

# ‘The red template’: US policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan

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**ABSTRACT** *‘The red template’ examines the policies of the United States in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan in the context of the Cold War. The available documentation tends to support the thesis of this paper: that US policy in Afghanistan, consistent with US policy elsewhere both during and after the Cold War, is geared to protect US private power and thus US access to oil. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on 25 December 1979, the belief among US foreign policy-makers that the Soviet Union was finally embarking on their longtime mission of advancing upon the oil of the Persian Gulf and the warm water ports of the Arabian Sea was finally supported—a propaganda defeat for the Soviet Union. America’s response—to finance and arm the most fundamental and dangerous Muslims that could be rounded up—is a decision that continues to shake the world. The possibilities of the resulting ‘blowback’—in the form of well-documented terror and the not so well-known heroin trade—were ignored in the drive to support those who would struggle against Soviet-dominated communism. This paper details the cold calculus of US decision-makers and the negative effects on the people of Afghanistan and beyond. The rise of the Taliban can be directly attributed to this process and America’s so-called ‘War on Terrorism’ is yet another harsh penalty the people of this war-ravaged country must accept at the hands of the world’s sole remaining superpower.*

While an analysis of US policies during the Cold War must account for the geopolitical polarisation of the globe, explaining US foreign policy during the cold war era should not be much different from an analysis of US foreign policy during other eras in American history. The broad context of US foreign policy during the Cold War, like other eras, adhered to the bottom line—protecting a favourable investment climate for private business interests. The late Pakistani dictator, General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, clearly understood this broad context of US foreign policy when he administered his ‘red template’ briefing to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (DCI), William Casey, in 1981. During this meeting, Zia pointed to a large map of the Near East that had a red template covering Afghanistan and spreading out across Iran, nearing the oil-rich Persian Gulf and the warm water ports of the Arabian Sea. The Soviet Union’s military occupation of Afghanistan, over a year old, was the focus of the briefing. Zia’s specious suggestion, that the occupation of Afghanistan represented the

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'traditional' Russian push southward towards the Arabian Sea, was an attempt to convince the Americans of the imperative need to increase their covert aid to the *mujihadin*, the Islamic resistance to the Soviet occupation.<sup>1</sup> Casey and US policy makers did not need Zia's prod; they had already decided to do everything possible, in the words of DCI Casey, to 'grow the war' and create for the Soviet Union 'their Vietnam'.<sup>2</sup>

The CIA's covert war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan makes for an excellent case study of US foreign policy during the Cold War because the Soviets were acting in accordance with the expectations of US ideologists—as expansionists. In the USA much cold war historical analysis of US policy reflects this traditional ideology: the Soviets initiated cold war conflicts, and the US simply reacted to these initiatives.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan on 25 December 1979 is a prime example of Soviet initiation and expansion, and falls within the context of US expectations that the Soviet Union wished to expand southwards to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, as will be discussed in detail later. The 1979 Soviet invasion, as described by Undersecretary of State Michael Armacost in 1988, 'marked the first Soviet military occupation since World War II'.<sup>4</sup> It was the one case of Soviet military intervention well outside the historic invasion route from the West. For these reasons, US policy in Afghanistan is easily labelled reactive. But this analysis misses the broader context of US foreign policy obligations.

The geopolitical polarisation of the world during the Cold War does not discount the notion that US foreign policy is driven by the pursuit of capital; rather, it strengthens the argument. Communism in general was a threat to the needs of a capitalist society. The Soviet Union's support of socialism in the national liberation movements of Third World countries was a grave issue for US policy makers, although the USA never directly confronted the Soviets themselves, as is reflected in this comment by Marines Corps Commandant General AM Gray: 'The majority of the crises we have responded to since the end of World War II have not directly involved the USSR'.<sup>5</sup> The economic growth necessary to the survival of capitalism and the continuation of US global dominance requires the resources of the Third World. George Kennan described this necessity in 1948 as head of the State Department's policy-planning staff:

We have about fifty percent of the world's wealth, but only six percent of its population ... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships that will permit us to maintain this position of disparity ... We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford the luxury of altruism and world benefaction ... We should cease to talk about vague and unrealistic objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standard, and democratization.<sup>6</sup>

At times during the Cold War virulent anti-communism seemed irrational—and the 1980s are a prime example of this. The intense anti-communist ideology that permeates the records of US crisis managers seems ignorant at times. In such instances the policy makers appear driven by naive emotionalism—a fact that is painfully clear when the language used by US leaders during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is examined. But the fact that anti-communism, rather

than, say, anti-fascism, has remained a consistent aspect of US policy sheds light on its continual existence as an ideology. Communist countries usually opted out of the global economic structure dominated by the USA. Countries that attempted to extricate themselves from this capitalist system were consistently not tolerated. While Afghanistan was a unique situation, for reasons that will be examined later in the paper, US policy in Afghanistan is consistent with both the overarching agenda of capitalism and the 'naive emotionalism' of anti-communism.

The primary economic motivation for hegemony in the areas surrounding Afghanistan, and thus military support to anti-Soviet fighters, is the US control of Middle East oil. This argument is based on the presumption that the protection of fossil fuels is a private interest. The US government has a long history of protecting the interests of the energy and automobile industries. This includes huge corporate subsidies in research, development, and marketing, and the subjugation of urban and suburban development to the needs of these industries in cities across America. Commuter transit systems were quite literally derailed in many cities as a result of the close ties between government and automobile and energy corporations. Instead of mass transit, huge highway systems were built. This relationship between industry and government explicitly constructed an American 'car culture'. A cheap flow of oil may now benefit a majority of Americans because of this 'car culture', but private interests are the primary benefactors.<sup>7</sup> Thus, any threat to Middle East oil reserves—the largest reserves in the world—primarily affects US business. Any explanation of US foreign policy that does not include economic interests as the primary motive in the Middle East is a tenuous argument, as demonstrated by US support of corrupt regimes throughout the Middle East.

Foreign markets are not the only consideration in the formation of policy. The 'red menace' the Soviet Union represented was the perfect tool for domestic mobilisation and militarisation. John Foster Dulles echoed this consideration: 'the creation of a vast armament in itself calls for a condition midway between war and peace. Mass emotions on a substantial scale are prerequisite. The willingness to sacrifice must be engendered. A sense of peril from abroad must be cultivated.'<sup>8</sup> Jimmy Carter recognised the necessity of 'mass emotion' when he labeled the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 'the gravest threat to world peace since World War II'.<sup>9</sup>

The research presented in this paper will reveal that the US response to Soviet-occupied Afghanistan is consistent with compulsory US foreign policy interests, beholden to private power both domestic and foreign.<sup>10</sup> While the expulsion of the Soviets in 1989 was celebrated as one of the most sensational US victories of the Cold War, US policy did not correlate with providing security for the American people. A policy that considers the protection of capital first and foremost will never correlate with a policy that safeguards people. This is dangerously true with regard to US policy in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation; a fact brought home to America on 11 September 2001.

