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LESSONS OF HISTORY: COMPARISON OF THE SOVIET INTERVENTION TO THE ISAF MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

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**LESSONS OF HISTORY: COMPARISON OF THE SOVIET INTERVENTION
TO THE ISAF MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan has been in continuous turmoil since the Soviet invasion of 1979. It endured ten years of Soviet occupation, civil war, Taliban regime and since 2001 it has troops from United States and International Security Assistance Force operating to root out the insurgents in Afghanistan and help restore peace and stability in the country. The Soviet intervention and ISAF's intervention took place in different timeframe and had different circumstances but the fact that ISAF is still engaged in Afghanistan after six and a half years with no end in sight enables its comparison with the Soviet occupation. ISAF faces similar challenges in the military, security, diplomatic, political and economic fields as were faced by the Soviets. After comparing the two interventions, it can be said that although ISAF has been able to do a much better job than the Soviets so far but it has been unable to find a solution to Afghan problem. To ensure that it withdraws leaving behind a stable country, there has to be a comprehensive approach involving political, economic and regional aspects apart from the military aspects. There has to be a focus on provision of the basic necessities of life to the Afghan people so as to strengthen their belief in the government. There is also a need to carry out a process of dialogue between the local and regional players to ensure peace in Afghanistan instead of focusing only on the military option. If it is not done the success of the ISAF's mission will remain in doubt and in the meantime Afghanistan remains poor and backward with its people waiting for the deliverance promised to them by the international community.

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LESSONS OF HISTORY: COMPARISON OF THE SOVIET INTERVENTION TO THE ISAF MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan has been in the limelight since the Soviet invasion of 1979 and has been ruined by strife and civil war ever since. Its people have endured brutal communist and Taliban regimes, despotism of the warlords and have been a host to multinational forces since 2001, which have promised to bring in peace and stability to the country. It remains to be seen whether the latest intervention by the international community is able to put Afghanistan back on the road to progress and stability.

Afghanistan is located in southwest Asia at the junction of the Central and South Asia. It has been the source of numerous invasions being the cross roads to the fertile plains in the east. Over the centuries, wave after wave of invaders have descended from the mountains through the famous Khyber Pass to conquer the Indian sub-continent. Most famously, it was site of the ‘Great Game’ between Russia and British Empire during the nineteenth century in which both the empires jockeyed for a position in the country.¹

Afghanistan remained essentially “neutral” until the “Saur Revolution” on 27 April 1978², when the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) under the leadership of Nur Muhammad Taraki overthrew the government of the incumbent Prime Minister, Muhammad Daud, and closely allied itself with the Soviet Union.³ The people

¹Senzil Nawid, “The State, the Clergy, and British Imperial Policy in Afghanistan During the 19th and Early 20th Centuries,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, no. 4 (November 1997): 581-605; <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2008

²‘Saur’ means ‘Taurus’ (the second astrological sign in Zodiac) and is one of the lunar months of the Afghan calendar. Typically it is associated with the arrival of spring in the country. Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in International System* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), 105.

³David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of Afghan Jihad* (California: University of California Press, 2002), 27.

of Afghanistan refused to accept the new government and agitation started against the radical policies of the new 'communist' government. In the meantime, Taraki was overthrown in an internal party power struggle by Hafizullah Amin on 16 September 1979.⁴ The Soviet Union alarmed by the growing insurgency and deteriorating situation in Afghanistan invaded the country to prop up the fledgling communist regime. The Soviet invasion acted as a catalyst further inflaming the insurgency. 'Mujahideen' (Holy warriors) were actively aided and abetted by the West and were successful in forcing the Soviet withdrawal from the country in 1989. The communists managed to hold onto power until 1992, when the Mujahideen were finally able to capture Kabul. They were unable to form a representative national government, which led to a civil war giving rise to warlords and factions who ravaged the country side making life miserable for the common man. This allowed the rise of 'Taliban (Students)' militia in the city of Kandahar, which was composed mainly of students studying in religious *madrassahs* (schools) in Pakistan. They took advantage of the infighting amongst the various factions and starting in 1994 occupied 90% of the country until 2001 imposing their own brand of fundamentalist Islam.

They also provided refuge to Osama bin Laden and refused to expel him despite pressure from the US which blamed him for attacks on US embassies in East Africa in 1998 and bombing of USS Cole at Aden harbor in 2000.⁵ The matters were brought to a head by the events of 9/11 and despite extensive diplomatic efforts, the Taliban refused to hand over or expel bin Laden from the country. This led to the US military operation against Afghanistan dubbed as 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (OEF) in 2001, which

⁴*Ibid.*, 88.

⁵John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*. 3rd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 195, 218.

toppled the Taliban regime with the help of Northern Alliance (NA) and placed in power a transitional government headed by Hamid Karzai. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was formed on December 20, 2001 and a Kabul Multinational Brigade (KMNB) was deployed to maintain security in the capital.⁶ ISAF was later on taken over by NATO which deployed its forces alongside the US forces operating in Afghanistan as part of 'Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).' Canada was an active member of both the contingents and after deploying small numbers in 2002, it deployed some troops in Kandahar Province in 2005, a mission which continues until today.⁷

Although elections were held and a representative Afghan government again headed by Mr Karzai was formed in 2004, peace has eluded the country even after the passage of six-and-half years after the overthrow of the Taliban regime. Corrupt governance, weak Afghan security forces, growing narcotics trade and inability of the international community to come up with adequate funds and forces have been cited as several reasons for the resurgence of the Taliban.⁸ These are almost the same challenges which were faced by the communists once they were in power.

The mountainous terrain on Pak-Afghan border acts as the sanctuary for the Taliban just as it provided sanctuary to the Mujahideen two decades ago against the Soviets. Although the massive financial and material support provided to Afghan Mujahideen by the US and its other allies is missing but the Taliban are much better organized today than they were at Soviet times and have access to sophisticated weapons and technology which the earlier Mujahideen lacked. They are also using psychological

⁶Peter Pigot, *Canada in Afghanistan: The War so Far* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007), 84.

⁷*Ibid.*, 105.

⁸The word 'Taliban' has been used to simplify all the insurgent groups operating in the country. It is an accepted fact that other elements such as Gulbadeen Hekmatyar's forces, Al Qaeda elements and the criminal elements are operating in the country as well but for simplification only Taliban is being used.

warfare tools and methods in the form of internet and electronic media for propaganda purposes to project their message.

THESIS STATEMENT

It is said that history repeats itself. Afghanistan has proved this point again and again. Its rugged terrain and hardy fighters humbled two superpowers of their times, Britain and the Soviet Union and a third, the United States, along with the international community is mired in the country again. This paper aims to carry out the comparison between the Soviet intervention and ISAF's involvement in Afghanistan to draw pertinent lessons for ISAF forces operating in Afghanistan. The comparison will be made on the military and the security aspects, political and governance issues, opium problem, economy and a review of the regional situation being faced by Afghanistan today. The ISAF nations have immense economic, military and diplomatic prowess at their disposal and it remains to be seen whether they are able to turn around Afghanistan; a country which has almost no resources of its own and has been destroyed by decades of warfare. At present, the Taliban seem to be gaining in strength and are following the same age old tactics with which the Mujahideen tormented the Soviets. Unless ISAF learns its lessons from history, its mission may have the same fate as Soviet Union which tried and failed to control the country and had to withdraw in ignominy.

OUTLINE

The study will be divided into the following parts

Chapter 1 Afghanistan – Location and History.

Chapter 2 Soviet Invasion and Analysis.

- Chapter 3 Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF's involvement.
- Chapter 4 Comparison of Soviet Occupation and ISAF mission.
- Chapter 5 Conclusions/Recommendations.

CHAPTER 1

AFGHANISTAN – LOCATION AND HISTORY

LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY

Afghanistan is a small landlocked country (Refer Map 1.1) located at 33° 00' N and 65° 00' E in South West Asia having an area of 647,500 sq km, an area almost equal to the province of Alberta.⁹ It is bounded in the east and south east by Pakistan, west by Iran and has the Central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the northwest. It touches a small portion of Chinese territory as well in the remote north eastern region of Wakhan. Amu Darya demarcates the northern border between Afghanistan and Central Asian republics whereas Durand Line demarcates the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.¹⁰

Afghanistan's shape has been compared with a leaf with Wakhan corridor forming the stem. It can be divided into three major regions: the Central Highlands, the Northern Plains and the Southwestern Plateau.¹¹ The Hindukush Range roughly divides the country into the northern and southern halves and runs about 1200 km from northeast to southwest.¹² In the east, along the border with Pakistan is the Suleiman Range which effectively blocks the monsoon winds from the Indian Ocean accounting for the dry

⁹Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>; Internet; accessed 24 Jan 2008.

¹⁰Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Afghanistan. (2008)," <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-226120>; Internet; accessed 16 February 2008.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, ed. and trans. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 3.

climate in the country. The central highlands are characterized by high mountains and narrow valleys with some peaks rising above 21,000 feet. The northern plains are fertile, intensively cultivated and are densely populated. This region is also rich in mineral resources particularly natural gas. The southwestern plateau is a combination of high plateaus, semi deserts and deserts. The major rivers of the country are Kabul, Helmand, Amu Darya and Harirud.¹³



¹³Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Afghanistan ...”

Map 1.1: Map of Afghanistan¹⁴

Source: University of Texas Libraries, "Afghanistan Maps"

HISTORY

Afghanistan's geopolitical position has frequently attracted the interest of the foreign powers but this proud and independent nation has fiercely resisted the occupation efforts of all such powers.¹⁵ These included the Persians and the Mughals in the middle ages who tried to establish their rule on the country but failed to do so. Afghanistan was formed as an independent state for the first time in October 1747, when an intertribal assembly or 'Loya Jirga' in Kandahar was convened and Ahmed Shah Durrani was elected as sovereign of the country.¹⁶ Ahmed Shah expanded the Durrani Empire to include Punjab, Kashmir, Sind, Sirhind, and Baluchistan, Khurasan, Balkh and several other regions bordering on the south of Amu Darya.¹⁷ However, his successors could not control this vast empire after him and Afghanistan coalesced slowly and gradually into the shape it is in today. The Afghans, however, retained their tribal/family culture and the tribal lords were exempt from paying any taxes as they furnished the soldiers to the king in the time of war. This led to an increasing militarization and retention of the tribal character of the Afghan society.¹⁸

Upon expansion of Tsarist Russia in Central Asia, Britain was alarmed by the possibility of Russian advance into Afghanistan and its arrival on the gates of India. The

¹⁴University of Texas Libraries, "Afghanistan Maps," http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_rel_2003.jpg; Internet; accessed 25 February 2008.

¹⁵Neamotollah Nojumi, *The Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, And the Future of the Region* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 1.

¹⁶Nawid, "The State, the Clergy...", 582.

¹⁷The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 6.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 6.

British Army launched its first campaign in 1838 against Afghanistan which was initially successful and they were able to install their puppet King Shah Shuja to the throne. A popular uprising in January 1842 forced the British withdrawal from Afghanistan which ended in a total disaster as only one British doctor survived out of a contingent of 4,500 which had left Jalalabad for India.¹⁹ The second Anglo-Afghan War took place from 1878-90 and left Britain in control of the foreign affairs of Afghanistan as a result of Treaty of Gandamak in May 1879.²⁰ As per the treaty, the Afghan government agreed to cede the districts of Kurram, Pishin and Sibi to British administration. This was followed by the famous Durand Line agreement in 1893 under which the Pashtun areas were divided between the British and Afghan spheres of influence and the border was demarcated between the two states.²¹ The First World War saw the rise of Pan-Islamism in Afghanistan in support of the Ottoman Empire but Afghanistan remained neutral in the conflict. However, under intense pressure of the religious clergy, Amir Amanullah declared jihad against the British in 1919. This resulted in a month long inconclusive third Anglo-Afghan War. However, Afghanistan was able to obtain full independence from the British in 1919 including control of its foreign affairs. Afghanistan exerted its freedom of foreign relations promptly by signing a 'Treaty of Friendship' with the Bolshevik Russia on 28 February 1921. Afghanistan and Russia further signed an agreement on neutrality and mutual non-aggression on 24 June 1932 initially for 10

¹⁹Nawid, "The State, the Clergy...", 590.

²⁰The full text of the treaty can be read at Annex A. Khyber.org, "Treaty of Gandamak," <http://www.khyber.org/pashtohistory/treaties/gandamaktreaty.shtml>; Internet; accessed 12 Jan 2008.

²¹The full text of the treaty can be read at Annex B. Khyber.org, "Durand Line Agreement," <http://www.khyber.org/pashtohistory/treaties/durandagreement.shtml>; Internet; accessed 12 Jan 2008.

years. This treaty was renewable and was renewed in 1975 just before the Soviet invasion in 1979.²²

Afghanistan got its first constitution in 1921 from Amir Amanullah in which he introduced various administrative and constitutional reforms and allowed the establishment of coeducational institutions and the right of women to go unveiled. This created a rebellion from the conservative quarters and Amanullah had to abdicate his throne. A more conservative constitution was approved in 1931 by King Nadir Shah to appease the religious sentiments. King Zahir Shah ascended the throne in 1933 and continued to rule until 1973.

Once Britain made its intentions clear to leave the Indian sub-continent, the Afghan Government sent a note to British Government demanding that the Pushtuns should be allowed to join Afghanistan or Pakistan.²³ This was rejected by the British government as Afghan governments repeatedly over the years had accepted the Durand Line agreement.²⁴ However, the Afghan Government never fully relinquished its claim on the Pushtun areas of Pakistan and this left a lingering dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the issue of Pushtunistan, which continues until today.

Afghanistan kept its neutrality during the Second World War as well but started leaning towards the Soviet Union once Muhammad Daud Khan became Prime Minister in 1953. His hard stance on Pushtunistan damaged relations with Pakistan and he was forced to resign over the issue in 1963.²⁵ King Zahir Shah convened a Loya Jirga in 1964

²²The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 8.

²³S. M. M. Qureshi, "Pakhtunistan: The Frontier Dispute Between Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 39 no. 1/2, (Spring - Summer, 1966): 99-114. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 25 Dec 2007.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Afghanistan ..."

in which a new constitution was approved making Afghanistan a constitutional monarchy having a National Assembly of 216 members with one third elected by the people, one-third appointed by the King and one-third indirectly elected by the provincial assemblies.

Elections were held in 1965 and 1969 on non-party basis but these enabled sympathizers of the various parties like the PDPA and conservative Islamic parties to get elected to the National Assembly. The PDPA was formed in 1965 but lost its effectiveness greatly once the party split up in two factions, Khalq (People) and Parcham (Banner) in 1967. Lively debates were carried out in the National Assembly but the King refused to enact several key measures leading to stagnation in the political process. Muhammad Daud, sensing the political instability, overthrew Zahir Shah in a bloodless coup in 1973 and promulgated Afghanistan as a Republic and declared himself as Chairman of the Central Committee and Prime Minister of the country.²⁶

He tried to introduce various reforms in the country by making a new constitution and tried to move away from the dependent relationship on Soviet Union. The political tensions amongst the various parties continued to simmer in the background and there was a failed coup attempt by the Islamist parties in 1975. This alienated Daud from the Islamists and most of their leaders fled to Pakistan and established themselves there. These were welcomed by Pakistan because of its apprehensions over the Afghan government's stance on Pushtunistan. However, Daud made a serious effort to normalize relations with both Pakistan and Iran, and cultivate ties with the West specially the United States (US).²⁷ This caused alarm in Soviet Union and its protégé, PDPA led by

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Alam Payind, "Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, no. 1. (February 1989):107-128. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 25 Dec 2007.

