*⁴⁰ posits this was mainly due to security concerns. The paper argues that “For the Chinese, the invasion of Afghanistan typified Soviet expansionism by adding another link in the Soviet encirclement of China. It also heightened the threat to Pakistan, China’s longtime ally in South Asia.” (1). The paper also notes “the widespread use

³⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85M00364R002404760067-9.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00287R000400680001-5.pdf>

of Chinese-manufactured arms -- supplied via Pakistan -- in Afghanistan.” (2). This is surprising as the documents rarely reference weapons used by Afghan insurgents. Chinese dissatisfaction with the Soviet invasion was further evidenced by “unyielding statements during the UN debate on Afghanistan” (3). Another reason for Chinese aid for the insurgents may well have been based on the border dispute the state had with India earlier in the 1960s, a strong bond with Pakistan would provide increased security should India and China come to blows (Fisher et. al.).

The last nation to provide noteworthy aid to the Afghan insurgency is Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini had come to power following the revolution which deposed the Pahlavi dynasty supported by the United States (Britannica). An Afghanistan Situation Report⁴¹ issued on the 18th of November 1986 describes Iran’s attempt to gain influence on the insurgents by attempting to “unify Shia Afghan insurgents under the leadership of Pasadran and Nasr” (2). The report notes that “Iran is probably seeking to build a strong but pliable and loyal organization which can credibly demand a share of political power in any post-Soviet coalition government” (3). Another such report issued in on 19 May 1987⁴² finds that Iran was increasing support, noting that “Tehran reportedly now allows Jamiat-I-Islami insurgents [...] to take refuge and maintain logistic basis in Iran and occasionally permits insurgent supply caravans from Pakistan to cross Iranian territory”. This allegedly prompted Soviet concern about “the impact Iranian support may have on radicalization the Islamic nature of the insurgency” (3). Another situation report⁴³ created on 17 December 1985 notes that the Iranians also provided the base of operations from which the Afghans operated the Revolutionary Islamic Voice of Afghanistan radio programs.

To sum up; in the Afghanistan insurgency and the international aid that kept it alive realists may well find evidence for their beliefs. Specifically the tenet stated in the theory section of this research paper as described by Williams; “Selfish human appetites for power, or the need to accumulate the wherewithal to be secure in a self-help world, explain the seemingly endless succession of wars and conquest.” (16.). None of the nations which involved themselves in the mujahideen struggle against the Soviet puppet regime did so out of concern for the Afghans. Rather they acted out of the interests of State, Security and

⁴¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86T01017R000303230001-9.pdf>

⁴² <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP96R01136R001302260010-5.pdf>

⁴³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000507180001-5.pdf>

Survival, the three realism tenets described by Dunne (172). The United States saw an opportunity to create a Soviet Vietnam, Pakistan acted out of concerns for their security and safety, China's considerations to influence the conflicts outcome were similarly informed and Iran hoped to gain power and influence over the new government, if the regime were to fall.

Chapter 4: Epilogue

Hey Joe, where you goin' with that gun of yours?

Hey Joe, I said where you goin' with that gun in your hand?

(Hendrix)

This chapter will briefly discuss the aftermath of the Afghan conflict and the rise of the Taliban. For those interested in a full account of the events following the Soviet retreat I recommend Amin Saikal's *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*. This chapter will then move on to examine the proxy wars currently being waged in Syria and Libya which respectively show strong and some similarity to the Afghan conflict. Unfortunately the CIA documents created in the early 21st Century will not be declassified until 2026. As such this particular chapter will lean heavily on secondary and news sources for the support of arguments and information dealing with currently ongoing conflicts.