### **The arc of crises**

Were the Soviets acting as expansionists, and did this make a difference to the

Americans? Initially, as the situation in Afghanistan began to deteriorate in 1979, the Soviet Union was against direct military intervention. Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev knew the use of force in Afghanistan would be a propaganda defeat. Afghanistan, with its 'backward economy' was not worth the risk. But as the situation deteriorated between May and December 1979, with their preferred Afghanistan communist Nur Mohammed Taraki losing power and his life in an internecine struggle with fellow communist Hafizullah Amin, the Soviets changed their minds. The sweeping gains being made by Islamic fundamentalism, including the Iranian Revolution that placed Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini in power, were as much a warning to the Soviets as they were to the Americans. The Soviets did not want to lose Afghanistan to Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>11</sup> They feared the spread of this phenomenon into the Muslim Central Asian republics of the USSR. Therefore the Soviets considered intervention the only way to ensure Afghanistan remained a buffer state.<sup>12</sup> The USA had directly impeded Soviet security in Afghanistan before the invasion by beginning covert aid to Islamic insurgents in July 1979. In fact, Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, informed the president that 'this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention'. He told a French reporter: 'We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would. The secret operation ... had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap.'<sup>13</sup>

Military intervention in Afghanistan was considered a vital security measure for the Soviet Union, and it became one of the more urgent arguments for intervention. Soviet planning did not include any strategy to continue a push south through Pakistan to the Arabian Sea. However, these considerations did not enter into the US decision-making process. Beyond working to induce a Soviet invasion, the USA never attempted to calculate Soviet purposes in being in Afghanistan, which became evident later when they made demands for withdrawal, to which the Soviet Union could not possibly adhere.<sup>14</sup> An honest calculation of Soviet concerns would have disrupted the prevalent anti-communist ideologues from gaining further momentum in Washington, and might have disjointed the US assessment of the Soviets' security interests in the region.

The USA enjoyed favourable hegemonic conditions in the oil-rich Persian Gulf between World War II and the late 1970s. The USA also primarily controlled the strategically important trade routes through the Arabian Sea along the coastlines of Iran and Pakistan during this era. That the Soviet Union had begun to gain slightly more influence in Afghanistan before 1978 was not deemed vital. US policy had always been to prevent 'excessive Soviet influence in Afghanistan'.<sup>15</sup> Afghanistan had never been part of the American security system before 1978.<sup>16</sup> Soviet influence was not deemed 'excessive' until June 1979, when the Carter administration began its preparations for a covert war.

The USA began to incur hegemonic losses in this region of strategic importance when the favourable Iranian government under the dictatorship of the Shah—a dictatorship restored by means of CIA interference in 1953—fell to Ayatollah Khomeini's version of Islamic fundamentalism in January 1979. The strong and friendly ties to the Shah allowed the USA to exchange massive military assistance for access to intelligence and military bases, which helped

safeguard the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to the global capitalist system.<sup>17</sup> The Iranian hostage crisis of that year added to Carter's troubles in the region. Six months before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Carter administration reacted to the changing situation in the Gulf region by building up the US naval fleet. Carter pointed to the threat of a Soviet invasion of Iran to justify enacting his 'long gestating' plans for a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.<sup>18</sup> The RDF was deployed at the same time as covert operations began in Afghanistan. While other impulses helped determine this deployment, the RDF was consistent with US military build-up in the region.

When the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, US policy makers recognised that 'Moscow's Army and Air Force ... were within striking distance of the Persian Gulf'.<sup>19</sup> In what can be referred to as the 'red template syndrome', 'the Soviet occupation was perceived in the US as threatening to the security of the oil-rich Persian Gulf region'.<sup>20</sup> A Defense Intelligence commentary written on 7 January 1980 displays this conception: 'The key motivation that propelled Moscow's move was to bring its long-standing strategic goals within reach. Control of Afghanistan would be a major step toward overland access to the Indian Ocean and to domination of the Asian sub-continent'.<sup>21</sup> In response, Carter declared the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia to be the third security zone of the West.<sup>22</sup> Preoccupation with oil drove the USA's post-invasion policy. Thomas P Thornton, then National Security Council (NSC) director of South Asian affairs, said, 'Careful measurements were made on maps throughout Washington to determine how much closer the Soviet Union was to the Straits of Hormuz and other exotic sites in the petro-world'.<sup>23</sup>

Afghanistan is different from other wars fought by the USA and its proxies—ostensibly under the umbrella of anti-communism—in that, as mentioned above, it had never been in the American security system before 1978.<sup>24</sup> In Afghanistan the Soviet Union used its own military forces to intervene, also a unique situation. The US role in Afghanistan enjoyed a measure of domestic solidarity rare in the era of cold war conflicts. The legislative and executive branches were united in their opposition to the Soviet invasion; it was a propaganda defeat for the Soviet Union that US politicians could hardly ignore. The USA was also domestically united against the Soviet occupation because of the unique opportunity to inflict severe damage on the Soviet Union, gaining some measure of revenge for Vietnam—the 'naive emotionalism' of the decision-making process. Texas Congressman Charles Wilson, a member of the powerful Appropriations Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, and the *mujihadin's* biggest congressional supporter, wanted to repay the Soviets for Vietnam. In a CBS news interview, he said, 'I wanted to hurt them. I wanted them to count body bags going back to Moscow'.<sup>25</sup> Brzezinski saw the Afghan invasion as an opportunity, in his words, 'to finally sow shit in their backyard'.<sup>26</sup> These unique facets of the Afghanistan situation cannot be ignored. However, the language of economic materialism—ie oil—appears and reappears throughout the security documents.

Brzezinski worried that the Soviet Union might take advantage of its presence in Afghanistan in order to influence Pakistan or Iran—considered a threat to US oil interests. In a 1980 memorandum written by Brzezinski and sent to most of

Carter's cabinet, he outlined US goals in Afghanistan. He dedicated most of the document to the exploration of ways to achieve a security framework to protect vital interests in the Persian Gulf region. While the document did not explicitly outline what those interests were, it implied that oil was the key economic issue, and stability in the world oil market was the focus of security. In order to maintain that security, he prioritised more military assistance to the region from both the USA and its allies.<sup>27</sup>

In what became known as 'the arc of crises', this string of negative events shaped US policy in the Near East; meanwhile, on the domestic front, Jimmy Carter was preparing for the 1980 presidential election in a country where the mood was shifting to the right. The Southern conservatives of the Democratic Party had left the party. Despite increasing defence spending every year of his administration, conservatives labelled Carter weak on defence.<sup>28</sup> Besides the Iranian and Afghan problems, events in Africa and Nicaragua had given critics leverage in their argument that the USA had become Nixon's 'pitiful helpless giant'.<sup>29</sup> The USA's access to the world's resources appeared to be in recession. Carter had to get tough, and Afghanistan was a good place to begin. Carter took a hard stand and, in his January 1980 address to the nation, he said, 'The Soviet invasion poses an incredible threat ... to the world's access to vital resources and to vital sea lanes'.<sup>30</sup> This may have eased the delicate psyches of those that relied on the cheap flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, but Carter knew actions spoke louder than words. He leaked information to the press concerning the covert operations in Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup> Carter's tough stance committed the USA to its role in the war in Afghanistan, but it was not enough to stem the tide of conservatism in the USA.

### The 'Evil Empire'

Had Carter won re-election in 1980, we can only speculate how things might have been different. It is very likely, given Carter's initial reaction to the Soviet invasion and as a result of US political solidarity in support of resisting it, that the response might have been similar. But the conservative mood of the country that elected Ronald Reagan was linked to the deliberate embellishment of Soviet military capabilities and intentions. This new and improved era of anti-communism—seeking to roll back the Soviet Empire and denouncing any notion that might spur another *détente* effort—ensured that the Afghanistan *mujihadin* would be extremely well armed, financially backed, and trained to wage a technologically advanced war against the Soviets.