Nur Muhammad Taraki in Afghanistan. They initially had high hopes from Daud's regime but as he distanced himself from them, it caused a growing sense of frustration in the communist camp. At the same time, Daud's regime became increasingly unpopular due to corruption, political assassinations and strong arm tactics by the Government. The leftist leaders were persecuted to ward off any threat to the government.²⁸ The PDPA was able to unite both of its factions, Khalq and Parcham at the coaxing of Soviet Union and launched a bloody coup against the Daud Government with the help of military on April 27, 1978. Daud and his entire family were murdered and the country was ushered into a new era hailed as 'Saur Revolution' by the PDPA.²⁹

²⁸*Ibid.*, 113 – 114.

²⁹Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Afghanistan ..."

CHAPTER 2

SOVIET INVASION AND ANALYSIS

SAUR REVOLUTION

After the revolution, the PDPA government openly allied itself with the Soviet Union and declared itself as the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) on 30 April 1978.³⁰ Initially the regime was a little cautious about its agenda but buoyed by the relative ease with which it had obtained power, it embarked upon a program of radical reform forgetting the culture, history and religion of Afghan people. By a number of decrees, the government introduced land reforms along with reforms for women and education.³¹ These reforms were considered as an affront to the tribal culture and Islamic customs and traditions. The pro-Soviet alignment of the government and the reforms introduced by it were not acceptable to ordinary people who rose en masse in revolt against the government. The first major incident was the uprising in the city of Herat on March 15, 1979 in which the complete 17 Division switched sides and joined the rebels. The government forces used brute force to suppress the rebellion resulting in deaths of more than 5,000 people.³²

The Soviet Union continuously supported the DRA through this tumultuous period. The Soviet leadership viewed Afghanistan as being too backwards and warned Taraki, General Secretary of PDPA and President of the revolutionary council and Prime Minister of the country,³³ to move slowly with the reform process as in their opinion

³⁰Rubin, *The Fragmentation of ...*, 105.

³¹Edwards, *Before Taliban...*, 66.

³²Nojumi, *The Rise of Taliban ...*, 52.

³³Rubin, *The Fragmentation of ...*, 111.

Afghanistan was not yet ready for the socialist reform process.³⁴ In a Politburo meeting on 17 March, Yuri Andropov remarked,

It is completely clear to us that Afghanistan is not ready at this time to resolve all the issues it faces through socialism. The economy is backward, the Islamic religion predominates, and nearly all of the rural population is illiterate. We know Lenin's teaching about a revolutionary situation. Whatever situation we are talking about in Afghanistan, it is not that type of situation.³⁵

However, Afghan leaders especially the Deputy Prime minister, Hafizullah Amin³⁶ were convinced that they had the necessary sense of self purpose to carry the reforms through. In an interview with a Pakistani journalist, Amin boasted that they were proud of not sharing the power with anyone and had the support of a much smaller segment of the population.³⁷

During the Herat uprising, Taraki and Hafizullah Amin repeatedly appealed to Soviet Union to intervene but it is apparent in the discussions of Soviet Politburo that the Soviet Union was not ready to commit ground forces to Afghanistan. It tried to convince Taraki to use his own military forces which could be provided material support by the Soviet Union.³⁸ The situation slowly turned from bad to worse for the DRA. In view of the repeated requests by the DRA, the Soviet Union despatched an airborne battalion to

³⁴David Gibbs, "Does the USSR Have a 'Grand Strategy'? Reinterpreting the Invasion of Afghanistan," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 24, no. 4. (December 1987): 365-379. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 24 Dec 2007.

³⁵The National Security Archive, The George Washington University, "Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, March 17, 1979," <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/r1.pdf>; Internet; accessed 16 February 2008.

³⁶Rubin, *The Fragmentation of ...*, 111.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 372.

³⁸ Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, "Meeting of Kosygin, Gromyko, Ustinov, and Ponomarev with Taraki in Moscow, 20 March 1979", http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034DBE7-96B6-175C-981ACBCBC6932105&sort=Collection&item=Soviet%20Invasion%20of%20Afghanistan , Internet; accessed; 17 Feb 2008.

Bagram on 7 July disguised as military specialists but did not despatch additional troops in spite of repeated requests by DRA.³⁹

Soviets desired that both the factions of PDPA should remain united and Amin should be removed from the power. They considered him to be radical and an obstacle to the Party unity. Taraki was too weak willed to remove Amin and the half hearted attempt made by him to kill Amin failed. Amin launched a coup himself and had Taraki arrested and killed while he proclaimed himself as the new President of Afghanistan.⁴⁰

SOVIET INVASION

Amin's coup was a major embarrassment for the Soviets. However, they had invested too much in the DRA to back out now and had no option but to support Amin as well. In a cable to the Soviet representatives in Kabul, Foreign minister Gromyko advised all concerned to cooperate with the Amin government but to avoid reprisals against the Taraki supporters thereby not becoming a party to the domestic politics of Afghanistan.⁴¹ Amin tried to adopt a more independent policy which was unacceptable to the Soviet leadership. They accused him of cooperating with the Americans and having links with the West. In a 29 October report to Politburo, it was emphasized that Amin was trying to follow a "balanced policy" which was very pleasing to the US.⁴² On 1 December, KGB

³⁹The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 10.

⁴⁰Edwards, *Before Taliban...*, 88.

⁴¹Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, "Cable from Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko to Soviet Representatives in Kabul," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034DD00-96B6-175C-9F20466DD1150ABA&sort=Collection&item=Soviet%20Invasion%20of%20Afghanistan Internet: accessed 17 Feb 2008.

⁴²Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, "Gromyko-Andropov-Ustinov-Ponomarev Report to CPSU CC," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034DDCB

Chairman, Yuri Andropov in a personal memorandum to General Secretary Brezhnev proposed that in view of Amin's lack of credibility, he should be removed and replaced with other leaders like Babrak Karmal and Asadullah Sarwari. He also proposed that although two battalions were stationed in Afghanistan, additional forces should be moved along the border.⁴³ On 12 Dec 1979, the decree was issued by the Politburo authorizing the introduction of forces in Afghanistan.⁴⁴

By Directive No 312/12/001 of 24 December 1979 signed by Defense Minister Ustinov and Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Ogarkov, a limited contingent of Soviet military forces was approved for Afghanistan. Finally, on 25 December 1979, Soviet airborne and ground forces invaded Afghanistan (Ref Map 2.1).⁴⁵ Forces loyal to Amin were quickly overcome and Babrak Karmal was proclaimed as the new President of Afghanistan.⁴⁶ All organized resistance in the cities against the Soviets was put down by 28 December by which time the Soviets were firmly in control of the major cities of the country, but their hold on the country side remained tenuous.

[-96B6-175C-9F7830234C3DDE69&sort=Collection&item=Soviet%20Invasion%20of%20Afghanistan;](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034DB5A-96B6-175C-9D886C24443BD2D4&sort=Collection&item=Soviet%20Invasion%20of%20Afghanistan;)
Internet: accessed; 17 Feb 2008.

⁴³Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, "Personal memorandum Andropov to Brezhnev," http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034DB5A-96B6-175C-9D886C24443BD2D4&sort=Collection&item=Soviet%20Invasion%20of%20Afghanistan;
Internet: accessed; 17 Feb 2008.

⁴⁴The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 11.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁶Payind, "Soviet-Afghan Relations ...," 121.



Map 2.1: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan⁴⁷

Source: The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet Afghan War...*, 16.

The Soviet invasion was condemned all over the world. The local Afghan resistance was rejuvenated as once again the Afghans had a foreign and ‘infidel’ invader to fight. The response was so swift that within a month Soviet soldiers were engaged in suppressing the resistance by ‘Mujahideen’ or ‘holy warriors.’⁴⁸ The resultant fighting between the Soviets and Mujahideen spanned almost a decade, devastated the countryside and forced over 4 million people to flee as refugees to Pakistan and Iran.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ This map is available in The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet Afghan War ...*, 16. The exact image has been downloaded in electronic format from Wikimedia Commons, “Atlas of Afghanistan” http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Afghanistan; Internet; accessed 20 March 2008.

⁴⁸“Mujahideen” were a loose collection of various tribal, religious, ethnic factions who got together to fight against the Soviets. Initially each tribe kept fighting in its areas and there was much less central cohesion. With the passage of time they coalesced to form several parties which were based in Pakistan and directed the operations against the Soviet forces. There were seven fundamentalist parties and three moderate parties based in Peshawar.

⁴⁹ Payind, “Soviet-Afghan Relations ...,” 122.

Apart from the reaction in Afghanistan, the Soviet invasion greatly affected the policy making in Islamabad and Washington where Pakistan was considered to be the next target of the Soviet imperialism. Washington was initially hesitant of supporting the Mujahideen as it was unclear whether the rag tag bunch of armed Mujahideen had any chance of success against a superpower. However, due to limited opportunities available to bleed the Soviets at that time and to get back at the Soviets for Vietnam, President Carter authorized non-lethal support to Mujahideen on 3 July 1979.⁵⁰ As the insurgency gained in strength, Carter administration offered \$400 million in aid to Pakistan to encourage it to support the Mujahideen which was termed by President Zia as “peanuts.”⁵¹ The US revised its aid package and agreed to provide \$3.2 billion aid to Pakistan for a period of six years. Later on, this package was enhanced to \$1.74 billion in military aid and \$2.28 billion in economic aid in 1987 making Pakistan the third largest recipient of foreign aid from US.⁵² President Zia and the Director General Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), General Akhtar Abdul Rehman coordinated the Afghan Jihad with the active support of US for over a decade which kept the Soviets bogged down in Afghanistan by attacking the “bear” with a policy of “a thousand cuts.” They avoided a direct Soviet confrontation by ensuring that “the water did not get too hot” which might give the Soviets an excuse to attack Pakistan.⁵³ This massive struggle against the Soviets culminated in 1989 with the withdrawal of the last Soviet soldier from Afghanistan.

⁵⁰Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 46.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 62.

⁵²Marvin G. Weinbaum, “Pakistan and Afghanistan: The Strategic Relationship,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 6. (June 1991): 496-511. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 24 Dec 2007.

⁵³Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992), 26.

ANALYSIS OF SOVIET OCCUPATION

The story of Afghan resistance is long and brutal with accounts of heroism and greed of the middlemen. In this paper, however, the focus will only be on analysis of the Soviet occupation to determine how a superpower fought and lost. Some of the factors which will be discussed during this section will be: military, security, diplomatic, governance, political, economic and the drug culture.

Military

It is a well established fact that the Soviets could not defeat Mujahideen in the battlefield in spite of their tactical and technical prowess. At the peak of its strength, the Soviet Army employed 120,000 military personnel with 74,500 combat personnel to quell the insurgency in Afghanistan.⁵⁴ A total of 620,000 Soviet soldiers served in Afghanistan out of which 525,000 were from the Army, 90,000 from border troops and KGB sub units whereas 5,000 were from MVD (Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs).⁵⁵ An approximate strength of Soviet forces during various times over the course of conflict is shown in Table 2.1.

⁵⁴The National Security Archive, The George Washington University, "The Cost of Soviet Intervention," available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/us8.pdf>; Internet; accessed 18 February 2008

⁵⁵G.F. Kiroshchev, *et al*, *Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century* (London; Churchill Books, 1997), 286.

Table 2.1: Soviet Strength through the Years⁵⁶

Year	Soviet Strength (Personnel)	Remarks
1979	50,000	108 Motorized Rifle Division 103 Guards Air Division 5 Motorized Rifle Division 1 x Separate Motorized Rifle Regiment
1980-1985	81,800	201 Motorized Rifle Division 2 x Separate Motorized Rifle Regiments
April 1985-April 1986	108,800	4 x Rifle Divisions 5 x Separate Brigades 4 x Separate Regiments 6 x Separate Battalions
1986 (second Half)	90,000(approx)	Withdrawal of 6 x Regiments (including 2 x Rifle, 1x Tank and 3 x Air Defence)
15 May to 16 August 1988	90,000(approx) to 50,000	Withdrawal of half of the force
15 November to 15 February 1989	50,000 to Nil	Withdrawal complete

Source: The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War ...*, 15-29.

Ratio of Combat Forces

The Soviet Union, in addition to its own forces, had the support of the DRA forces which were conducting operations even before their arrival and numbered an average of 40,000 during the Soviet occupation. The total Mujahideen were estimated to be between 90,000 and 120,000 but out of these the number of active Mujahideen was much smaller and their figure was considered to be between 20,000 to 30,000 at various times. Most of the Mujahideen fought for some time and then looked after their families and rejoined the fight again after a period of inactivity thereby making it harder for the Soviets to control the insurgency.

⁵⁶This data has been taken from the book written by the Russian General Staff. The other open sources like Military Balance place the Soviet strength much higher.

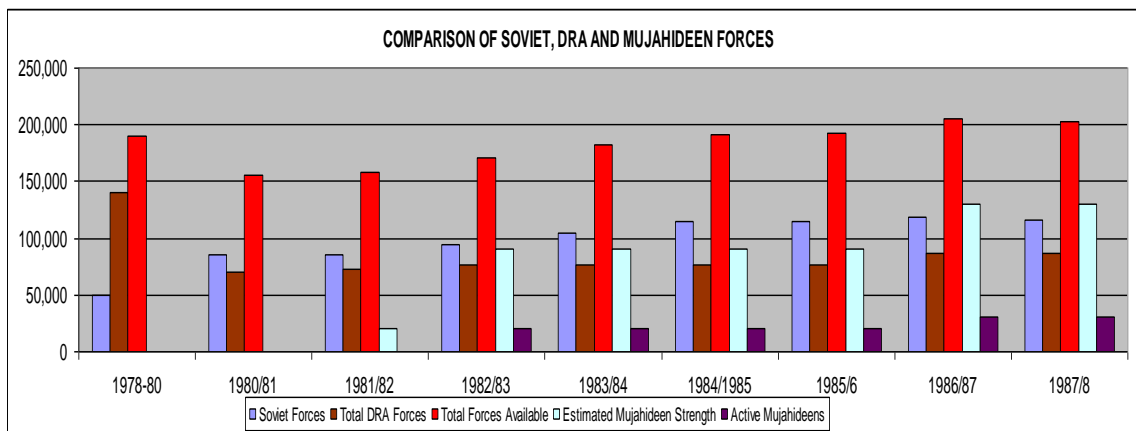


Figure 2.1: Chart showing the Comparison between Mujahideen and Combined forces of DRA/ Soviets⁵⁷

Source: Military Balance, 1978 – 1989.