Aftermath of the Afghan Conflict

After a long, drawn out and bloody conflict the Soviets withdrew their forces, completing the exodus in 1989. The CIA document *Afghanistan: Regime and Resistance Military Performance*⁴⁴ issued on the 5 October 1988 predicted that “the Kabul regime will fall within six months to a year after Soviet troops have left Afghanistan (1). In reality it would take until April 1992 for the mujahideen forces to take power, signing the Peshawar Agreement which would install a two month transitional government after which a traditional Afghan council was held which would extend this to 18 months. (Saikal 214). Yet the differences between the insurgent groups was not easily resolved and the years following the fall of the Afghan regime were chaotic. Saikal notes that “In the meantime, mujahideen of Mazari and Sayyaf were busy battling each other [...] In early August 1992, Hekmatyar had launched a barrage of rockets against Kabul, killing 1,800 civilians” (214). Hekmatyar Gulbuddin, mentioned regularly in the CIA documents, would continue his attacks on Kabul

⁴⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP05-00761R000101120001-9.pdf>

with aid of the Pakistani ISI who had been given “a free hand to do whatever it could to shift the balance of power in favour of Hekmatyar.” (Saikal 220).

Yet Hekmatyar could not take Kabul from the insurgent groups which had taken power and as such the ISI decided on a new course of action. Religious schools, Madrassas, created during the insurgency along the Pakistan-Afghan border had been dutifully radicalizing their students. Saikal states that “Madrassas [...] created by Pakistan with US consent and Saudi funding [...] Focused on the teaching of a strictly puritanical Islam [...] Students were trained to be [...] in one sense traditionalist and, in another sense, radical Islamism [...] but also with devotion to the concept of Islamic Jihad.” (220-221). They called themselves the Taliban and in a relatively short period of two years, from 1995 to 1997, they conquered much of the country, taking advantage of the mujahideen infighting and lack of incoming resources. (Saikal 225).

Proxy Wars in the 21st Century

It is undeniable that in 1980 and onwards the United States support for the insurgency groups of Afghanistan created a chain of events that would eventually lead to the 9/11 terror attacks. Pakistani and U.S support for the mujahideen as well as the deliberate efforts to radicalize a generation of displaced Afghani refugees would lead to the Taliban regime, which would eventually provide safe haven for the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization responsible for the reprehensible attacks. Yet it appears this causal link between funding and arming Islamic insurgents, both fundamentalist and moderates, and the eventual attacks that would result in the perpetual War on Terror is being ignored. Currently there are several proxy wars raging which bare striking resemblance to the support offered to the Mujahideen in the 20th century. The aim of this subchapter then is to identify two of these conflicts and their similarities to the aid provided to the Afghan insurgency.

On 20 October 2011 the death of Muammar Gaddafi following the Arab Spring uprising and NATO bombardments was met with elation by the international community. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the EU council noted that “The reported death of Muammar Gaddafi marks the end of an era of despotism and repression from which the Libyan people have suffered enough” (Agencies). The world was hopeful a new democratic era of prosperity would arrive for the Libyan people. Yet after the election in June these hopes were dashed. Libya is currently embroiled in a devastating civil war after the House of

Representatives won the election held in June that year. The results were not accepted by the Islamist Libyan Dawn faction which seized Tripoli in response (Stephen and Penketh). An article in the Guardian notes that “Libya’s war is partly a proxy struggle between Qatar and UAE [...] While Qatar hosts Ali Salabi, Libya’s most influential islamist, UAE is the base for Mahmoud Jibril, its leading nationalist politician [...] Both Gulf states, locked in a four-way rivalry with Iran and Saudi Arabia, have pumped military aid and cash to their favoured Libyan militias.” (Stephen).

These four countries are not the only ones meddling in Libya’s internal affairs for their own gain. For instance an article in Reuters published on March 13, 2017 this year saw the head of a private security firm state that “A force of several dozen armed private security contractors from Russia operated until last month in a part of Libya that is under the control of regional leader Khalifa Haftar” (Tsetkova). Meanwhile Islamic State has gained foothold in the war torn nation and is being bombed by American airstrikes (Schmitt). The EU is also involved and supports the GNC as one article in the Libyan Express notes (Libyan Express 2017).. The effects of the chaos in Libya following the proxy civil war were felt keenly for the first time in Europe this month, as Salman Abedi, who visited the country six years ago to fight in the revolution against Gaddafi, blew himself up in the middle of a Manchester stadium (Jones).