During the 1970s a trend developed to shift away from doctrine that explained all the world's problems in the context of the Cold War. Nationalism and decolonisation were phenomenal developments that, although hotly contested by the cold war superpowers, could not be interpreted as a result of the Cold War. The Trilateral Commission, founded by David Rockefeller in 1973 and later including members Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton can be described as an ideological tool of a new breed of 'internationalist' policy which attempted to breach the cold war paradigm. Almost the entire Carter Administration was drawn from its ranks. Brzezinski served as the Commission's director and co-

ordinator until 1977, when he became Carter's National Security Adviser. The Commission stated:

There is a sense that the US was no longer in such a singular leadership position as it had been in earlier post-World War II years, and that a more shared form of leadership—including Europe and Japan in particular—would be needed for the international system to navigate successfully the major challenges of the coming years.<sup>32</sup>

The right-wing foreign-policy makers in America—men who had built their careers around the 'us versus them' mentality of the Cold War—were not ready to change the focus of US policy, and were attempting to regain power. The framework of US foreign policy—to dominate the world's resources—had worked quite well for the conservative ideological policy makers in the context of the Cold War. These right-wing veterans were not accustomed to interpreting and formulating policy outside of the cold war context. While they must have realised that decolonisation and nationalism threatened US access to the resources of the Third World, their cold war mentality was too rigid to account for the possibility that decolonisation and nationalism had developed outside the sphere of the Cold War. The neoliberal Trilateral Commission looked beyond the Cold War, thus becoming the framework for US policy in the post-Soviet years. Had the right-wing foreign policy veterans looked closer at the framework of the policies advocated by the Trilateral Commission, they might have been open to suggestion. The corporate libertarianism (aka 'free trade') propagated by the Trilateral Commission and its powerful members resulted in international policies that ensured record-breaking corporate profits, in accordance with US foreign policy demands.<sup>33</sup>

The conservative foreign policy veterans wishing to regain power, including Eugene Rostow and Paul Nitze, formed the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) during the Carter administration. The CPD formed to influence policy according to what it perceived as a growing Soviet threat. It castigated the CIA for underestimating Soviet strategic capabilities. According to a CPD report, the Soviets had undertaken an 'unparalleled military build-up ... reminiscent of Nazi Germany's rearmament in the 1930s'.<sup>34</sup> The CPD became the thorn in the side of Carter's defence policies. Carter worked hard to reconstruct his foreign policy to fit the growing influence of the CPD and a swing to conservatism. He increased military spending every year of his administration, and his denouncement of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, accompanied by an end to wheat shipments from the US to the USSR and a US boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics being held in Moscow, was part of his effort to stem the growing dissatisfaction with his administration's foreign policy. Carter's covert aid to the *mujihadin* was in line with his hawkish National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, as he ignored the wishes of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to search for a diplomatic solution to the Afghanistan problem. The USA worded its demands for withdrawal to ensure the Soviets would not comply by escalating the aims beyond a possible Soviet compromise. The USA demanded 'restoration of a neutral, nonaligned Afghan government'. A 'neutral, nonaligned' Afghanistan was a demand for a scenario far beyond restoration—a scenario that would have left the Soviet sphere beyond the pre-intervention power structure.<sup>35</sup> But Carter's tough stance

on Afghanistan was not enough. The CPD, the ultimate advocate of the military–industrial complex, worked to ensure the election of a president who would, when it came to the defence budget, outspend all his predecessors.

Paul Nitze, whose CV included the infamous anti-communist works NSC-68 and the Gaither report, authored a new doctrine that would become the basis for future planning and provide the intellectual intelligence community justification for continued peacetime military build-up. Nitze’s new report falsely claimed that the Soviets maintained a favourable missile gap, when it was the Americans who enjoyed the advantage. The CPD, which Reagan joined as an executive board member in January 1979, became the Reagan campaign brain trust on issues of foreign policy.<sup>36</sup> The arms race became the centrepiece of the Reagan campaign and, as evidenced by his 1981 proposal to spend \$1.5 trillion on defence, it also became the focal point of his eight years in office.<sup>37</sup>

In the midst of Reagan’s arms race, ‘the close, continuing relationship between the Department of Defense and its major suppliers resulted in the convergence between the two which blurred and reduced much of the distinction between public and private activities’.<sup>38</sup> During the administration’s drive to militarise space through its Star Wars programme, the Pentagon established panels to study how and where research and development of Star Wars should move forward. Fred S Hoffman, the president of a defence-consulting firm with ties to Lockheed Martin, a company vying for a chunk of the money that would be allocated to begin the Star Wars project, chaired one of these influential panels.<sup>39</sup> The corporate beneficiaries of this ‘Pentagon Keynesianism’ were able to operate outside the criteria of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, as the taxpayers bore the costs of research and development that the weapons build-up entailed. In order to have support for a weapons build-up, as noted earlier, it was necessary to maintain a viably dangerous enemy. Reagan and his foreign policy advisers enhanced the Soviet threat to support their major military build up. The abhorrent Soviet actions in Afghanistan continued to be the propaganda defeat that Brezhnev feared.

During the 1980 presidential campaign, Reagan told the *Wall Street Journal*, ‘Let us not delude ourselves. The Soviet Union underlies all unrest that is going on. If it weren’t engaged in this game of dominoes, there wouldn’t be any hot spots in the world.’<sup>40</sup> Reagan began to refer to the Soviet Union as the ‘Evil Empire’. He said, ‘All over the world, we can see that in the face of declining American power, the Soviets and their friends are advancing’.<sup>41</sup> Reagan’s rhetoric translated into a policy that became known as the Reagan Doctrine, a coherent policy of support for, as he stated, ‘those who are risking their lives on every continent from Afghanistan to Nicaragua to defy Soviet-supported aggression’.<sup>42</sup> The *mujihadin* became the centrepiece of the Reagan Doctrine—to increase the cost of Soviet support of Third World socialist governments.

The Reagan Doctrine was formulated according to the conceptual analysis of strategies of containment. Cold war historian John Lewis Gaddis exemplifies this thinking: ‘To a remarkable degree, containment has been the product, not so much of what the Russians have done, or what was happening elsewhere in the world, but of internal forces operating within the US. What is surprising is the primacy that has been accorded economic considerations in shaping strategies of

containment, *to the exclusion of other considerations*.<sup>43</sup> The economic considerations in question in the ‘arc of crises’ region was access to oil. Of course, with regard to the Third World, as George Kennan told the National War College in 1947, ‘it is not Russian military power which is threatening us, it is Russian political power’.<sup>44</sup> Soviet support for nationalist, socialist movements in the Third World increased the measure of Soviet political influence. The Reagan Doctrine sought to destroy Soviet influence in the Third World, and the Soviet Union’s military occupation of Afghanistan offered a unique opportunity to drain the Soviet Union of its military resources and sap the political will of the ‘Evil Empire’.