Employment of Limited Forces

The Soviets had a vast army at their disposal. However, they chose to field a limited number of forces and even named it as “Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces (LCOSF).”⁵⁸ It is estimated by western scholars that a combined force of 400,000 to 500,000 was minimum required to ensure a conventional victory in Afghanistan.⁵⁹ The Soviet leadership never agreed to that and especially Yuri Andropov, once he was Secretary General of the Party, focused on keeping the number of Soviet forces down in order to reduce the casualties of the Red Army.⁶⁰ His replacement, Chernenko increased the number of soldiers serving in Afghanistan but the Soviet strength was never sufficient to meet the requirement. This created a permanent handicap for the commanders on ground that they were never able to have sufficient forces on ground to the level they may have desired.

⁵⁷This data has been collated from Military Balance, 1978 – 1989.

⁵⁸The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War ...*, 1.

⁵⁹ Rubin, *The Fragmentation ...*, 142.

⁶⁰Cordovez, Diego and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford university Press, 1995), 147.

Failure to Utilise Full Combat Strength

The full combat strength could never be exploited by the Soviets as repeated attacks by the Mujahideen at various targets all over the country ensured that most of these individuals were appointed on various security duties throughout Afghanistan to protect garrisons, bases and lines of communications (LOC). Thus at any one time a limited number of troops were available for actual ground combat against the Mujahideen. Table 2.2 highlights that even at the peak of its strength; the Soviet Army had only 30% of its total strength available for combat actions against the Mujahideen.⁶¹

Table 2.2: 40th Army Statistics

Description	Soviet Forces		
	1980/81	1988	15 Oct 1988
Total Personnel (000)	-	100.3	50.1
HQ Personnel	-	3.6	2.4
Personnel in Combat Units	-	70.7	29.2
Logistics and Maintenance Personnel	-	14.3	18.5
Total Battalions	73	93	56
Securing Government vital areas	11	40	29
Securing LOCs	20	15	15
Reinforcing vital areas and LOCs	34	9	-
Convoy Escort	-	3	2
Securing Industrial Areas	-	5	2
Available for Combat	8	30	5
Percentage Available for Combat	11%	30%	9%

Source: The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 317 - 322.

Use of Cold War Tactics

The Soviet forces operated in the typical Cold War high intensity conflict scenario. There was a focus on carrying out great sweeps in the Mujahideen controlled territory. These forces were mostly road bound and relied on massive air and ground

⁶¹Data collated from The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 317 - 322.

firepower available to them to create effects on ground. The Soviets employed a multitude of artillery weapon systems from mortars and howitzers to multiple rocket launchers and helicopter gunship to provide fire support to their forces.⁶² The indiscriminate use of this massive firepower caused innumerable civilian casualties and was also not very effective against the Mujahideen in the rugged mountainous terrain. Whatever the military advantage gained was mostly lost due to the new insurgents created by the civilian casualties in the process. The Soviets lost air superiority due to the introduction of anti-aircraft missiles and specially the ‘Stinger’ in 1986 on the battlefield.⁶³ This forced them to curtail the use of airpower in operations and robbed them of the biggest advantage which they had over the enemy.

Morale and Equipment

The Soviet forces consisted mostly of conscripts who were paid very poorly and lived in very harsh conditions in Afghanistan. The Soviets did not have very good personal equipment available to them. Although they had access to the latest weapons like Armoured Personnel Carriers, fighter bombers and helicopter gunship they were severely handicapped by the inability of good Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) resources. Moreover, the bullet proof jackets provided to the Soviet troops were neither sufficient in number nor they provided full protection to them.⁶⁴

⁶²*Ibid.*, 168-169.

⁶³Alan J. Kuperman, “The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, no. 2 (Summer 1999) 219-263. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 25 Dec 2007.

⁶⁴The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 290.

Casualties

The Soviets had to face a huge number of casualties during their decade long campaign. The casualties were initially light in 1979 but witnessed a sharp spike from 1980 onwards as the Soviets increased the intensity of their operations (Refer Figure 2.2). In spite of the authoritative regime of Kremlin, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the casualties being incurred by the Soviet Army. This became one of the main reasons of Soviet withdrawal because Gorbachev on becoming Secretary General was of the view that were unlikely to get the victory if they continued like this and the number of dead and wounded will just keep climbing. The detail of Soviet casualties is shown below.

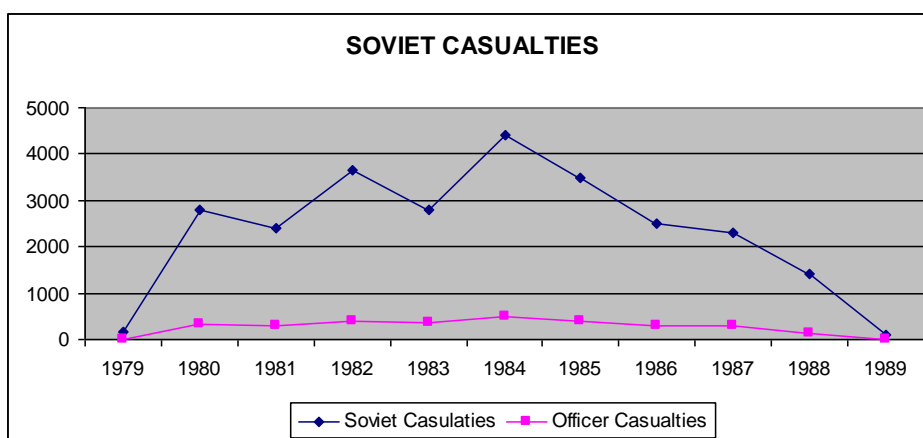


Figure 2.2: Chart showing the Soviet Casualties over the years.⁶⁵

Source: The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War...*, 44.

⁶⁵This chart is taken from the book compiled by the Soviet General Staff and the number of casualties is almost double than the estimates quoted in Kiroshchev's book quoted above. This chart helps however in understanding of what was the distribution of these casualties spread over the years.

Employment of DRA Forces

The DRA forces were an important component of the Soviet forces' campaign against the insurgency. Afghanistan had a well trained force of about 110,000 before the Saur Revolution.⁶⁶ However, just after the revolution, the armed forces were weakened by the great desertion rates and the inability of the government to find new recruits for it. There was a 60% decline in the DRA forces strength during 1981-82 (Ref Figure 2.3). The conscription was carried out but very few recruits were available in the rural areas and most of these were collected from urban areas after applying coercive tactics. The DRA lowered the conscription age and increased the length of the service required to be performed by the draftees but these measures failed to fill the huge gap existing between the demand and supply.⁶⁷ There was a slight increase after the Soviet withdrawal and the DRA forces reached strength of 58,000 before the regime finally fell in April 1992.⁶⁸

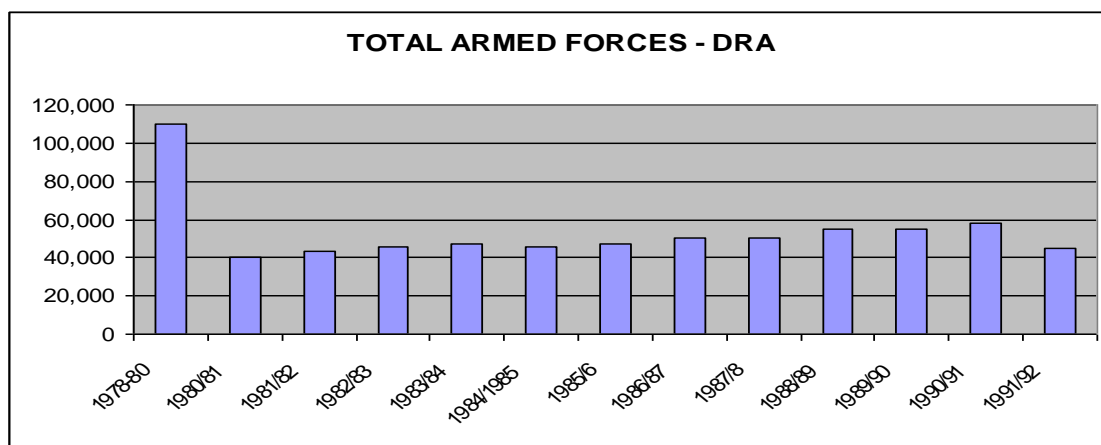


Figure 2.3: DRA Armed Forces over the years

Source: Military Balance 1978 – 1994.

⁶⁶The International Institute For Strategic Studies, “Military Balance – 1978-80”

⁶⁷ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan...*, 132.

⁶⁸The data has been collated from Military Balance from 1978 - 1992.

Improved Capability of Afghan Forces

Although there was a problem of finding more recruits, Soviet aid ensured that the DRA forces were equipped with the latest equipment and the number of tanks, APCs, aircraft and helicopter gunship in their use greatly increased. In 1989, Afghan forces had 800 tanks, 200 artillery pieces, 400 APCs, 253 cbt ac and 90 attack helicopters to counter the Mujahideen. This indicates a qualitative shift in the Afghan forces laying more emphasis on mechanized means.⁶⁹ This helped the DRA forces to supply the besieged garrisons and deny the freedom of movement to Mujahideen even after the Soviet withdrawal.

Reconciliation Policy

After Najibullah took over in summer of 1986, he started a policy of national reconciliation and Soviet and Afghan forces declared a unilateral ceasefire at the end of 1986. He also started forming tribal militias by offering 3000 Afghanis (US\$200) per month per man as well as increasing the Afghan secret police, *Khidamat-i-Ittila'at-I Dawalati* (KhAD)⁷⁰ along with the 'Sarandoy' troops.⁷¹ These forces took active part in the actions against the Mujahideen. However, these measures lasted for only the next few years as the authority of the DRA regime dwindled, its forces slowly and gradually

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰Rubin, *The Fragmentation of ...*, 114.

⁷¹'Sarandoy' was initially the police elements. Later on they expanded to form a quite heavy para military militia. Charles Dunbar, "Afghanistan in 1986: The Balance Endures," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, no. 2, A Survey of Asia in 1986: Part II. (February 1987): 127-142. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 26 Dec 2007.

deteriorated and were scattered with many joining the Mujahideen ranks. A break down of the paramilitary forces is shown in Figure 2.4.

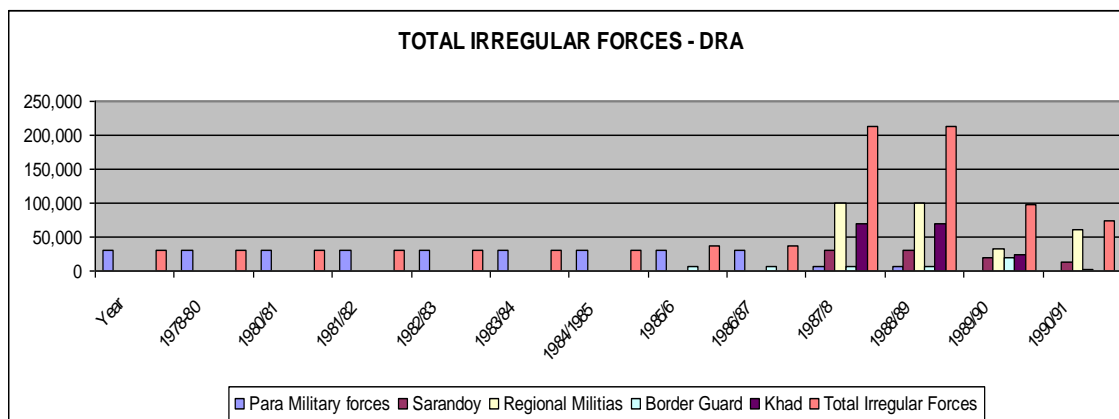


Figure 2.4: Chart showing the Distribution of DRA Irregular Forces

Source: Military Balance 1978 – 1992.

Dependence on Soviet Military Aid

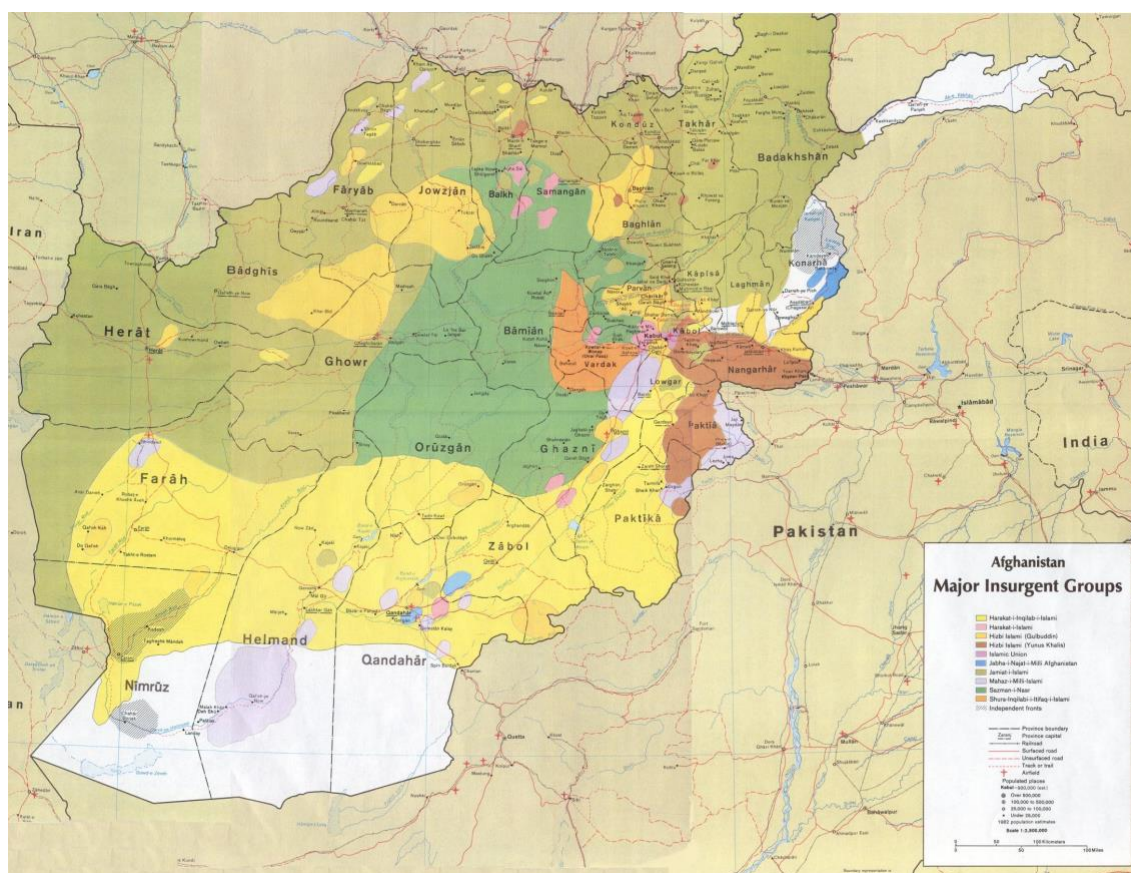
The DRA's military effort was dealt a severe blow by the agreement between US and Soviet Union where both the superpowers pledged to stop aid to both the sides by 1 January 1992.⁷² However, the Soviets left behind \$1 billion worth of equipment which helped the regime to continue fighting. The regime was able to keep Mujahideen at bay until 1992 when the aid cutoff by Soviet Government curtailed the government's ability to pay off the tribal militias and the local commanders which led to the fall of government in Kabul as they switched sides to Mujahideen Commanders.