Whereas the backers of Libya’s factions are for the most part regional actors, the insurgency in Syria has seen a return to conflict for the Cold War superpowers. Indeed if there is one currently ongoing conflict with parallels to the Afghan insurgency during the Cold War it is the civil war currently raging in Syria. After the Arab Spring in 2011 the Assad regime attempted to suppress the protestors through a brutal crackdown, deploying tanks and firing on civilians (Marsh et. al.). The civil war has escalated dramatically since, with fundamentalist and moderates alike fighting an increasingly desperate war against the Assad regime. The conflict has only been exacerbated as the actors involved in the Afghan conflict found a way to wage indirect war against one another once again. In 2015 Russian President Putin gained formal consent from parliament to deploy its military in Syria in an effort to support the Assad Regime (Mamantov). Meanwhile the United States has been arming, funding and training the insurgents in an effort to overthrow the Assad regime and create a more Western friendly government in the Middle-East (Stewart and Holton).

It is not merely the actors who are similar in this conflict, as the U.S. is again funding fundamentalist proxies with similar goals as the Reagan doctrine. Take for instance the statements made in regards to being a moderate by Thaer Akkoush, the commander of the rebel FSA, one of the recipients of arms and finance; “It is no secret that we have received the TOW missile from America [...] We are not moderate. There is no such thing as a moderate Muslim. We represent true Islam. So of course, America did not choose us because we are moderate.” (Snell). Much like in Afghanistan, the rebel groups armed by the U.S have also been fighting amongst themselves. An LA Times story written in March 2016 notes that “Syrian militias armed by different parts of the U.S. war machine have begun to fight each other [...] highlighting how little control U.S. intelligence officers and military planners have over the groups they have financed and trained in the bitter five-year-old civil war.” (Nabih)

In conclusion the world has learned very little from the disastrous consequences of the aid it provided to the Afghanistan insurgency. The United States is currently arming and supplying Islamic rebels which are fighting a war against a Russian backed regime, while maintaining very little control of their proxy troops. The chaos in Syria has already had its effect on Europe which is currently bearing the brunt of many of the refugees fleeing the war torn country. Meanwhile the bitter after effects of the chaos which has reigned Libya since the removal of Gaddafi has as recent as two weeks ago been felt in the United Kingdom.

Conclusion

Q: And neither do you regret having supported the Islamic fundamentalism, having given arms and advice to future terrorists?

B: What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?

Zbigniew Brzeziński (Gibbs 241)

The consequences of the proxy war between the Soviet Union and the United States has been felt in Afghanistan for decades. Take for instance a recent New York Times article reporting on the fall of Tora Bora, previously an Al-Qaeda stronghold and until the 13th of June under the control of the Taliban, reportedly built with CIA funds. It had fallen to an unforeseen consequence of Western military interventions, taken over by Islamic State fighters who allegedly fought to take over the cavern compound as a result of “the American decision to drop the so-called mother of all bombs on an Islamic State network of tunnels in Achin District in April.” (Nordland and Abed). The Saturday prior a different New York Times article reported on three U.S casualties in Afghanistan, shot by an Afghan commando (Nordland).

This research paper has contributed to the growing body of research on the Afghanistan conflict during the Cold War and its consequences by examining the analysis and intelligence gathering efforts of the CIA and how it influenced or contributed to the Reagan doctrine. It has furthered the theoretical debate by showing that in the case of proxy wars, policy is what influences analysis rather than the other way around.

As this research has shown the CIA’s analysis efforts have at times been flawed at best. Due to an overreliance on a particular method of interpreting the arena of International Relations, realism, the CIA failed to accurately predict the likelihood of a Soviet invasion. The timing of the Soviet troop movements memorandum and the alert memorandum, which had been called for some time prior, appears to indicate the agency did not take the possibility of a Soviet invasion seriously despite several documents pointing to its likelihood.