### **Fighting the covert war: lack of forward thinking**

After an examination of *why* the US reaction to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was tough, it is necessary to analyse *how* US policy took shape. The USA was involved from the outset of the Soviet invasion and nine-year military occupation of Afghanistan—nine years that resulted in the deaths of over one million Afghans and created nearly four million Afghan refugees. In April 1979, eight months before the Soviet intervention, the USA had begun quietly meeting rebels who were fighting the Afghanistan communist government. CIA support began almost immediately.<sup>45</sup> Carter ordered a modest covert operation of propaganda and medical aid to the insurgents, who were rebelling against what the USA still considered a home-grown communist revolution.<sup>46</sup> Four days after the Soviet invasion on 25 December 1979, Carter swiftly approved a broader plan that instructed the CIA to provide military supplies in addition to humanitarian aid to the *mujihadin*.<sup>47</sup> Pakistan was the key to launching the CIA’s covert aid to the *mujihadin*. The CIA used Pakistan’s military Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), with its extensive intelligence connections to the *mujihadin*, as a go-between. The CIA funnelled US money, matched dollar-for-dollar by Saudi Arabia, into the *mujihadin* war chest through the ISI. A colleague of Charles G Cogan, chief of Near East and South Asian Division of the CIA’s Directorate of Operations from 1979–84, summed up the nature of this relationship: ‘We took the means to wage war, put them in the hands of people who could do so, for purposes for which we agreed’.<sup>48</sup>

The *mujihadin* employed urban guerrilla tactics—consistent with the emerging US policy of ‘low-intensity warfare’. Brigadier Mohammed Yousaf, ISI member and director of covert operations in Afghanistan, described the strategy: ‘We must keep the pot boiling at a certain temperature. We must not allow the pot to boil over.’<sup>49</sup> This analogy was an admonition not to overreach the arms programme and incite a Soviet reaction. In avoiding a direct confrontation with the Soviets, the *mujihadin* concentrated on soft targets, a style of warfare described by the ISI leaders as ‘death by a thousand cuts’.<sup>50</sup>

According to Yousef, ‘the foremost function of the CIA was to spend money.’<sup>51</sup> Most of this money was spent on weapons. Early in the war, in an attempt to maintain ‘plausible deniability’, the CIA only supplied weapons and equipment that were also used by the Soviets or the Eastern European countries.<sup>52</sup> Egypt was able to supply large amounts of Soviet-bloc weapons, as was China, in part

thanks to Senator Orrin Hatch, who travelled there to convince the Chinese of the worthiness of the effort.<sup>53</sup> Egyptian President Anwar Sadat recalled shortly before his assassination that the USA had asked him to ‘please open your stores for us so that we can give the Afghans the armaments they need to fight’.<sup>54</sup> Yousef claimed some Soviet-made weapons actually came from Israel, and had been captured from the PLO in Lebanon and also used to supply the Contras, facts kept hidden from the *mujihadin* for obvious reasons.<sup>55</sup>

The CIA provided the Afghan resistance with satellite mapping intelligence and demolitions experts who were able to train the *mujihadin* in the use of delayed timing devices for the large tonnage of C-4 plastic explosives supplied for urban sabotage.<sup>56</sup> The US also provided the rebels with targeting devices for mortars linked to a US Navy satellite, wire-guided anti-tank missiles, and, eventually, the highly effective Stinger missiles. The CIA helped Pakistani trainers establish schools in guerrilla warfare and urban sabotage for the *mujihadin*.<sup>57</sup> Sniper rifles were given to the rebels to assassinate senior Soviet military officials, and several members of the Afghanistan Communist Party (PDPA) were assassinated.<sup>58</sup> Of this controversial tactic, CIA operations officer Vincent Cannistraro had this to say: ‘Assassination is not really a relevant question in a wartime scenario’.<sup>59</sup> The rebels launched indiscriminate rocket attacks on Kabul and lined Kabul with land mines. Thanks to the Soviets and the US-backed proxies, Afghanistan still has more land mines per capita than any other country in the world. Essentially, the USA in large part created some of the deadliest urban guerrilla warriors in the world—trained to use weapons of modern-day terror.

Throughout most of the war the DCI was William Casey, a member of the CPD and Reagan’s 1980 campaign manager. In an unprecedented move consistent with the formulation of his foreign policy, Reagan raised the position of DCI to a cabinet-level one. Casey considered himself to be the commander-in-chief of the war against the Soviet army in Afghanistan. The CIA headquarters in Islamabad, Pakistan, became the largest in the world outside of Langley.<sup>60</sup> Casey, vehemently anti-Soviet, was the perfect man for directing the Reagan Doctrine.

Throughout the 1980s the Reagan administration increasingly stepped up aid to the *mujihadin*. His National Security Decision Directive Number 166 in 1985 authorised increased aid to the Afghan rebels. By 1987 the USA was aiding the *mujihadin* to the tune of \$700 million per year in military assistance. US covert aid to the Afghan resistance in the 1980s cost American taxpayers over \$3 billion.<sup>61</sup> By 1984, with *détente* a thing of the past, the USA ended attempts to conceal the origins of the weapons going to the *mujihadin*. In 1985 the legislative branch authorised the shipment of US-made Stinger missiles—the most effective in the world—to the *mujihadin*. The agreement to supply the *mujihadin* with Stingers was made despite intelligence community concerns about ‘leakage’ of Stingers into the hands of terrorists.<sup>62</sup> Stingers were soon used for attacks against civilian air transport. The Soviet press blamed the USA and Pakistan for these civilian deaths and asserted that the Reagan administration supported international terrorism, a point well taken despite the transparent biases of the Soviet press.<sup>63</sup> One person’s urban guerrilla warfare is another’s terrorism. The Reagan administration seemed to be spreading the cancer it demanded be wiped out by supplying and training the *mujihadin* with the means to wage urban guerrilla

warfare. This covert war was not consistent with the Reagan administration's public statements that 'terrorism had become a frightening challenge to the tranquility and political stability of our friends and allies'—particularly 'disturbing was state-provided training, financing, and logistical support to terrorists'.<sup>64</sup>

Some in the Soviet Union recognised the negative implications of their military actions in Afghanistan almost immediately, and they made small steps towards a way out that did not endanger their perceived interests. The USA blocked diplomacy as a means of withdrawal on more than one occasion. Punishing the Soviets for its actions in Afghanistan was preferable to a diplomatic solution. The United Nations, under the leadership of Diego Cordovez, attempted to broker settlement negotiations in 1982. According to Cordovez, 'both the US and Pakistan took the line of deception on Afghanistan with a public posture of negotiating a settlement while privately agreeing that military escalation was the best course'.<sup>65</sup> CIA point man Charles Cogan said, 'Pakistan's security is best assured by keeping the Soviets tied down in Afghanistan'.<sup>66</sup> Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, said 'it was the CIA's war, not State's'.<sup>67</sup>

The USA continued to block diplomacy throughout the 1980s. In the autumn of 1987 Reagan cabinet member George Shultz thought that a profound and historic shift was underway in the USSR', which included their wanting out of Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> Reagan ignored this 'historic shift' during the Washington Gorbachev–Reagan Summit in December 1987, stating that 'our conduct at the Summit and the framing of its results must in no way complicate our efforts to maintain a strong defense budget ... and support of the Contras and the Mujihadin ...'.<sup>69</sup> A strong defence budget went hand in hand with the Reagan Doctrine, and the Reagan Doctrine was not consistent with political solutions in Third World 'hot spots'. The USA was determined to continue the violence in Afghanistan. In retrospect, even the staunchest advocates of a military solution in Afghanistan might acknowledge the lack of forward thinking inherent in this policy. But decades of policy dedicated to subverting communism died hard.