Security

The Soviets were plagued with this phenomenon throughout the course of War. Although they managed to control the cities but the rural areas were controlled by the

⁷²Coll, *Ghost Wars*:..., 232.

Mujahideen. The Soviet forces did not have freedom of maneuver in the country side. They relied on extensive convoy and base protection measures to safeguard against any Mujahideen attacks. The Soviets deployed their forces in a concentric ring from Mazar-e-Sharif, to Kabul, Kandahar and Herat (Ref Map 2.1). The Soviet convoys moved along this ring from both western and northern directions to support the forces in the field. 90% of the Soviet bases were based on this main road with very few bases outside that ring. In contrast, the Mujahideen operated all over the country and the areas controlled by the different Mujahideen groups during the Afghan war are shown in Map 2.2.



Map 2.2: Areas controlled by Mujahideen Groups during the Soviet – Afghan War.⁷³

Source: Globalsecurity.org, “Afghanistan Major Insurgent Groups.”

⁷³Globalsecurity.org, “Afghanistan Major Insurgent Groups,”

http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/images/afghan_resistance_groups_moz1.jpg;
Internet; accessed 26 Feb 2008.

Use of Secret Police/Militias

The DRA relied on secret police KhAD, tribal militias and paramilitary forces to provide security in the country side. The Soviet and DRA forces provided external security in the form of multiple rings of posts which stretched right until the country side. These rings were established around Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif and included the critical infrastructure as well. The internal security was provided by KhAD which imposed its reign of terror in the urban areas. As per one estimate in 1990, the KhAD had arrested 150,000 people only from Kabul City whereas the number of people arrested from other areas can not be ascertained.⁷⁴ In January 1986, once Najibullah took over, he elevated KhAD to a full fledged ministry and renamed it as Ministry of State Security (*Wizarat-i Amaniyyat-i Dawlati*) or WAD.⁷⁵

The DRA Government also raised tribal militias which helped it to maintain security alongside WAD. This helped improve the situation to some extent but could not give the government forces control over the country side especially in the eastern half. There was always the probability of these militias defecting to the Mujahideen as often happened during the campaign.⁷⁶

Lack of Protection to Civil Population/Refugees

Another element related to the security was the inability of the government to ensure protection of the civil population during the various sweeps carried out by the Government and Soviet forces. The Soviets followed a “scorched earth” policy of “rubbelization” and “migratory genocide” to deny all form of support to the

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 137.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 133.

⁷⁶Dunbar, “Afghanistan in 1986 ...,”

Mujahideen.⁷⁷ This did not cause much difficulty for the Mujahideen but the lack of physical security prompted many people especially those living in the Mujahideen controlled areas to abandon their homes and migrate to either outside Afghanistan or to the cities inside the country. During the decade long war, the Soviet forces killed nearly a million Afghans out of a population of 15-17 million, pushed over 5 million into the neighboring countries and displaced 2-3 million people inside the country.⁷⁸ Figure 2.5 shows the distribution of refugees within Pakistan and Iran, which were the major recipients of the Afghan refugees.

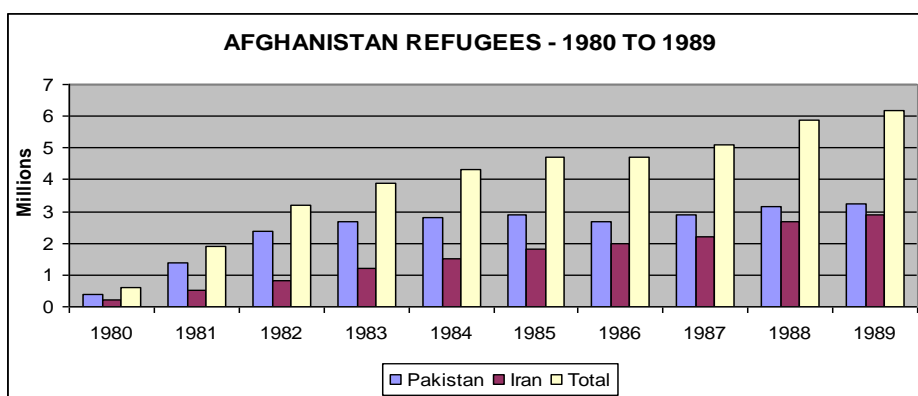


Figure 2.5: Chart showing the Distribution of Refugees in Pakistan and Iran⁷⁹

Source: ReliefWeb, "Afghan Refugee Population."

Diplomatic

The Soviet Union's intervention was opposed vehemently by the West and the Islamic world. Initially, there was a perception among western capitals that the Soviets would be able to take over Afghanistan in the same fashion as they had taken over

⁷⁷Louis Dupree, "Afghanistan in 1982: Still no Solution," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, no. 2, A Survey of Asia in 1982: Part II. (February 1983): 133-142. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 24 Dec 2007.

⁷⁸Rubin, *The Fragmentation of ...*, 7.

⁷⁹ReliefWeb, "Afghan Refugee Population," <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/AllDocsByUNID/81f3c45318379fABC1256acb0039b878>; Internet; accessed 25 February 2008.

Hungary and Czechoslovakia. However, as the resistance continued to bleed Soviet forces, there was a growing realization that Afghanistan was not going to be a cake walk for them. This gave a fresh impetus to the diplomatic support for the Mujahideen.

Pakistan was the main thorn in the side of Soviet Union but in spite of all the efforts it could not isolate Pakistan diplomatically from the international community due to the strong US support.⁸⁰ Pakistan government also felt threatened by the presence of Soviet forces closely allied with India right across its western border which raised the specter of having hostile forces both on its eastern and western borders thereby increasing its willingness to be used against the Soviet forces.⁸¹ This allowed the resistance to regroup, refresh and rearm from the sanctuaries inside Pakistan.

Soviet Diplomatic Efforts

The Soviets tried at various times to resolve the issue diplomatically. Yuri Andropov made concerted efforts to resolve the Afghan imbroglio in early 1983 and there were bright prospects of a peace deal on Afghanistan under the auspices of UN involving Pakistan in early 1983. However, due to his death and various other reasons, this could not be accomplished and the issue continued to linger on till the Geneva Accord in 1988 paving the way for withdrawal of Soviet Forces.⁸²

Pushtunistan Issue

Instead of trying to improve relations with Pakistan and isolate the resistance movement, the DRA tried to inflame the issue of Pushtunistan further deteriorating the

⁸⁰Weinbaum, "Pakistan and Afghanistan...,"

⁸¹Weinbaum, "Pakistan and Afghanistan...,"

⁸²Cordovez, Diego and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan...*, 125-143.

relations. Initially, Taraki in a speech on 9 May expressed his desire for “understanding and peaceful talks,” with Pakistan over the Pushtunistan issue.⁸³ However, Karmal and Najibullah inflamed the issue to the dislike of Pakistan. Karmal in one of his initial statements after taking over power called for elimination of all differences with Pakistan and at the same time demanded that Pakistan’s Baloch and ethnic Pushtun tribes should be given the right of self determination.⁸⁴ This theme was continuously followed throughout the DRA tenure in Kabul.

International Legitimacy of DRA Government

However, the DRA was able to successfully project itself as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and except Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia no country broke off relations with Afghan government. Similarly except the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) which suspended Afghanistan’s membership, UN and other international organizations continued to work with the DRA.⁸⁵

Mujahideen’s Support

It was a major victory for the DRA but at the same time, Mujahideen were provided increasing support from the international community. The covert aid by the end of war was coming from a number of nations including US, China, Saudi Arabia, Gulf Emirates and Egypt apart from various global charities and even Israel.⁸⁶ It is estimated that about \$6 – 12 billion was provided to Afghan Mujahideen as combined US, Saudi

⁸³Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 36.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 120.

⁸⁵Dunbar, “Afghanistan in 1986 ...,”

⁸⁶Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap ...*, 83.

and Chinese aid.⁸⁷ Out of this approximately \$4.225 billion was provided by the CIA and Saudi Government as per the distribution shown in Figure 2.6. It becomes obvious that by 1990, the US share had started falling as it was perceived that the US had achieved its strategic goal of pushing the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan and there was no need of further engagement in Afghanistan.

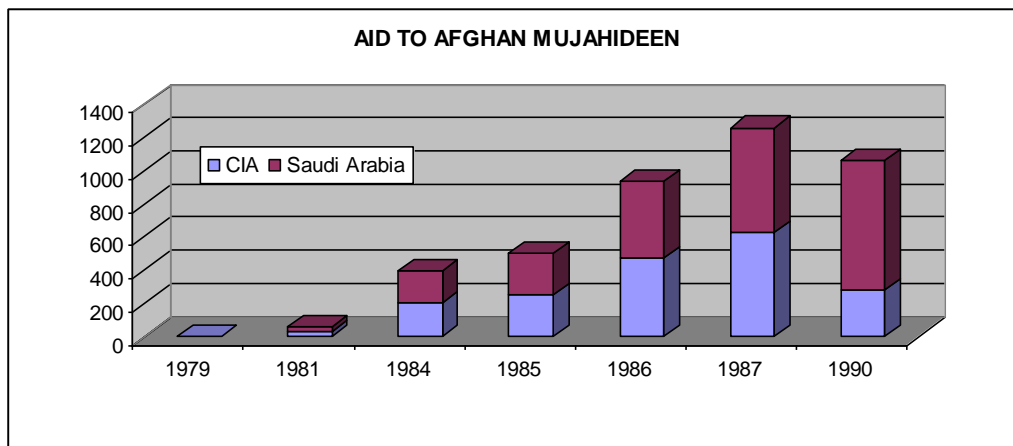


Figure 2.6: Chart showing the Aid Provided by US and Saudi Arabia⁸⁸

Source: Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*

Governance

The biggest problem facing the Soviets was to legitimize the PDPA government in eyes of the people. The PDPA tried to base its government on the communist principles which were considered to be in direct conflict with the tenets of Islam. The Afghans as a whole were not ready to accept a government which they considered to be controlled by infidel forces and did not accept Islamic principles as a fundamental tenet for governance of the country.

⁸⁷Coll, *Ghost Wars:...*, 238.

⁸⁸Compiled from data mentioned in Coll, *Ghost Wars:...*

Moreover, the land and education reforms introduced by it were considered to be against the tribal customs and traditions. Although the intention of the government was to overall improve the good of people but due to its insensitivity it could not implement its reforms. At the end, the government abandoned its most radical policies and tried to revert to the basics of but it was too little too late and could not halt the slide of the popularity of government rule.

The Government exercised control over the cities whereas its control over the country side was minimal (Ref Map 2.2). As a result, the Government failed to provide basic facilities like health, education, clean drinking water etc to the people of the country. Apart from the security situation, this was also one of the main reasons of the migration of people as the state failed to deliver on the basic necessities of life to its citizens. This eroded the writ of government especially in the rural areas as ordinary people felt that they had nothing to gain by supporting a government which could not look after them at all.

Political

The PDPA was having a very small base of its workers and party members and was unable to eliminate factionalism within the party⁸⁹ which were continuously involved in infighting amongst themselves. The repeated purges of the party to get rid of the opposing faction members and the great number of casualties in the fight against Mujahideen greatly reduced its strength in the Armed forces, which was the main source of its strength. To increase its support base and have more people with it, the party had a

⁸⁹Tad Daley, "Afghanistan and Gorbachev's Global Foreign Policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, no. 5. (May, 1989): 496-513. <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 25 Dec 2007.

youth wing – the Democratic Youth Organisation of Afghanistan (DYOA) and it was designed on similar lines as the Soviet Komosol which provided it with additional strength.⁹⁰

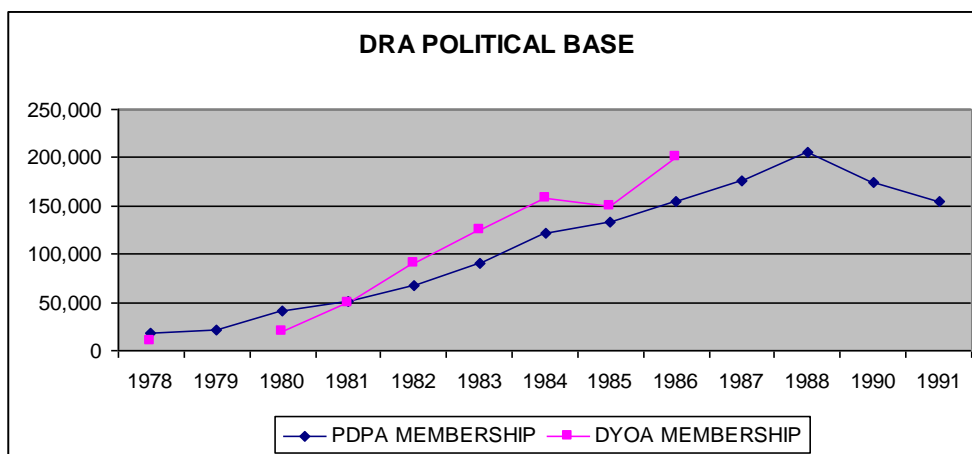


Figure 2.7: Chart showing the claimed number of party members of the DRA regime.⁹¹

Source: Guistozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan: 1978-1992*, 252-253.

Lack of Strong Political Base

The graph in Figure 2.7 shows the number of party members. These numbers are from the official Afghan sources but even they acknowledged that the number of true ideologues was not really that high. A Pakistani intelligence estimate put that number at 15,000 in 1984 -85 which is several times smaller than that claimed by the DRA.⁹² It was generally assumed that the hard core members constituted about “15% to 25% of the total ... 30% and 40% was made of opportunists and ‘dead souls,’ and between 35% and 45% of partially committed people.”⁹³

⁹⁰ Minkov and Gregory Smolyneec, *3-D Soviet Style...*, 13.

⁹¹ Antonio Guistozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan: 1978-1992*, (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 252-253.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 35.

National Reconciliation

The DRA initially was not willing to share power with any one and adopted a hard stance towards the opposition. There was no effort to make a broad based government to resolve the problems facing the county. The emphasis was on brute force to subdue the opposition. During the Najeebullah's 'National Reconciliation' campaign, it was decided to hold talks with the opposition. The Najeebullah government bribed many tribal elders and Mujahideen commanders in his reconciliation campaign. This helped the government to survive for some time once the Soviet forces left the country.

Dependence on Soviet Union

The DRA Government was wholly dependent on the Soviet support which changed the leaders at its will. All the important decisions were made either by the Soviets themselves or it was ensured that they were in line with the desires of the Soviet high command.⁹⁴ This created resentment amongst the population who had always considered foreign occupation as an anathema. Therefore, even once the government tried to win popular support; it could not get much encouragement from the local population.