On several occasions throughout the conflict their analysis of the mujahideen insurgent factions indicated their extremist views and the unlikelihood of a working transitional government. They appeared to have believed the anti-western sentiments of many of the fundamentalist factions they supported were a boon rather than a detriment as they allowed the U.S. to maintain a plausible distance between them and the rebels they supported. One of the more interesting facts to emerge from the analysis is the CIA's lack of long term considerations and analysis. The administration acted seemingly without taking into account future geopolitical consequences, consequences which in a total of 1070 CIA files were only considered in 1986, seven years into the conflict.

Through analysis of secondary sources in combination with the CIA's database the methods for supplying and aiding the insurgents was established. Interestingly enough only one of the files in the CIA database directly mention the means through which the insurgents were supported, instead only implying support and often not mentioning it at all. The documents also provided an interesting insight into the CIA's monitoring of media criticism of the agency. The documents show circumstantial evidence pointing to cooperation between the agency and several pro-Afghan insurgency NGO's such as the Committee for a Free Afghanistan. Finally the documents and the personal account of Yousaf allowed for the analysis of the propaganda efforts involving the CIA.

The documents also analysed the reasoning of other nations such as China and Iran for supporting and funding the mujahideen fighters. The documents provide ample evidence for the realism theory, as the states acted solely on selfish security and power related interests.

Finally the last chapter briefly discussed the rise of the Taliban post-Soviet withdrawal and the role Pakistan played in creating the fundamentalist Islamic regime which would eventually provide a safe-haven for Al-Qaeda. This segment of the paper also discussed two proxy wars currently raging in the 21st Century. The example of Libya and specifically Syria shows that the Reagan doctrine is still very much being practiced. There are several parallels between the Afghan insurgency and the current proxy war waged between the United States and Russia through their rebel and regime intermediaries. The conflict has already had disastrous consequences for the region. If the proxy war and its consequences for Afghanistan are any indication of future events the chaos is unlikely to abate any time soon.

This paper has shown that the path of clandestinely intervening in Afghanistan was not set by careful consideration of the intelligence communities analysis, rather it was a continuation of a policy which began under Carter and was expanded under the Reagan doctrine⁴⁵. The Reagan doctrine's goal was to weaken the Soviet Union, which was done by undermining sympathetic states through funding, arming and providing intelligence to insurgency groups. Evidence of this can be found in the CIA analysis which clearly shows that the fundamentalists, the strongest among the insurgent groups, were as vehemently anti-Western as they were anti-Soviet, yet these findings did not influence the decision to fund and arm them. It is further evidenced by the lack of early analysis regarding potential long-term consequences. An argument may be made that this was due to the fact that circumstances in Afghanistan and the region were perfect for supporting an insurgency. The tribal culture of Afghanistan had created skilled fighters who knew the terrain better than their adversaries and could quickly strike against the Soviet Union, disappearing just as fast. The United States had a willing ally in Pakistan through which it could funnel its support. As such speed was of the essence if the U.S. were to capitalize on the insurgency. However this does not absolve the escalation as it occurred under the Reagan administration.

In conclusion the animosity between the Soviet Union and the United States led to a policy in which the ends justified the means. CIA analysis does not appear to have contributed to or influenced the Reagan doctrine through its intelligence gathering, rather the documents indicate analysis was adapted to fit policy. The documents show that conclusions made such as the unviability of a resistance government and the anti-Western sentiments among insurgents were respectively not considered relevant and spun in a positive light so as not to affect the policy. In light of the proxy wars currently ongoing, specifically in Syria, this conclusion is worrying. Indeed the events in Syria, specifically the U.S. support for rebels, fundamentalist and moderate alike, shows that the Reagan doctrine is still alive and well in the 21st century. In 25 years, when the documents created on the Syrian conflict are released under the Freedom of Information Act, we may well find that analysis has again been treated as subservient to policy, with similar consequences.

The above quote stems from an interview with Mr. Brzeziński in 1998, three years before the horrendous 9/11 terror attacks would plunge the United States and much of the

⁴⁵ <https://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/BRZ110A.html>

Western world into the War on Terror. The former National Security Advisor to both Carter and Reagan died this year, and one can only wonder whether he changed his opinion on which was more important before the end.

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