### **Pan-Islam: lack of forward thinking continues**

In waging this covert war against the Red Army, the USA deemed it necessary to ally itself with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The nature of these alliances ensured that the US money and weapons programme would solidify the growing Pan-Islam movement, more commonly referred to as Islamism. Did the USA perceive Islamic fundamentalism as a risk? US interests had already suffered a blow at the hands of Islamism in Iran. According to Cogan, US and *mujihadin* relations had to be short-lived because 'the long range aims of a country in which Islamists were at least beginning to have a say would not be wholly compatible with the aims of a Western nation'.<sup>70</sup> Yet in the 1980s the Soviet Union's military expansionism was still considered the major threat to the region's petroleum and warm water ports—the 'red template syndrome'. When weighing the risks of the Soviet threat against the relatively new threat of Islamic fundamentalism, unsurprisingly, fighting communism was still first and foremost in the minds of US policy makers. The US ignored the threat of Islamism and used it as a

bulwark against communism and revolution.

Because of Pakistan's location and intelligence capabilities within Afghanistan, it became the key to the covert operation. Pakistan, a nation built on the tenets of Islam, absorbed huge numbers of Afghan refugees who began streaming over the border. Most of these Afghans seeking refuge were from rural and conservative regions of the country and opposed communist efforts to modernise and secularise Afghan society. In these Pakistan refugee camps, it was easy to recruit *mujihadin*.<sup>71</sup>

Until the Soviet invasion, Carter had maintained only tenuous relations with Pakistan and the Zia regime, a public relations necessity because of Zia's poor human rights record, which included the execution of his predecessor, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. As a result of the evolving scenario in the region, Carter began to overlook Zia's human rights record. When Reagan came into office, closer ties with Pakistan were high on his security agenda. He told the Pakistanis: 'I know we have had problems, but things are going to change'.<sup>72</sup> The Reagan administration proposed a \$3.2 billion aid package to Pakistan to 'give Pakistan confidence in our commitment to its security and provide us reciprocal benefits in terms of our regional interests'.<sup>73</sup> Getting away from Carter's so-called human rights policy, Reagan's Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, said to the Pakistanis, 'your internal situation is your problem'.<sup>74</sup> Overlooking Pakistan's poor human rights record seemed the proper policy at the time to protect resources and fight the Soviets.

Saudi Arabia was brought into the alliance against the Soviets because of its willingness to match US funds to the *mujihadin*. It was a unique opportunity for the Saudis to gain influence in the region. They were able to import their brand of ultra-conservative Islam known as Wahhabism through the refugee camps they were funding in Pakistan. Wahhabism is a virulent, sectarian strain of Islam that is the official state religion of Saudi Arabia. Wahhabi ideology is built on the concept of political enforcement of religious beliefs. To Wahhabis, faith is not an option; it is mandated by force. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), a refugee camp-spawned group based on the Saudi tenets of Wahhabism and empowered to recruit fundamentalist warriors, established close links with the ISI.<sup>75</sup>

Pakistan insisted the CIA funnel all aid through the ISI.<sup>76</sup> The USA agreed to this arrangement, subcontracting to the ISI the main political decision about which Afghans to support. Beyond the ISI's connections to Wahhabism, Pakistan, long fearing Pashtun-driven Afghan nationalism, wanted the social order in Afghanistan to be Islamic, which explains Pakistani recognition of the Taliban.<sup>77</sup> The ISI allocated most of the weapons and resources to the most extreme fundamentalist groups among the *mujihadin*.<sup>78</sup> According to foreign correspondent Lawrence Lifshultz, the ISI's distribution system 'was creating a form of warlordism'.<sup>79</sup> Andrei Gromyko likened this situation to 'lending your house to bandits to fire on the neighbors'.<sup>80</sup> US foreign policy and its concerns with access to oil and shipping lanes in the region clouded its judgement during these fateful security decisions.

How did the USA and its Western allies perceive the *mujihadin*? Publicly, they lavished praise on the Afghan resistance. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger said to the Afghan rebels, 'I want you to know that you are not alone. You

will have our support until you regain the freedom that is rightfully yours'.<sup>81</sup> The leader of the USA's closest ally, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, berated the BBC at a G-7 news conference in Venice in 1986 for calling the *mujihadin* the 'Afghan resistance' rather than 'freedom fighters'.<sup>82</sup> Privately, the USA was more honest in its assessment of the *mujihadin*. A CIA Pakistan station chief had this to say about the Peshawar Seven, the loose configuration of Afghan tribes allied against the Soviets: 'They were all brutal, fierce, blood-thirsty, and basically fundamentalist. There were no Thomas Jeffersons on a white horse among the Afghan resistance leaders.'<sup>83</sup>

According to Yousef, only two of these groups were considered to be Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>84</sup> One such group, Hizb-I Islami, the extremist Islamic group headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, became the primary benefactor of the ISI's system of allocation. In early 1979 Hekmatyar became the first rebel leader to meet the CIA.<sup>85</sup> A vehement anti-American, he was able to build his stature and power in Afghanistan thanks to the US money and weapons programme. In the early stages of the covert war, Saudi Arabia provided \$2 million to Hekmatyar.<sup>86</sup> Hekmatyar's Hizb-I Islami was touted by the Pakistanis as the group with the best chance of resisting the Soviets. The weapons he received tended to be of much higher quality than those sent to other groups.<sup>87</sup> Mike Malinowski, US Consul General to Peshawar, later agreed with the Pakistani claims: 'Gulbuddin is the most effective fighting force in Afghanistan'.<sup>88</sup> US intelligence recognised the need to unite the rebel forces, and viewed Islam as the uniting force, realising that secular unity would 'obviously be beneficial'.<sup>89</sup> Hekmatyar was not a uniting force. There is far more evidence that Hekmatyar's actions resulted in the splintering of the Peshawar Seven. Journalist Kurt Lohbeck was an eyewitness to huge weapons deliveries to Hizb-I Islami after the Soviet withdrawal, when it was common knowledge that Hekmatyar's group was using the weapons against other factions of the *mujihadin*, impeding the peace process.<sup>90</sup> The weapons being supplied to Hekmatyar gave him and his group power and leverage the other *mujihadin* tribes lacked.

Many in the USA knew the dangers of funding and arming fundamentalist extremists. State Department Afghanistan specialist Eliza Van Hollen argued strongly that the CIA should have held firm and not allowed the ISI to direct the weapons to its favoured groups.<sup>91</sup> The USA was empowering Hekmatyar, who was generally not a nice man—a well-known fact that Americans recognised but apparently ignored. Hekmatyar was described by a former US ambassador to Afghanistan as a 'nut, an extremist, and a very violent man.'<sup>92</sup> In the early 1970s he dispatched his followers to throw acid in the faces of women students who refused to wear a veil.<sup>93</sup> In 1980 Hekmatyar's fighters attacked a school south of Kabul because the communist regime had forced girls to be educated alongside boys. They bombed the school, murdered the head teacher's wife, and cut off the teacher's head for the students to watch.<sup>94</sup> US Congressman Jack Wheeler reported, as a member of the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan, that the incidence of corruption among the Afghan rebels was highest in Hekmatyar's group. He stated that no US assistance should go to him.<sup>95</sup> But such assistance continued to flow into Hekmatyar's war-making coffers.