Economic Factors

Afghanistan had a limited infrastructure and economic base. It had no significant industrial capacity and the population relied mainly on agriculture for subsistence. The land reforms of the DRA were aimed at improving the state of landless peasants but this backfired due to the traditional tribal influence. Moreover, the fighting destroyed crops,

⁹⁴Rubin, *The Fragmentation of ...*, 125.

and irrigation infrastructure thereby uprooting millions of people from their homes. The Soviets also depopulated large segments of the countryside to destroy the infrastructure support being provided to the Mujahideen.⁹⁵ These people migrated to other countries or cities where they were forced to live in extremely poor and squalid conditions.

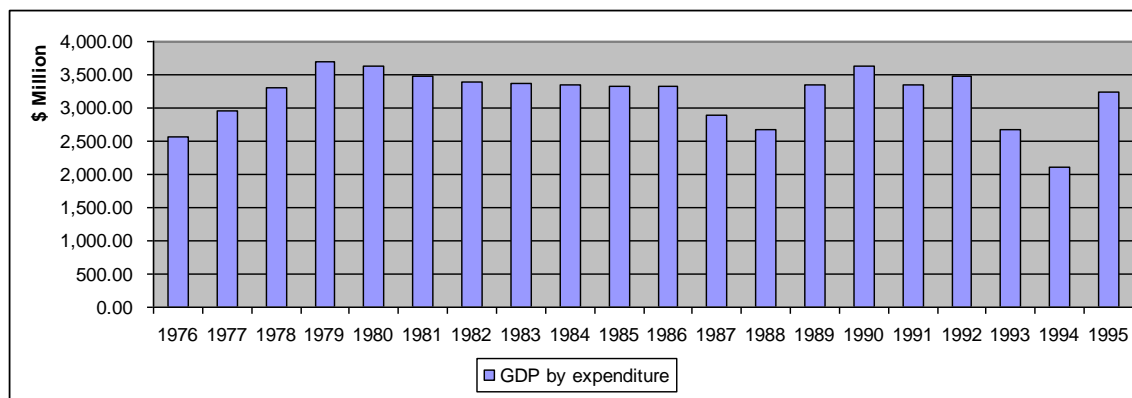


Figure 2.8: Chart showing the State of Afghan Economy from 1976 to 1995⁹⁶

Source: United Nations Statistics

If one looks at the condition of Afghan economy (Refer Figure 2.8), the Afghan economy was improving before the 1978 revolution. However, soon after the Soviets took over due to the adverse security situation and lack of any major industrial activity the economy went in a down ward spiral hitting rock bottom in 1988. After 1988, Soviets provided massive aid to Afghan government which kept it afloat until 1992 but it crumbled like a house of cards as soon as the aid plug was pulled.

The Soviets tried to revive the economy by external aid and developing the natural gas resource of Afghanistan especially in north of the country. Their main focus

⁹⁵Minkov and Gregory Smolyneec, *3-D Soviet Style...*, 19.

⁹⁶Compiled from Data available from, United Nations Statistics, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/dnllist.asp>; Internet; accessed 27 Jan 2008.

for economic uplift was northern Afghanistan with some areas around Kabul because they considered only these worth developing for being the seat of government and in close proximity to the Soviet Central Asian Republics. Economically these were the only areas in Afghanistan which had the natural gas reserves thus providing a source of income for the cash strapped central government. There was even talk of annexation of these areas to Soviet Union as part of the Soviet Central Asian Republics but that was never considered feasible.⁹⁷ The other parts of the country were totally neglected as the security situation never developed to that extent that reconstruction work could be carried out there.

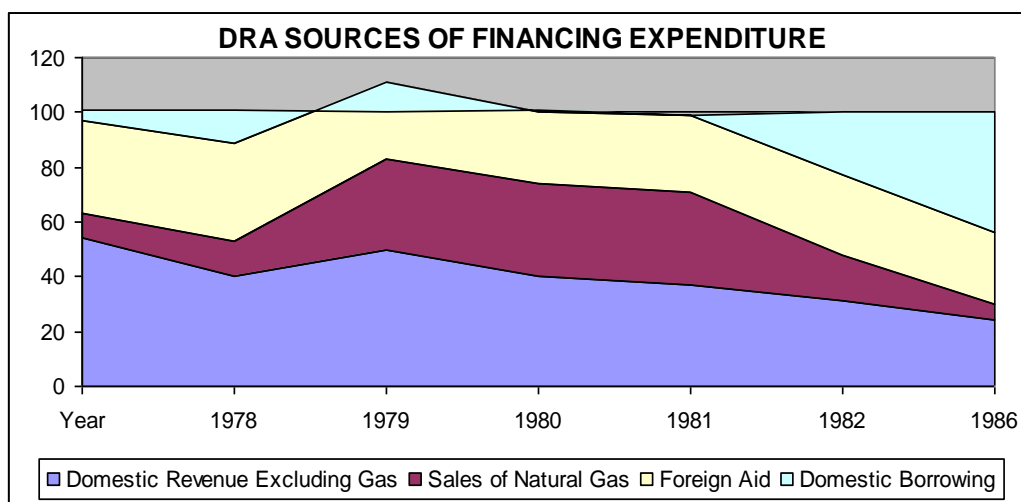


Figure 2.9: Chart showing sources of financing of DRA

Source: Rubin, *The Fragmentation of ...*, 148-149.

The Soviets investment in the natural gas sector provided government with much needed revenue (Refer Figure 2.9) but at the same time revenue from other sources especially the customs revenue decreased which was the main source of earning for the

⁹⁷Joseph Newman, Jr., "The Future of Northern Afghanistan," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, no. 7. (July 1988): 729-739; <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 25 December 2007.

government. Apart from natural gas revenues, the government relied on foreign aid and massive borrowing to offset its expenditures which greatly increased the inflation thereby making things more expensive for the common man and eroding the much needed support base of the regime.

The DRA also used the economic factors to influence and control the local population by issuing the ration cards, establishment of special stores and payments to the warlords.⁹⁸ This created an atmosphere where few people were rewarded and the others suffered based on their political leanings thus creating factions in the local population. Similarly, across the border some of the refugees undertook various jobs in Pakistan but the majority became totally dependent on the foreign aid and as a result there was a growth of economic dependence of Afghans on the foreign aid and subsistence.

Drug Culture

Initially there was not a drug culture in the country. Hashish was always openly available in Afghanistan and had been used by people as a medication or as an intoxicant. The disenchanted Soviet soldiers initially hooked onto hashish in Afghanistan and there are reports of soldiers selling even their weapons, equipment and ammunition to obtain Hashish.⁹⁹ Opium was also grown in Afghanistan at that time but its conversion to heroin was not that prevalent. In 1975, as per the US assessment, the Afghan drug trade was not

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 142.

⁹⁹Arthur Bonner, "Afghanistan's Other Front: A World Of Drugs :[Russians In Afghanistan Last Of Three Articles]," New York Times, November 2, 1985, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com>; Internet; accessed March 2, 2008.

a threat to the US interests. However, by 1982, the drug trade was flourishing and beginning to spread all over the globe.¹⁰⁰

The unstable situation in the country was a boon for the drug smugglers who took full advantage of the opportunity and started extensive smuggling of opium and heroin. Some Mujahideen leaders with the connivance of corrupt officials on both sides of the Pak Afghan border also got involved in the drug trade for personal gain. It is reported that the convoys sent for transport of weapons and ammunition carried drugs back to Pakistan in some cases¹⁰¹. The opium problem had a snowball effect and its growth became widespread due to the huge profit margins available and inability of the government to do anything about it.

LESSONS LEARNT

After carrying out an analysis of the Soviet occupation, it is pertinent to crystallize some of the lessons learnt which can then be used as a bench mark to compare the performance of ISAF at present in Afghanistan. Some of the lessons learnt are as follows:-

Military

- a. The forces deployed for a Counterinsurgency (COIN) must be sufficiently strong and robust enough to conduct the required operation. The strength to be deployed should cater for the forces required to provide security to the convoys and base installations as well to allow full generation of adequate combat power against the insurgents. The

¹⁰⁰David Macdonald, *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws and Scorpion Tales* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 86.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 90.

- Soviets never deployed sufficient forces to conduct all the required operations in Afghanistan.
- b. In a COIN operation, the military on its own cannot produce positive results till the time it is complemented by a comprehensive political and economic approach, a policy which the Soviets failed to implement in Afghanistan.
 - c. If the insurgents have access to secure bases and funds, it is not possible to quell the insurgency. The Mujahideen had access to ample funds and secure bases in neighbouring countries which enabled them to continue the insurgency unabated.
 - d. The support of local population is the key for both the sides because it would determine who would win at the end. The Soviets lost the popular support and lost the campaign as a result of that.
 - e. Air superiority is a key in operations and its loss can seriously affect the fight. The introduction of Stinger and other antiaircraft missiles severely eroded the Soviet capability to conduct their operations.
 - f. The increase in technical and combat capabilities of local military forces is essential in order to allow for an exit strategy of foreign forces. The Soviets achieved this by equipping the DRA forces with adequate weapons and creating paramilitary forces before their withdrawal.
 - g. The casualties will remain a prominent factor in all decisions and must be minimized in order to reduce the adverse impact on morale of the forces as well of the population back home. Even the Soviets could not escape from this and were subjected to severe pressure by their population due to mounting casualties.

- h. The troops being employed in a theatre must be trained for the operation they are going to conduct which otherwise can have serious consequences. The Soviet forces were not trained for COIN operations but were more trained for the high intensity Cold War conflict.
- i. The provision of quality equipment and adequate care to the individual soldier is a key component for maintaining the morale of forces. The Soviet soldiers were not properly equipped or well-paid resulting in poor morale.

Security

- a. It is essential for the government to have the ability to operate in the country side in order to establish writ of the government in these areas. The Soviet/DRA forces remained road bound thus surrendering control of the country side to Mujahideen.
- b. The application of force must be proportional and discriminate; otherwise it will result in creation of more recruits for the insurgency. The Soviet scorched earth policy's negative effects are a perfect example in this regard.
- c. The reliance on secret police or paramilitary forces must be made with great care to ensure that they do not exceed their limits. The KhAD and *Sarandoy* militias helped to control the country but at the same time their high handed tactics created an atmosphere of fear and resentment amongst the local population.

Diplomatic

- a. The support of the incumbent government is essential to allow for continued operations in any country. The DRA government provided this support to the Soviet

- Union as the Soviets always maintained that they were operating under the invitation of the legal government in place.
- b. The international legitimacy of the operations is essential to put pressure on the supporters of insurgency. The Soviets failed to isolate Pakistan diplomatically for its support to Mujahideen thereby failing to cut off the source of insurgency.
 - c. Regional goodwill is essential to ensure that the insurgents are denied the support of neighbouring countries. The Pushtunistan issue played an important role in Pakistan's decision to support the Mujahideen to fight against the Soviets.

Governance

- a. The government has to be able to provide the basic facilities to the people in order to be legitimate in the eyes of the people. Inability of the DRA government to provide the basic facilities led to disenchantment of local population. The presence of refugees reflect on the inability of the government to make conditions favourable for its population. The millions of Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries was a major factor which undermined the DRA government.
- b. The reforms being initiated in any country should be commensurate with the public's ability to accept those reforms. The bid to undertake radical reforms by the DRA against the wishes of the society was a major impediment in the stabilization Afghanistan.

Political

- a. The political support of the masses is required to allow a government to remain in power and it is necessary to deny the same to insurgents. The PDPA had a weak

- political base making it unacceptable to majority of the population and allowing the insurgents to exploit this weakness.
- b. The government should be aware of the local conditions and adopt its approach accordingly. The inability of the DRA to adjust to the ground realities based on religion and tribal structure played a major role in the downfall of the government.

Economic

- a. A country has to be financially strong and robust enough to stand on its own feet. Economic strength helps prevent the sliding of the country towards an insurgency as there is less incentive for the people to do so. The DRA was financially on a very shaky base thus making it difficult for it to look after its people.
- b. The government has to ensure that the people are provided with livelihood means and these are protected. The destruction of the agricultural base of the country destroyed the livelihoods of the people forcing them to migrate and making them an easy target for recruitment in the resistance.
- c. Industrialization or other major infrastructure projects should be undertaken to provide employment opportunities to the people. The DRA failed to rejuvenate the economy in order to provide jobs to local people.
- d. The development in the country must be even to prevent the feeling of deprivation amongst the local population. The uneven development in North and South of the country increased the difference in living standards of the people and helped fuel insurgency in the South.

CHAPTER 3

OEF AND ISAF'S INVOLVEMENT

RISE OF TALIBAN

The Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989. However, the Mujahideen were unable to capture any major city due to their internal weakness and superior firepower possessed by the DRA forces. As soon as the Najibullah regime fell in 1992, the Afghan Interim Government (AIG) formed by the Mujahideen failed to establish its writ all over the country. As a result, warlords sprang up all over the country and started harassing the travellers and local people by collecting taxes on the roads under their command making life miserable for the common man.

In 1994, fed up by this anarchic scene, a new student militia under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar was formed in Kandahar with the help of elements in Pakistan. These individuals were trained in the various religious schools spread all along the border and called themselves as 'Taliban'.¹⁰² The Taliban started from Kandahar and brought an era of peace and stability to the area which they controlled, which was welcomed by the residents of the area. Slowly and gradually, Taliban expanded their influence northwards and captured Kabul in 1996. This was a setback to all the other factions in the country who decided to join their forces against this new menace. The Northern Alliance (NA) was formed after alliance between the Tajik Ahmed Shah Masood and Uzbek General Abdur Rashid Dostum. Their combined forces numbered

¹⁰²Nojumi, *The Rise of Taliban ...*, 119.

about 55,000 in 1996 whereas Taliban numbered 25,000 at the same time.¹⁰³ The period from 1996 – 2001 was a period of gradual expansion of Taliban influence in the northern and western part of the country. They were opposed by the NA whose military efforts were directed by the charismatic leader, Ahmed Shah Masood from Panjshir valley and Abdul Rashid Dostum in Mazar-e-Sharif. By the time the 9/11 incident took place, the Taliban had gained control of almost 90% of the territory and were readying for a final push to finish NA forces remaining in the northeast.¹⁰⁴

The Taliban were supported by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and even the US to some extent whereas the NA was backed by Russia, Iran and India in terms of weapons, equipment and moral support.¹⁰⁵ Taliban were initially considered as a stabilizing force and were expected to usher an era of peace and security in the region. However, the rigid views regarding Islam professed by the Taliban became the biggest obstacle in international recognition of their government. In spite of the fact that they controlled 90% of the territory they were unable to win international recognition and were recognized by only three countries: Pakistan, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The Taliban may have survived in their own country if they had not given refuge to Osama bin Laden who was professing the idea of global fight against the US. The terrorist acts in 1998 against the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were blamed on Osama bin Laden. As a result, missile strikes were carried out by the US government against the targets in Afghanistan which failed to kill bin Laden but resulted in the death

¹⁰³Ralph H. Magnus, "Afghanistan in 1996: Year of the Taliban," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 37, no. 2, A Survey of Asia in 1996: Part II. (February 1997): 111-117; <http://www.jstor.org>; Internet; accessed 26 Dec 2007.

¹⁰⁴Coll, *Ghost Wars*:..., 532.

¹⁰⁵Magnus, "Afghanistan in 1996: Year of the Taliban,"

of several other individuals.¹⁰⁶ Taliban were undeterred by these strikes rather it resulted in the hardening of their resolve against the US.

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

On 9 September 2001, Ahmed Shah Masood was killed by a suicide bomber posing as a journalist. It was perceived that NA would be unable to withstand the final Taliban assault and it was just a matter of time before the Taliban controlled the entire Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷ All that changed on 9/11 once the hijackers slammed their aircraft into World Trade Centre in New York and Pentagon. The US people were shocked by this act of violence and demanded immediate retribution from the perpetrators of this violent act.

Initial reports pointed to the involvement of Al-Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. The US asked the Taliban to hand over bin Laden or to expel him from the country. Extensive efforts were carried out by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as well for the purpose of making the Taliban agree to international demands but the Taliban did not yield and refused to hand over bin Laden. On the refusal by Taliban, the US formed a coalition of willing to oust the Taliban regime. It was supported by most of the countries including Pakistan, the former ally of Taliban. Pakistan agreed to provide the US with logistics and intelligence support keeping in view the obstinacy of the Taliban and the fact that they were not ready to listen to any voice of reason.

The US conducted its first air strikes against Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 heralding the start of OEF (Ref Map 3.1).¹⁰⁸ The US adopted the strategy of inducting

¹⁰⁶Michael Griffin, *Reaping the Whirlwind: Afghanistan, Al Qa'ida and the Holy War*. 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 170.

¹⁰⁷Coll, *Ghost Wars ...*, 574.

¹⁰⁸Michael DeLong, and Noah Lukeman, *Inside Centcom: The Unvarnished Truth About the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Washington D.C: Regeneray Publishing Inc, 2004), 38.

small teams of CIA and Special Forces to liaise with the NA elements on the ground. No ground troops were inducted initially and NA forces did the fighting at their own with the help of US Special Forces and airpower. In spite of criticism of this strategy, the NA forces were able to defeat the Taliban.

They had their first success in the north once they took Mazar-e-Sharif on the night of 10 November.¹⁰⁹ The NA forces moved south and were able to evict the Taliban from Kabul on 14 November.¹¹⁰ The Taliban resisted fiercely in Kunduz which was their last stronghold in the north but it fell after two weeks of fierce fighting on 28 November leaving only Kandahar in Taliban hands.¹¹¹ The US marines established their first base called “Rhino” in between Kandahar and Pakistan border to prevent the escape of the Taliban to Pakistan. The Taliban continued to resist in the south in Kandahar until December 7 once the local leaders surrendered Kandahar to Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pushtun anti-Taliban Commander in the southern provinces, putting all the major Afghan cities under the control of coalition.¹¹² During the course of this operation, the US airpower played a major role carrying out a total of 6,500 sorties from 7 October to 23 December 2001 and dropping 17,500 munitions of various types on targets all over the country.¹¹³

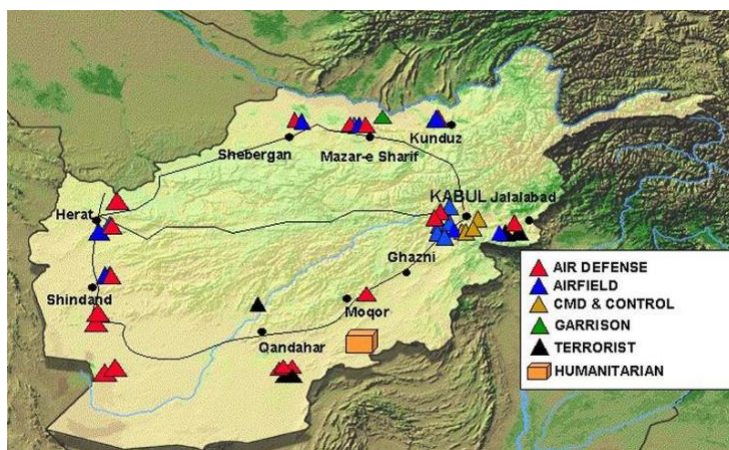
¹⁰⁹Gary C. Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Presidio Press, 2005), 337.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 351.

¹¹¹Michael DeLong, and Noah Lukeman, *Inside Centcom...*, 53.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 55.

¹¹³Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Lessons of Afghanistan: War fighting, Intelligence and Force Transformation* (Washington D.C: The CSIS Press, 2002), 5.



Map 3.1: Map showing the targets struck on 7 October 2001 as part of OEF.¹¹⁴

Source: Global Security.org, “Operation Enduring Freedom Maps.”



Map 3.2: Major US Special Forces Operations as part of OEF from October 2001 to March 2002.¹¹⁵

Source: The United States Army in Afghanistan, “Operation Enduring Freedom,”

¹¹⁴Global Security.org, “Operation Enduring freedom Maps,” <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/images/011009-d-6570c-002.jpg>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

¹¹⁵ The United States Army in Afghanistan, “Operation Enduring Freedom,” <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Afghanistan/Operation%20Enduring%20Freedom.htm>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008.

The bulk of Al Qaeda along with Osama and his lieutenants escaped to Tora Bora Mountains. The US formed an 'Eastern Alliance' and engaged local commanders: Hazrat Ali and Zaman Khan supported by the US airpower and Special Forces to surround Tora Bora region and capture Al-Qaeda members.¹¹⁶ Extensive aerial bombardment was carried out to blast the cave complexes of Tora Bora but the US forces failed to capture bin Laden or a significant number of Al Qaeda fighters once the operation ended on December 16, 2001.¹¹⁷ The Taliban leadership vowed to carry out their resistance against the US forces as the Mujahideen had done against the Soviets.

There were efforts to make a broad based government in Afghanistan but these were marred by the fact that NA was a major ally of the US and had a major say in the political process. Talks were held at Bonn in December 2001 and it was agreed to form a transitional government in Afghanistan with Hamid Karzai as Chairman of the Interim Administration and various NA leaders were inducted as ministers to important portfolios like defence, foreign affairs and interior.¹¹⁸ After a Loya Jirga in 2002, Hamid Karzai was selected as President of the transitional administration until the elections were held in the country in 2004.¹¹⁹

The US meanwhile inducted more forces in Afghanistan to help eradicate the Taliban influence. A major operation named "Anaconda" was conducted in Shah-i-Kot area on 1 March 2002 in Paktia province in the eastern part of the country. Intense

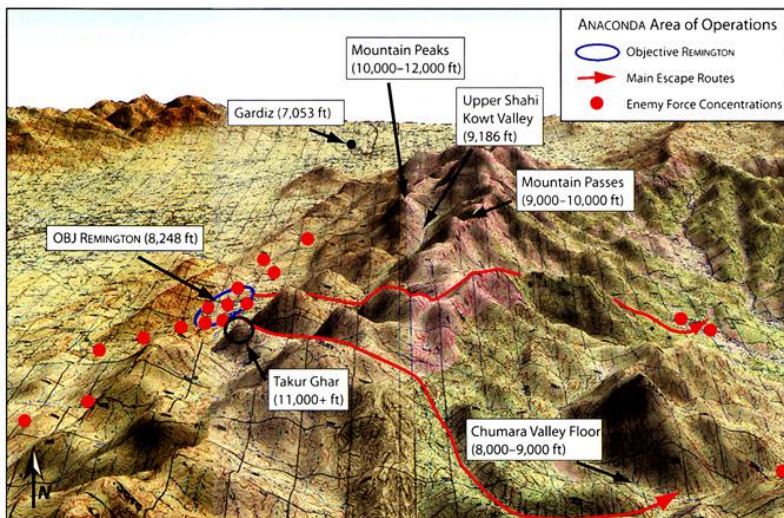
¹¹⁶Delong and Lukeman, *Inside Centcom...*, 55.

¹¹⁷Philip Smucker, *Al Qaeda's Great Escape: The Military and Media on Terror's Trail*, (Washington D.C: Brassey's Inc, 2004), 131.

¹¹⁸Afghan government, "Government - Afghan Bonn Agreement," <http://www.afghangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

¹¹⁹United Nations General Assembly Security Council, "The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for International Peace and Security, Report of the Secretary-General," <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/651/06/PDF/N0265106.pdf?OpenElement>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

fighting took place over the course of operation; the Taliban however, managed to break contact and were able to escape again as in the case of Tora Bora operation to fight another day.



Map 3.3: Operation Anaconda (2-16 March 2002).¹²⁰

Source: The United States Army in Afghanistan, “Operation Enduring Freedom.”

Formation of ISAF

ISAF was formed in December 2001 as per the Bonn Agreement with its Headquarters (HQ) at Kabul to provide security in and around Kabul.¹²¹ Initially, ISAF was a small force which was rotated amongst various nations but this caused a lot of disturbance after every six months. NATO took over the responsibility of leading the ISAF on 11 August 2003. At the same time, US forces continued to operate separately in Afghanistan as part of OEF. The Iraq War started on 19 March 2003 and involved

¹²⁰The United States Army in Afghanistan, “Operation Enduring Freedom.” <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Afghanistan/Operation%20Enduring%20Freedom.htm#p30>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

¹²¹North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, “ISAF History,” <http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/history/index.html>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

another coalition of the willing with more than 100,000 US troops.¹²² Although major combat operations in Iraq were declared over on May 1, 2003 by President Bush aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln*, the insurgency in Iraq continues until today and has employed a significant number of US troops since then.¹²³

As the US involvement in Iraq increased, the ISAF took over more and more responsibility enabling the US to decrease its troop levels and focus on Iraq. As of 1 April 2008, the ISAF had 47,000 troops from 40 countries deployed in Afghanistan with 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams and having control over the entire country.¹²⁴ The latest ISAF dispositions are shown in Map 3.4.



Map 3.4: ISAF deployment as of 1 April 2008¹²⁵

Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "ISAF Expansion."

¹²²Michael DeLong, and Noah Lukeman, *Inside Centcom...*, 91.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 121.

¹²⁴North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "ISAF Expansion,"

<http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/expansion/index.html>; Internet; accessed 6 April 2008.

¹²⁵Note: Regional Commands = RC, RC(N) = Regional Command (North), E, W and S similarly stand for the East, West and South commands. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Troops Placement," http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf; Internet; accessed 6 April 2008

CHAPTER 4

COMPARISON OF SOVIET OCCUPATION AND ISAF MISSION

The coalition forces are engaged in Afghanistan after more than six and a half years since the operations began in late 2001. Even though the circumstances between both the invasions are fundamentally different, the continued engagement of ISAF in Afghanistan enables a comparison between the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the present ISAF mission. Afghanistan was brutally occupied by Soviet Union to further its aims with a horrendous cost for the local population whereas the ISAF is in Afghanistan under the auspices of the UN. Although ISAF claims to have made a significant difference in the lives of ordinary Afghans, the Afghan government is still struggling to establish its writ all over the country. The comparison of the Soviet and ISAF's mission will be made in the various fields such as military and security, governance and political, economy, drugs and effect of regional states in order to allow suitable conclusions to be drawn from the process.

MILITARY

If we compare the military aspect, it can be said that both forces enjoyed good initial success. The Deputy Commander Centcom, General Michael Delong claims that US established complete control over Afghanistan in eight weeks whereas the Russians claim to have done it in two days in 1979.¹²⁶ However, both the forces faced a guerilla type resistance after the conventional combat was over. The Soviets were faced with a much more determined and well-funded enemy than the ISAF as over a period of time,

¹²⁶Delong and Lukeman, *Inside Centcom...*, 55.

the resistance had vast swathes of territory like Panjshir Valley under its control (Ref Map 2.2). ISAF has been relatively more successful than the Soviets in controlling major portions of the country side. However, still there are areas which have significant Taliban presence affecting the functioning of ISAF and the Afghanistan National Army (ANA).

Composition of ISAF

The Soviet Union provided the bulk of forces employed in Afghanistan with only a limited support in the form of advisers from Warsaw Pact countries. This put the entire burden on the Soviet Union for force generation and employment, which greatly strained the Soviet Armed Forces. At the height of the Soviet involvement, approximately 80,000 to 120,000 Soviet soldiers served at one time in Afghanistan.¹²⁷ ISAF has been lucky in this regard that it has got forces from different countries operating in the theatre greatly reducing the impact on individual countries. The details of troop contributing nations are shown below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: ISAF composition showing the multinational contribution as of 1 April 2008¹²⁸

	Albania	140		Finland	100		Lithuania	260		Spain	770
	Australia	1100		France	1430		Luxemburg	9		Sweden	350
	Austria	2		Georgia	1		Netherlands	1730		The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*	130
	Azerbaijan	40		Germany	3490		New Zealand	110		Turkey	750
	Belgium	360		Greece	130		Norway	540		Ukraine	3
	Bulgaria	400		Hungary	250		Poland	1020		United Kingdom	7750
	Canada	2500		Iceland	10		Portugal	170		United States	19000
	Croatia	210		Ireland	7		Romania	530			
	Czech Republic	290		Italy	2360		Singapore	2			
	Denmark	690		Jordan	90		Slovakia	60			
	Estonia	120		Latvia	100		Slovenia	70			
										Total (rounded)	47000

Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Troops Placement,"

¹²⁷G.F.Kirosheev, *et al*, *Soviet Casualties ...*, 286.

¹²⁸North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Troops Placement,"

http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf; Internet; accessed 6 April 2008.

‘National Caveats’

The presence of troops from such a large number of countries emphasizes the legitimacy of the mission and the resolve of international community to deal with the issue. However, it has its problems as well. Most of the countries present in the coalition are contributing too few troops and are there to earn diplomatic points. Moreover, the troop employment of some countries is also under restrictions imposed by the respective country by what are known as ‘national caveats.’¹²⁹ Various countries like Germany, Spain and France have refused to deploy their troops in the more troubled southern region and have instead employed them in the relatively calmer North.

This result in unequal burden sharing with some nations like USA, Canada and Britain doing the bulk of fighting and suffering the most of casualties while others remain away from it. This is adequately reflected in the casualties of the coalition troops as shown in the Figure 4.1 below. Figure 4.2 provides the ratio of casualties suffered by various countries with Canada and US again leading the others whereas countries like Germany and Italy in spite of having a large number of troops on ground are having the lowest ratio in this regard.

¹²⁹Editorial, "Plenty of Blame for Afghanistan, " *New York Times*, December 16, 2007, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com>; Internet; accessed March 17, 2008.

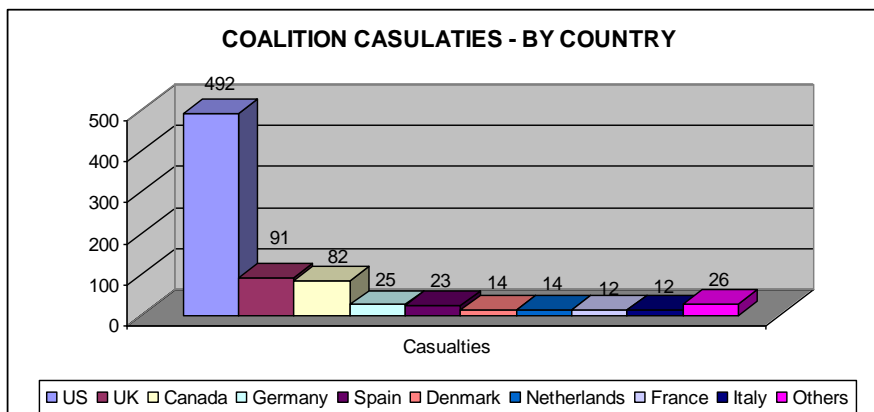


Figure 4.1: Chart showing the comparison of fatalities amongst the coalition countries.¹³⁰

Source: icasualties.org, “Operation Enduring Freedom.”