In July 1989 Hekmatyar's group slaughtered 30 members of another *mujihadin*

group. The other members of the Peshawar Seven denounced him as a ‘criminal’ and a ‘terrorist’.<sup>96</sup> Hekmatyar was accused of assassinating Afghan intellectual Professor Said Burhanuddin Majrooh, the most moderate member of the *mujahidin* alliance and also an advocate for a diverse coalition to rule Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. A friend of Majrooh’s is quoted as saying: ‘If you can tell your people in America anything, tell them to stop shoving Majrooh’s murderers down our throats’.<sup>97</sup> Correspondent Lifshultz criticised the USA in the *Pakistani Times* for promoting Hekmatyar as the eventual ruler of Afghanistan. He also criticised the US news media for ‘ignoring the murderous underside of Mujahidin politics’,<sup>98</sup> an important aspect of domestic solidarity.

Afghans such as Hekmatyar were not the sole extremist recipients of US money and weapons. The CIA permitted the ISI to recruit Muslim extremists from around the world to help fight the Soviets. This was consistent with the ISI goal of converting the Afghan *jihad* into a global war waged by all Muslim states against the Soviet Union. 35 000 Muslim radicals from 40 Islamic countries joined Afghanistan’s fight. Tens of thousands more came to study in the Saudi-funded camps in Pakistan—camps that became virtual universities for promoting pan-Islamic fundamentalism and a place for them to forge tactical and ideological links. Eventually, more than 100 000 foreign Muslim extremists were directly influenced by the war in Afghanistan.<sup>99</sup> Something akin to a radical Islamic foreign legion was taking shape.

The non-Afghans in the war, though funded by the USA, were never the subjects of a single known intelligence report, white paper, diplomatic warning, or State Department analysis.<sup>100</sup> Their presence in Afghanistan was non-controversial. Anyone willing to die while fighting the ‘Evil Empire’ was a satisfactory element of the war. According to a US diplomat in Pakistan, ‘During the jihad, everyone was welcomed in with open arms. If you were an armed anti-communist, it didn’t matter if you were from Bosnia or Bahrain, you were welcome.’<sup>101</sup> The USA had to be a secret ally to the non-Afghans because of their anti-American attitudes. According to a former US diplomat who worked in Kabul, ‘The CIA prided itself on conducting a major operation with little American involvement’.<sup>102</sup>

Osama bin Laden, the son of a wealthy Saudi oil magnate, joined the Afghan resistance movement following the Soviet invasion. The Soviet occupation elicited this response from bin Laden: ‘I was enraged’.<sup>103</sup> He financed recruitment, transportation, and training of Arab nationals who volunteered to fight alongside the *mujahidin*.<sup>104</sup> As the most prominent Saudi to participate in the war, he was heavily patronised by the ISI. Bin Laden’s experiences during the war in Afghanistan accentuated his religious ideology, and included a ‘religious experience’ when a Russian shell fell at his feet. Although the shell never exploded, ‘as he waited for it to explode, he had a sudden, religious feeling of calmness’.<sup>105</sup> His ties to US money and weapons helped solidify his power in Afghanistan. The trials of defendants accused of bombing the US embassy in Kenya disclosed that the CIA had shipped high-powered sniper rifles directly to bin Laden’s operation in 1989. Even the Tennessee-based manufacturer of the rifles confirmed this.<sup>106</sup> Bin Laden was one of many unpleasant CIA tools in its war against the Soviet Union. The threat of extremists such as bin Laden were

overlooked and ignored throughout the 1980s—in hindsight, this was a dangerous oversight. But Islamic fundamentalism was never deemed the threat to US resources that the threat of communism was.

### US foreign policy: lack of security

US foreign policy demands the protection of US access to foreign resources. The oil of the Persian Gulf is consistently assessed to be a vital resource—a resource necessary to protect. This policy does not correlate with providing security for the American people, however. The US covert war in Afghanistan did not create a more secure life for Americans. Rather, the ensuing ‘blowback’, a CIA term for the cost and consequences of US interventionist foreign policy and military over-extension, has made life more dangerous for them. Nabil Osman, director of the state information service in Egypt, stated that, ‘We have created a monster’.<sup>107</sup> This ‘monster’ has done more than risk the security of the American people; it has endangered the safety of people all over the world, particularly the citizens of Afghanistan.

Some of the consequences of the US policy in Afghanistan included the spread of terrorist acts beyond the borders of Afghanistan. Extremists with links to the Afghan *jihād* have been linked to numerous acts of terrorism, including the 25 June 1996 truck bombing of King Abdulaziz Air Base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, which demolished an eight-story barracks and killed 19 US airmen, the destruction of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 which killed hundreds, the bombing of the *USS Cole* in October 2000, and the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Three of the four suspects of the Saudi terrorist attacks admitted to receiving weapons and training from Afghanistan.<sup>108</sup> Two of the suspects of the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing that killed six and injured thousands, Mahmud Abouhamila and Kuwaiti-born Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, both fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s.<sup>109</sup> A US diplomat in Pakistan said, ‘This is an insane instance of the chickens coming home to roost. You can’t plug billions of dollars into an anti-communist jihad, accept participation from all over the world, and ignore the consequences. But we did.’<sup>110</sup> The former director of India’s intelligence bureau, MK Narayanan, described the Pan-Islamic terrorist movement as the illegal offspring of the Afghan conflict of the 1980s’.<sup>111</sup>

Algeria became one of the hot spots of the Pan-Islamic terrorist movement during its four-year Islamic insurgency in the early 1990s. Algerian sociologist Mahfoud Bennoune had this to say of US policy: ‘Your government participated in creating a monster. Now it has turned against you and the world. Thousands of Arabs were trained in Afghanistan, made into a veritable killing machine’.<sup>112</sup> A former US senior policy maker would have agreed with this assessment, stating, ‘In retrospect, we clearly missed something very important. We didn’t see the trees for the forest.’<sup>113</sup>

Another aspect of blowback was the huge increase in the production of opium and heroin—an intimately related aspect of the CIA’s covert war. David Musto, a member of the Strategic Council of Drug Abuse, warned US policy makers that the *mujahidin* were heavily involved in drug trafficking: ‘I told them that we

were going into Afghanistan to support the opium growers in their rebellion against the Soviets. Shouldn't we try to pay the growers if they will eradicate their opium production?'<sup>114</sup>

Decision makers did not heed this warning; the heroin that helped fund the  *jihad*  created a worldwide supply of the potent drug, which became cheaper and more available than ever. Some attribute the immediate increase in the number of heroin-related deaths in New York City—by 77%—to the new supply being shipped from Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>115</sup> The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) recognised that the 'new Middle Eastern heroin threat was growing without restraint'. World opium production tripled from an estimated 1600 tons in 1982 to 4700 tons in 1990.<sup>116</sup> By 1984, 51% of heroin supply in the USA came from the Afghanistan–Pakistan border.<sup>117</sup> Pakistan was devastated by the increased supply of heroin. Its heroin addicted population grew from nearly non-existent in 1979 to 1.2 million in 1985.<sup>118</sup>

Without the CIA the huge markets of the USA and Europe would never have been accessible by the Afghan drug dealers. The CIA wittingly provided the political protection and logistical linkages that enabled the heroin to reach the West. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar became the most powerful drug lord, impervious to US and Pakistani probes because of the political importance of his role in the war. He controlled six of the 20 refineries operating within Pakistan. The weapons the USA supplied the  *mujihadin*  were used to secure prime poppy fields inside Afghanistan. The guerrillas forced the peasants to grow the lucrative poppies as a revolutionary tax. ISI troops delivered the drugs, as they were not subject to police checkpoints thanks to their clearance as ISI members.<sup>119</sup>

The  *Washington Post*  reported that US officials had ignored Afghan complaints of heroin trafficking by Hekmatyar and the ISI.<sup>120</sup> The DEA in Islamabad failed to instigate major seizures or arrests. An Interpol officer told correspondent Lifshultz, 'It is very strange that the Americans, with the size of their resources, and political power they possess in Pakistan, have failed to break a single case. The explanation cannot be found in the lack of adequate police work. They had some excellent men working in Pakistan.' Working in the same office as the DEA were five CIA members, one who told a DEA officer to pull back his operations during the war.<sup>121</sup> Cogan later admitted: 'Our main mission was to do as much damage as possible to the Soviets. We really didn't have the resources or the time to devote to an investigation of a drug trade. I don't think we need to apologize for this. Every situation has its fallout ... There was a fallout in terms of drugs, yes. But the main objective was accomplished. The Soviets left Afghanistan.'<sup>122</sup>

### 'Stirred-Up Muslims'

Many in the USA credit the eventual fall of the Soviet Union to the covert war in Afghanistan. Looking back in 1998, Brzezinski certainly did not display any regret over the initiation of the covert war: 'What was more important in the world view of history? A few stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?'<sup>123</sup> Certainly, in terms of raw economic materialism and military power, the Soviet Union was far more of a threat than these so-called 'stirred-up Muslims.' Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia

and the former Soviet-bloc are slowly but surely being incorporated into the global capitalist system dominated by the USA. The interests of big business have been well served by the break-up of the communist giant. But are Americans safer? Is the world a more secure place?

Had the USA been interested in peace and justice in Afghanistan from the outset, it is possible the 'blowback' the world has suffered since would have been far less dramatic. In August 1979 a classified State Department report stated that, 'the United States larger interests ... would be served by the demise of the (communist) regime, despite whatever setbacks this might mean for future social and economic reforms in Afghanistan'.<sup>124</sup> The high level of casualties that a long, drawn out war would cause was considered but ignored. According to a senior official interviewed by the *Washington Post*, 'The question here was whether it was morally acceptable that, in order to keep the Soviets off balance, which was the reason for the operation, it was permissible to use other lives for our geo-political interests'.<sup>125</sup> With regard to this question, Carter's CIA director, Stansfield Turner, said, 'I decided I could live with that'.<sup>126</sup> As a US diplomat in Pakistan stated, 'Our objectives weren't peace and grooviness in Afghanistan. Our objective was killing commies and getting the Russians out.'<sup>127</sup>

When the Russians pulled out of Afghanistan for good in 1989, the USA continued to send small amounts of money and arms to the *mujihadin* through the ISI to help the Muslims overthrow the local communist regime for good. The ISI continued to fund the most extremist groups, including Hekmatyar, who then warred with other factions of the *mujihadin*. The deaths continued to mount and the cycle of violence continued in a chaotic downward spiral.

Afghanistan fell off the map for Americans once again, dropping out of the US security system. The Soviet withdrawal represented, according to Undersecretary of State Michael Armacost, the 'restoration of the strategic balance of the region'.<sup>128</sup> The USA wanted nothing to do with building a nation in Afghanistan, or, as Armacost said, 'the US has no blueprint for Afghanistan'.<sup>129</sup> Building Afghanistan would have been a costly and difficult process and Afghanistan remained a country of relative unimportance to the USA, or so it seemed. The country did not possess any of the resources or investment opportunities that demanded attention. It was only important when it seemed to be a launching pad for communist expansion. The successful nation building process in Germany and Japan that followed World War II were deemed vital—these were the industrial giants of Asia and Europe, two areas of the world strategically positioned on the global capitalist grid. Afghanistan possessed none of these vital qualities.

While the Americans celebrated their victory in 1989 with champagne, Afghanistan spiralled into the violent time that is now labelled the time of 'anarchy'. With a quarter of the population living in refugee camps, and the country in tattered ruins, the fighting dragged on. Even when the Soviet puppet Najibullah's government finally fell to the *mujihadeen* in April 1992, the factions continued to fight. Hekmatyar's group was particularly outraged that it was not in the prime position of power, and rained bombs on Kabul for the next four years, worsening the rubble of the capital and creating a new batch of refugees.<sup>130</sup> The chaotic mess worsened until the arrival on the scene of the Taliban (Pashtun for 'students').

Members of the Taliban, mostly young men who were war refugees living in the JUI *madrassas* of Pakistan where they had received theological indoctrination and military training, swept through Afghanistan with help from the Pakistani army. They promised the ruined country a restoration of order, and most Afghans were relieved, especially those who survived on the trade routes that the warring factions of the *mujihadeen* had pirated and that the Taliban now protected. But all was not well—the Taliban enforced a very strict version of Islam closely related to Saudi Wahhabism, and the female population became virtual political prisoners of the new regime, simply for being women. This virulent breed of Islam did not have historical routes in Afghanistan, rather it was cultivated during the nearly 20 years of *jihad* and by, among other things, American complicity.

The US government, well aware of the Taliban's reactionary programme, chose to support its rise to power by actively encouraging Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to back it. Senator Hank Brown, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, had this to say of the Taliban: 'The good part of what has happened is that one of the factions at last seems capable of developing a new government in Afghanistan'. The USA expected the Taliban to be like the Saudis—a local elite propped up by American aid and influence—while Western corporate powers would be allowed to develop their long coveted oil pipeline running from the oil-rich Central Asian Caspian Sea to the Indian Ocean, permitting American freighters to access this newly tapped bonanza.<sup>131</sup> This analysis helps explain why the Bush administration gifted \$44 million dollars to the Taliban—a government not formally recognised by the USA—in 2001, couched in the lingo of the so-called 'war on drugs'.

Of course, US policy shifted dramatically after the horrific events of 11 September. Now the Taliban was linked to Osama bin Laden, blamed for the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, and thus also deemed a terrorist organisation by the Bush administration. Things were about to get ugly for the Afghan population once again, as millions streamed towards the borders in an effort to avoid the foreseeable bombing. The USA disallowed foreign aid, most of which was in the form of food relief and was estimated to be the sole source of averting the starvation of over one million Afghan civilians. We can only guess what effect the results of this decision will have on the population.

As the Taliban was quickly removed from power by a combination of intense bombing by the world's sole superpower and on-the-ground anti-Taliban forces—most of whom were the Northern Alliance that was blamed for a good deal of the death and destruction during the time of 'anarchy'—Afghans were again made to suffer. Although the US mainstream media has carefully avoided close scrutiny, others have reported this suffering at the hands of the massive US bombing campaign. Despite Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's statement that 'no nation in human history has done more to avoid civilian casualties than the United States has in this conflict', the picture is not so rosy. Marc Herold, an American professor, published 'A dossier on civilian victims of United States' aerial bombing of Afghanistan: a comprehensive accounting', in which he carefully studied worldwide press reports and survivor testimony on civilian deaths that have resulted from the US bombings of Afghanistan. Herold estimates

the number of casualties in the first nine weeks of the war at 3767—already more than the number of deaths in the World Trade Center and Pentagon.<sup>132</sup>