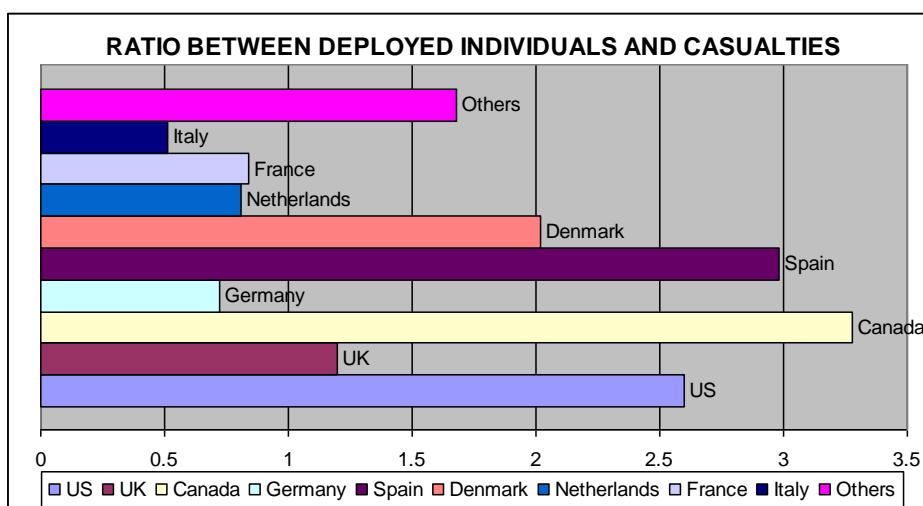


Figure 4.2: Chart showing the comparison of ratio of fatalities amongst the coalition countries.¹³¹

Source: icasualties.org, “Operation Enduring Freedom.”

Unity of Coalition

The unity of the coalition can be termed as the centre of gravity of ISAF. The presence of national caveats creates friction amongst the coalition partners, which

¹³⁰The chart has been prepared from the data available at iCasualties.org, “Operation Enduring Freedom,” <http://icasualties.org/oef/>; Internet; accessed 6 April 2008.

¹³¹The chart has been prepared from the data available at iCasualties.org, “Operation Enduring Freedom,” <http://icasualties.org/oef/>; and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, “Troops Placement,” as on 1 April 2008. Internet; accessed 6 April 2008.

threatens to disrupt this unity. However, if at any stage the countries start pulling out, it is likely to have a domino effect and may result in the failure of entire effort. The recent example of test of the alliance unity was when Canada threatened to pull out its forces from Afghanistan unless it was provided with 1000 more NATO troops to share the burden in Kandahar. The crisis was averted during the 'Bucharest Summit' held from 2-4 April 2008 in which France and various countries agreed to provide more troops thereby addressing the Canadian concerns.¹³²

Force Generation

This remains to be the Achilles heel of the alliance as it is facing a lot of problems in force generation for the south of country. When the ISAF commander demanded additional 4,000 troops for the mission, no NATO country was ready to provide that. This prompted the US Secretary Defence to make the statement that if the allies do not respond, NAO risks being converted into a two tier alliance in which some fight and some don't.¹³³ As a result, US had to sanction additional 3,200 marines for Afghanistan bringing the US strength to 30,000 (19,000 under ISAF and 11,000 under OEF) in Afghanistan making it one of the highest deployments of US troops during the six and a half years of deployment.¹³⁴

¹³²Cbcnews.ca, "France's 'significant' troop pledge meets Afghan mission demand: PM," 3 Apr 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2008/04/03/nato-soldiers.html?ref=rss>; Internet; accessed April 10, 2008.

¹³³Fred Attewill, Helene Mulholand, "Gates demands more troops willing to 'fight and die' in Afghanistan," *Guardian.co.uk*, 7 February 2008 [journal on-line], <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/feb/07/foreignpolicy.uk>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹³⁴Yochi J. Dreazen, "Pentagon Moves to Deploy More Troops to Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2008, Eastern Edition, <http://www.proquest.com>; Internet; accessed March 17, 2008.

Political Will

The employment of forces by the various countries is dependent on the wish of the people expressed through the approval by their parliaments. This results in a situation where the mission is continuously under scrutiny at the home countries. Although so far no country has pulled out of the mission but this threat remains there always. The Canadian Parliament recently voted to extend the mission from 2009 to 2011 by a vote of 198-77. Similar extensions are to be obtained by most of the member countries after every two to three years.

Soviet Comparison

If we compare the Soviet intervention, we find that they did not have any such problem as the entire force was from Soviet Union itself and there was no dependence on any other nation giving it a significant advantage of unified command and control. At the same time, it lacked international legitimacy and the entire burden was shouldered by the USSR itself.

Combat Ratio of Forces

The ISAF is supported by approximately 40,000 ANA troops, which at present are not capable of conducting independent operations. The strength of Taliban opposing them remains vague with figures of 10,000 to 15,000 core fighters being quoted in

various sources.¹³⁵ It is quite difficult to exactly gauge their strength because of the lack of any formal command and control structure and their ability to merge with the local population at will, which makes it harder to track them. Historically there has been a deployment of 20 security personnel per thousand or 2% of the population in successful COIN operations such as in Malaya and Northern Ireland by the British.¹³⁶ The population of Afghanistan at present is 32 million approximately¹³⁷ which is almost similar to Canada and if the above formula is applied the strength required will be approximately 600,000 whereas the combined strength of ISAF and ANA at present is about 100,000.

Tables 4.2 & 4.3 show the comparison of the Soviet forces and ISAF with that of the Mujahideen and Taliban in Afghanistan respectively. From these, one can observe that Soviets had an overwhelming ratio against the active Mujahideen in the earlier years. The same cannot be said about the ISAF. The ratio which they achieved over the Taliban in 2007 is almost equal to what the Soviets had against the Mujahideen at the time of their withdrawal once they were leaving the country after failing to achieve their mission.

Table 4.2: Table showing the ratio of forces between the Mujahideen and the Soviet Forces from 1979 to 1989¹³⁸

Year	Soviet Forces	Total DRA Forces	Total Forces Available	Estimated Mujahideen Strength (TM)	Active Mujahideen (AM)	Ratio TM	Ratio AM
1978-80	50,000	140,000	190000	NA	NA	NA	NA
1980/81	85,000	70,000	155000	NA	NA	NA	NA
1981/82	85,000	73,000	158000	20,000	NA	NA	NA

¹³⁵Anthony H. Cordesman, "Open Letter on Strategy in Afghanistan," The Center for Strategic and International Studies, http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080116_afghan_open_letter.pdf; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹³⁶James T. Quinlivan, "Force Requirements in Stability Operations," *Parameters* (Winter 1995):59-69; <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/1995/quinliv.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 April 2008.

¹³⁷Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook."

¹³⁸The chart has been prepared from the data available on the Soviet and Mujahideen forces from Military Balance as already indicated in Figure 2.1.

1982/83	95,000	76,000	171000	90,000	20,000	1.9	8.55
1983/84	105,000	77,000	182000	90,000	20,000	2.02	9.1
1984/1985	115,000	76,000	191000	90,000	20,000	2.12	9.55
1985/6	115,000	77,000	192000	90,000	20,000	2.13	9.6
1986/87	118,800	87,000	205800	130,000	30,000	1.58	6.86
1987/88	116,000	87,000	203000	130,000	30,000	1.56	6.7

Source: Military Balance 1978 – 1989.

Table 4.3: Table showing the ratio of forces between the Taliban and the Coalition Forces from 2003 to 2007¹³⁹

Year	US Forces	ISAF	ANA	Total Strength	Taliban	Ratio
2003	8,532	5,248	6,000	19780	10,000	1.98
2004	19,500	6,500	24,000	50000	10,000	5
2005	19,000	10,000	26,000	55000	15,000	3.67
2006	19,000	10,000	36,000	65000	15,000	4.33
2007	16,000	47,000	40,000	103,000	15,000	6.87

Source: Military Balance 2003 – 2007, NATO, Washington Post.

Effectiveness of Afghan Security Forces

The DRA forces were able to hold Mujahideen forces for three years after the Soviet forces withdrew based on their own ability. It can be reasonably assumed that if the ISAF was to withdraw today, Afghanistan security forces will have significant problems to battle Taliban on their own. This puts more burden on ISAF forces during the conduct of operations against the Taliban which prevents the preparation of any exit strategy by ISAF.

Taliban Tactics

The Taliban are not a classic enemy at present. They do not have vast areas under their direct control like the Mujahideen had during the Soviet times forcing the Soviets to

¹³⁹The ISAF strength in this table has been taken from NATO and Military Balance sources whereas ANA strength has been derived from Washington Post Report by Ann Scott Tyson, "More Recruits, U.S. Arms Planned for Afghan Military, Gates Voices Concern Over 'Growing Level of Violence,'" *Washington Post*, 5 December 2007 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/04/AR2007120402086_2.html; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008.

carry out great sweeps. Their first major engagement in conventional combat against ISAF was during ‘Operation Medusa’ once ISAF had just taken over the southern part of the country from the US forces in August 2006. Another time they did so was when they captured Musa Qala in late 2007 but it was wrested back from them by ISAF forces in 2008.¹⁴⁰ These incidents are becoming fewer as Taliban realize that they are unable to face ISAF forces directly due to the improved technology in terms of ISR and superior firepower of ISAF. They are relying more on Individual Explosive Devices (IED), hit and run attacks, mines and roadside bombs to slowly degrade the ISAF resolve.

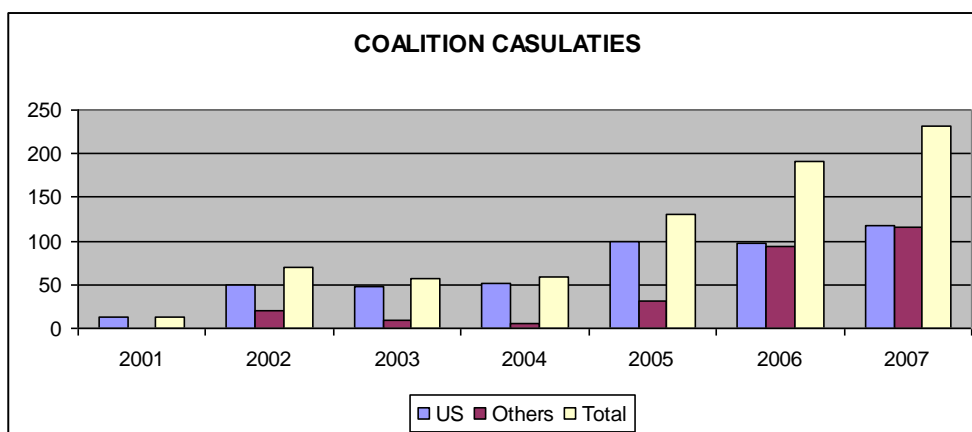


Figure 4.3: Chart showing the ISAF casualties over the years¹⁴¹

Source: icasualties.org, “Operation Enduring Freedom.”

Casualties

As the ISAF does not conduct large-scale operations frequently, therefore, it has much fewer casualties as compared to the Soviets. The latest casualty figures of coalition

¹⁴⁰“Things can only get better: The town that came back to life,” *The Independent*, 6 March 2008, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/things-can-only-get-better-the-town-that-came-back-to-life-792086.html>; Internet; accessed 24 March 2008.

¹⁴¹Compiled from data available at [iCasualties.org](http://icasualties.org), “Operation Enduring Freedom,” <http://icasualties.org/oe/f/>; Internet; accessed 29 February 2008.

troops are shown in Figure 4.3. Most of the casualties being incurred by ISAF today are attributed to the roadside bombings or IED and as per a congressional report, 50% of all casualties in Afghanistan have been caused due to IED.¹⁴² However, an analysis of the fatalities reveals that direct combat (33%) has caused more ISAF casualties than the IED (22%) so far as indicated in Figure 4.4.

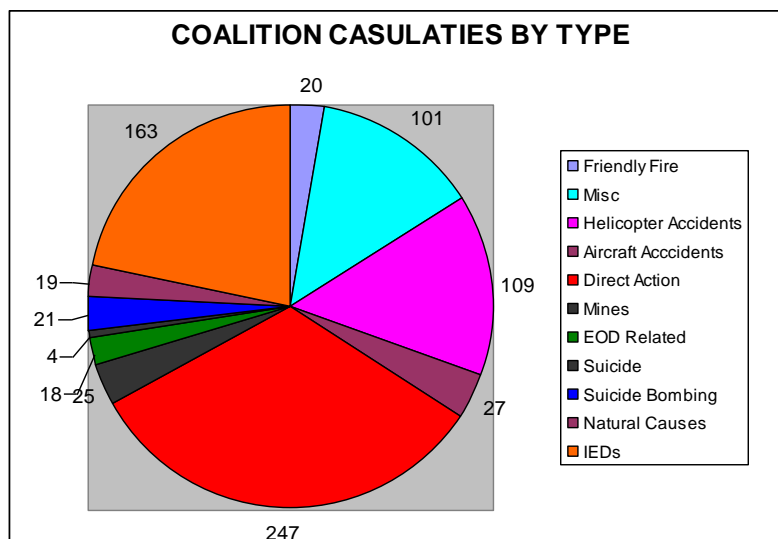


Figure 4.4: Chart showing the distribution of total ISAF casualties by Type (Until March 2008)¹⁴³

Source: CNN.com

In Figure 4.5, the graph shows that the number of the fatalities has increased in the recent years indicating a resurgence of activity by Taliban. The Taliban threat is clearly increasing instead of decreasing and this is an alarming trend. For the casualty conscious people of the NATO countries, it is a worrying trend as they want to see an end

¹⁴²Clay Wilson, CRS Report for Congress, "Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Iraq and Afghanistan: Effects and Countermeasures," <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RS22330.pdf>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008.