Now US foreign policy is once again overreaching its original justification for bombing Afghanistan: the so-called ‘war on terrorism’. As the new Afghanistan government attempts to rebuild from another round of debilitating warfare, private interests are flocking to Afghanistan to further discussion on the proposed oil pipeline. And the people of Afghanistan are once again on the verge of falling off the map of Western policy and opinion makers alike. The outrage that developed after 11 September concerning the shocking treatment of women in Afghanistan is slowly subsiding. Afghan law appears resistant to dramatic change, as the new Justice Minister, Abdul Rahim Karimi, said the new government would continue to enforce the laws of the Taliban, but with less force. ‘For example, the Taliban used to hang the victim’s body in public for four days. We will only hang the body for a short time: say, fifteen minutes’.<sup>133</sup> The new government, dominated by the Northern Alliance, who have been accused of systematic rape during the time of ‘anarchy’, surely will not go out of its way to improve the lives of the female population. One Afghan woman stated: ‘How much better women will fare in Afghanistan remains an open question’.<sup>134</sup>

The persistent vilification of Osama bin Laden is further evidence that the USA is not concerned with the welfare of the people of Afghanistan. This policy has damaged international relief efforts; a process termed the ‘OBL factor’ by humanitarian aid officials. The USA has shown its unwillingness to commit to massive relief efforts until bin Laden is captured or killed. ‘Osama bin Laden hangs like a dark cloud over Afghanistan’, said Yusef Hasan, head of operations in South and Central Asia for the UN High Commission for refugees.<sup>135</sup> Neighbouring countries have used the ‘OBL factor’ to justify their policies of not accepting the huge numbers of refugees, newly created by the US bombing campaign. This violation of international law can only be enforced by the USA, which is unwilling to compromise its mission of capturing or killing bin Laden and thus unwilling to enforce any such law. The law is rendered meaningless and the refugees have no place to go.

This blatant disregard for the people of Afghanistan is nothing new. For basic security purposes—beyond the morality issue that US leaders will not stoop to discuss unless it supports their policy—this disregard has always been a big mistake. The *mujahidin* of the 1980s may have been cannon fodder for US interests, but their victory over the Soviets represented something far more to them. It was a morale boost that Muslims of the world had not experienced in quite some time. Afghanistan became a launching pad for *jihād* worldwide, and the USA, with its overreaching geopolitical goals, became the target. Too much attention to money, trade and oil, and not enough attention to the capabilities of a well trained and well armed fanatical religious group, made for bad policy. None of us is the safer for the US role in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan can only hope that international outrage will pressure the USA to take responsibility for the mess it has helped create in Afghanistan this time around, and that further crises can be averted.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947–2000: Disenchanted Allies*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001, p 262. Also: Charles G Cogan, ‘Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan since 1979,’ *World Policy Journal*, summer 1993, pp 73–82.
- <sup>2</sup> Both quotes are attributed to DCI William Casey: Kux, *Disenchanted Allies*, p 261, and Brigadier Mohammed Yousaf and Major Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan’s Untold Story*, chapter entitled ‘The Role of the CIA.’ Yousaf was the Pakistani ISI agent who coordinated the *mujihadeen* war, and later wrote this account of the war. The book proved elusive to locate, but the entire text can be read at [Afghanbooks.com](http://Afghanbooks.com).
- <sup>3</sup> Raymond L Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, The Brookings Institute, 1994, pp 6–8. Garthoff presents a sound explanation of context and perspective.
- <sup>4</sup> Armacost testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 23, 1988; National Security Archive, *Afghanistan, The Making of US Policy: 1973–1990*.
- <sup>5</sup> A M Gray, *Marines Corps Gazette*, May 1990.
- <sup>6</sup> United States Department of State, PPS 23, February 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*.
- <sup>7</sup> For a detailed analysis, see: Stan Luger, *Corporate Power, American Democracy, and the Automobile Industry*, South End Press, 2000.
- <sup>8</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*, Simon and Schuster, 2000, p 79.
- <sup>9</sup> Steve Galster, introductory essay, *Afghanistan: The Making of US Policy, 1973–1990*, National Security Archive.
- <sup>10</sup> For a thorough analysis of this during the Cold War, read Noam Chomsky’s *Deterring Democracy*, South End Press, 1992, ch. 2: ‘Cold War Fact and Fiction.’
- <sup>11</sup> Cold War International History Project, Bulletin 8/9, Introductory Essay by Odd Arne Westad, VI: ‘From Hesitation to Intervention: Soviet Decisions on Afghanistan, 1979.’
- <sup>12</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p 1036.
- <sup>13</sup> *La Nouvel Observateur* (France), January 15–21, 1998, interview.
- <sup>14</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp 1040–1067.
- <sup>15</sup> Steve Galster, introductory essay, *Afghanistan: The Making of US Policy, 1973–1990*, National Security Archive.
- <sup>16</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p 1045.
- <sup>17</sup> Steve Galster, introductory essay, *Afghanistan: The Making of US Policy, 1973–1990*, National Security Archive.
- <sup>18</sup> Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of Soviet Withdrawal*, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp 53–54.
- <sup>19</sup> Armacost testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 23, 1988; National Security Archive, *Afghanistan, The Making of US Policy: 1973–1990*.
- <sup>20</sup> Richard Cronin, ‘Afghanistan: Soviet Invasion and US Response’, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, 1982, National Security Archive.
- <sup>21</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, *Intelligence Commentary*, January 7, 1980; National Security Archive, *Afghanistan, The Making of US Policy: 1973–1990*.
- <sup>22</sup> Memorandum from the White House to Cabinet Members, ‘Persian Gulf Security Framework,’ June 3, 1980, National Security Archive.
- <sup>23</sup> Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of Soviet Withdrawal*, p 55.
- <sup>24</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p 1045.
- <sup>25</sup> Kurt Lohbeck, *Holy War, Unholy Victory: Eyewitness to the CIA’s Secret War in Afghanistan*, Regnery Gateway, 1993, p 52.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p 43.
- <sup>27</sup> Memorandum from the White House to Cabinet Members, ‘Persian Gulf Security Framework,’ June 3, 1980, National Security Archive.
- <sup>28</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*, Simon and Schuster, 2000, p 16.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>30</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p 1070.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>32</sup> Holly Sklar (ed.), *Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management*, South End Press, 1980.
- <sup>33</sup> David C Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*, Kumarian Press, 1995. The documentation concerning the Trilateral Commission is rich—it never classified any of its findings. The collective power of the Commission’s members is impressive: Jimmy Carter, George H W Bush, Bill Clinton,

- Alan Greenspan, Cyrus Vance, etc.
- <sup>34</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War*, Simon and Schuster, 2000, pp 80–82. For an in depth analysis of the work of the CPD, consult this book.
- <sup>35</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p 1074.
- <sup>36</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, p 91.
- <sup>37</sup> John E Ullmann, 'The Military–Industrial Firm: Private Enterprise Revised,' *Policy Analysis* (No. 29, November 9, 1983), The Cato Institute.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, p 243.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p 74.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Charles Krauthammer, 'The Reagan Doctrine,' *The New Republic*, February 17, 1986.
- <sup>43</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp 356–357, emphasis in the original.
- <sup>44</sup> George Kennan, Speech to the National War College, October 1947, as cited by Noam Chomsky, *Detering Democracy*, South End Press, 1992, ch 2: 'Cold War Fact and Fiction.'
- <sup>45</sup> Steve Galster, introductory essay, *Afghanistan: The Making of US Policy, 1973–1990*, National Security Archive.
- <sup>46</sup> Charles G Cogan, 'Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan since 1979,' *World Policy Journal*, summer 1993, pp 73–82.
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