¹⁴³Compiled from data available at CNN.com, "U.S. and Coalition Casualties," <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2004/oef.casualties/>; Internet; accessed 10 March 2008.

to fighting in Afghanistan and not to lose more people. The Australian defence minister, Joel Fitzgibbon also highlighted the same fact by stating that ISAF has been “stomping on lots of ants, we have not been dealing with the ants’ nest.”¹⁴⁴

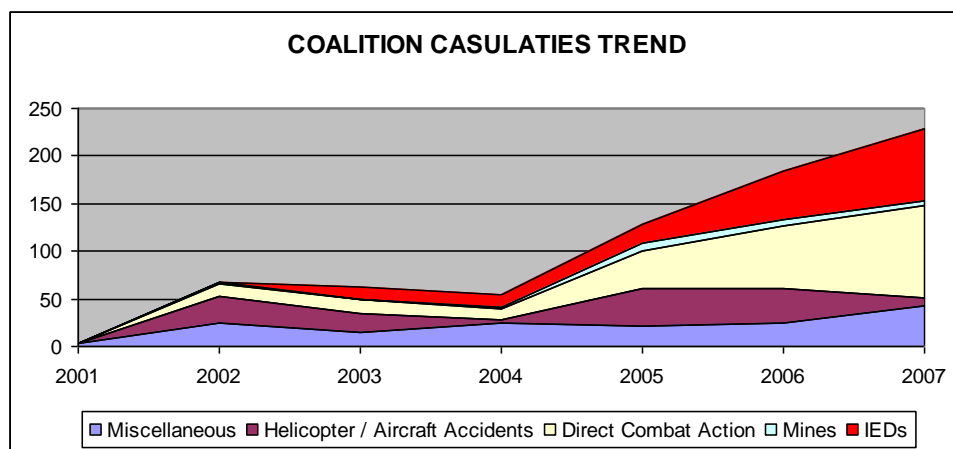


Figure 4.5: Chart showing the coalition casualties due to IEDs, Accidents and direct combat action over the years (Until March 2008)¹⁴⁵

Source: CNN.com

Support of Taliban

The Mujahideen were supported by a well organized network run by the CIA in collaboration with Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. The Taliban at present do not have this well laid out organization to support them. Frequently in western media there are reports of ISI and other rogue elements support to the Taliban in their campaign against the ISAF. However, the possibility of this happening is quite remote as there is no possibility of secret cells operating in the ISI or any other intelligence organizations in Pakistan to do things at their own without the approval of the government.

¹⁴⁴"FED: War in Afghanistan "will be lost" unless tactics change," *AAP General News Wire*, 17 December 2007, <http://www.proquest.com>; Internet; accessed March 16, 2008.

¹⁴⁵Miscellaneous includes deaths due to accidents, natural causes and all other reason not covered in the headings below. *Ibid.*

Financial Support

Although, the Taliban may have access to funds through their sympathizers but it cannot match the amount of support which was provided to the Mujahideen. The funds amounting to \$4.225 billion provided to Mujahideen have already been quoted above in Figure 2.6. It is not sure that how much aid Taliban are being provided but it can be argued that their funding capacity is much lower and is not backed by any major power as was the case with Mujahideen. ‘Jane’s Terrorism and Security Monitor’ estimates that they have the capacity to generate \$50 million annually from the tax levied on the Opium production in the Helmand province only but the actual figures may be much lower.¹⁴⁶

Morale

The coalition forces are much better equipped and looked after than their Soviet counterparts. There are proper camps in place for the troops with a much better home support system. Although at times, the conditions may deteriorate due to operational exigencies but overall the conditions are reasonably good. This ensures that morale remains high and the troops have a sense of purpose while carrying out operations against the insurgents.

Technology/Equipment

The individual ISAF soldier has much better technology and equipment available at his disposal than the Soviet soldier. In fact, it is said that there is no comparison in

¹⁴⁶Jane’s Terrorism and Security Monitor, “Opium and the Afghan Insurgency,” September 12, 2007, <http://www.jtism.janes.com>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008.

this regard it will not be untrue. The coalition troops have access to almost real time ISR capability along with the capability to call dedicated air support at almost any time. This technological superiority has been one of the main reasons of Taliban avoiding the direct conventional conflict with the NATO forces.

Collateral Damage

The Soviets were more indiscriminate in the use of force and there was a lot of collateral damage during their operations against the Mujahideen. The ISAF does not have this option. In this connected world, a single misstep could have drastic consequences. There is near zero tolerance for collateral damage as it can undo the good work undertaken by the whole force. The killing of civilians during various air strikes prompted the President Hamid Karzai to ask NATO to stop them to avoid killing civilians.¹⁴⁷ Apart from this, the NATO forces have also been blamed for putting civilians at risk by their presence because they are the targets of insurgents. This was made evident once a bomb exploded in Spin Boldak near the NATO convoy resulting in the death of several civilians and ISAF troops were blamed for it.¹⁴⁸

Perception of Being Foreigners

One of the biggest disadvantages shared by both the NATO and Soviets is that they are considered as foreigners and 'Infidels.' The Taliban and Mujahideen justified their fight on the religious grounds that they are fighting to rid their country of the

¹⁴⁷Aryn Baker, "Backlash from Afghan Civilian Deaths," *Time*, 24 March 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1636551,00.html>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹⁴⁸Stephanie Levitz, "Canadian troops blamed in blast that killed 38," *TheStar.com*, 18 February 2008, [journal on-line], <http://www.thestar.com/News/World/article/304586>; Internet; accessed 24 March 2008.

foreigners who had come to impose their own culture and customs on them. The Soviets realized this too late and abandoned the ‘Sovietisation’ of Afghanistan during the later half of their campaign. The ISAF came armed with this knowledge and every effort was made to allay these suspicions and fears. Although these campaigns may have success in the urban areas, their success in the rural areas is still suspect where the mullah at the pulpit holds the sway over the local population. Incidents like burning of dead Taliban bodies images of which were flashed around the world help the insurgents to strengthen their claims of lack of respect of their religion by the invading forces.¹⁴⁹ This trend is clearly reflected in a survey carried out by various independent polling agencies in Afghanistan as shown in the fig below.¹⁵⁰

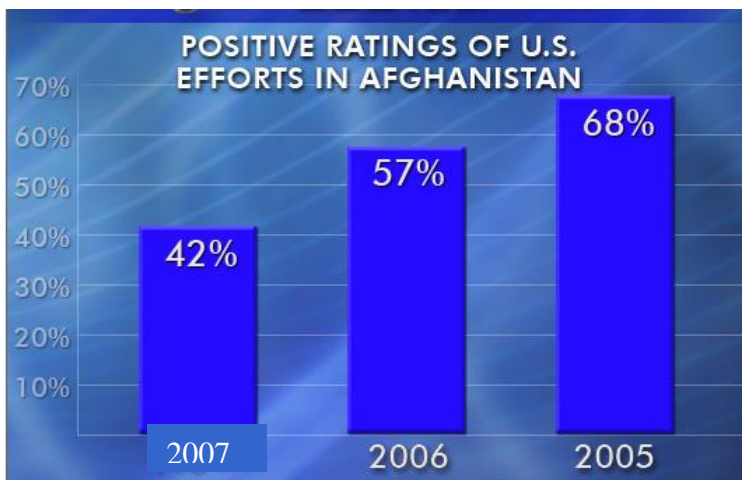


Figure 4.6: Chart showing the fall in positive rating of US efforts in Afghanistan (December 2007).¹⁵¹

Source: ABC News, BBC, ARD Poll, “Where Things Stand in Afghanistan,”

¹⁴⁹Declan Walsh and Jamie Wilson, “US fears backlash after TV documentary shows soldiers burning Taliban corpses,” *Guardian.co.uk*, 7 February 2008 [journal on-line], <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/oct/21/usnews.afghanistan>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹⁵⁰ABC News, BBC, ARD Poll, “Where things Stand in Afghanistan,” <http://ABCnews.go.com/PollingUnit/popup?id=3932920&contentIndex=1&page=1>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

Role of Pakistan

Perhaps one of the most important factors in the fight for Afghanistan is the role of Pakistan both in the past and present. The Soviet forces were unable to eradicate Mujahideen due to the presence of logistic bases and training camps in Pakistan. The Soviets could never undertake the initiative to undertake aggression against the Mujahideen bases in Pakistan because of various mitigating factors.

ISAF has a clear advantage that the Pakistani government at present is not providing bases and support to Taliban and in addition has deployed 100,000 troops to ensure that no cross border movement takes place. So far its security forces have suffered almost 1000 fatalities which are more than the casualties suffered by all the countries of ISAF.¹⁵² Although there are repeated assertions in the western media regarding the provision of sanctuaries to Taliban by Pakistan but the fact is that it is very difficult to control the porous and difficult border which exists between the two countries. The Taliban may have some sympathizers in tribal areas but their number and the capacity to keep the insurgency going inside Afghanistan is quite limited.

IRAQ WAR

One of the major factors which have affected operations in Afghanistan is the Iraq War. In 2003, the US invaded Iraq even before the operations in Afghanistan were fully over. Since then Afghanistan has been at low priority as compared to war in Iraq. If we compare the defense expenditure of the two campaigns, there is a stark difference

¹⁵²Isambard Wilkinson, "Pakistan troops 'lose faith in war on terror,'" Telegraph.co.uk, [journal online], <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/09/19/wpak119.xml>; Internet; accessed 6 April 2008.

between the two. Iraq War has been allocated \$526 billion since 2003 as compared to \$140 billion for the Afghanistan since 2001 (Ref Figure 4.7) by the US.

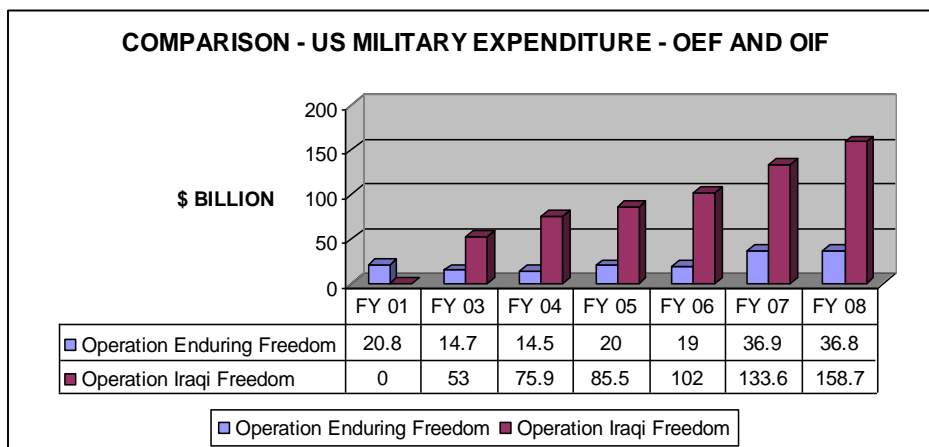


Figure 4.7: Chart showing the comparison in expenditure between Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom since 2001.¹⁵³

Source: Congressional Research Service Report, “The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11.”

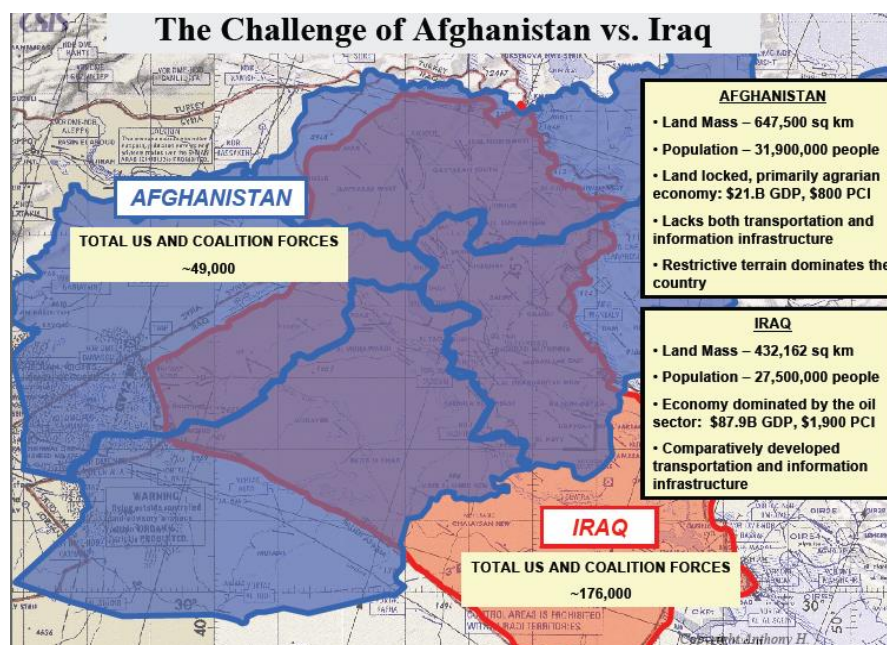
The US diverted resources to Iraq and left its NATO allies to do the bulk of fighting and stabilization in Afghanistan. Apart from the military resources, special operations and CIA numbers were also diverted to Iraq from Afghanistan denuding the intelligence collection in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁴ This allowed the Taliban to regroup and resurface after a strategic withdrawal in 2001. This is quite evident from increase in the number of attacks by the insurgents in Afghanistan as indicated by coalition casualties in Figure 4.5 above where we find a continuous increase in attacks after 2004.

Afghanistan has more area, population along with a much more difficult terrain than the rolling deserts of Iraq. Iraq also has a much better developed infrastructure along

¹⁵³For FY 08, the congress has yet to approve 82.3 and 22.8 \$ billion for OIF and OEF respectively. The chart has been prepared from the data available in Congressional Research Service Report, “The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11,” <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008.

¹⁵⁴Barton Gellman and Dafna Linzer, “Afghanistan, Iraq: Two Wars Collide,” Washington Post 22 October 2004, www.washingtonpost.com; Internet; accessed 29 February 2008.

with a better educated population as compared to Afghanistan. The presence of oil ensures that it has a reliable means of income which can help the country in times of need. Afghanistan on the other had is completely impoverished with no major infrastructure in place. The comparison between the two countries is shown in the Map below.



Map 4.1: Comparison of War between Iraq and Afghanistan – December 2007¹⁵⁵

Source: Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Report.”

Diplomatic Support

The US action in Afghanistan was supported by the international community with 40 nations contributing directly in the effort in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the war in Iraq is still controversial with Australia becoming the latest country to announce pull out

¹⁵⁵Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Report,” The Center for Strategic and International Studies, http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071203_afghanchallrev.pdf; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008

of forces from there.¹⁵⁶ It is surprising that it has never been given the amount of resources which have been devoted to Iraq. The Defense Secretary of USA, Mr Gates in a recent statement seemed to acknowledge the fact that the war in Iraq was having an effect on Afghanistan once he stated, ““I worry that for many Europeans the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan are confused ... I think they combine the two.” He further went on to elaborate that many of them have a problem understanding that they are different and are directed against different nature of threats.¹⁵⁷

This misperception is creating problems in allowing for the generation of forces in Afghanistan. Many people even in the US military believe that there are too less troops deployed in Afghanistan as compared to the requirement and there is a need to increase the troop levels. The US military has decided to bolster the troop levels in Afghanistan as compared to Iraq where there was a talk of reducing the troop levels.¹⁵⁸

Export of Tactics from Iraq

Another factor which is claimed by the US and others of having a spin off effect on the situation in Afghanistan is the export of the tactics by insurgents from Iraq to Afghanistan. The latest techniques being used for attacking the ISAF like suicide bombings, sophistication in the use of IEDs etc is increasingly coming from Iraq. In June 2007, an Explosively Formed Projectiles or (EFP) was discovered in Kabul, which was

¹⁵⁶BBC News, “Iraq pledge by Australia PM-elect,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7120242.stm>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹⁵⁷Helene Cooper, "Choosing Which War To Fight." *New York Times*, 24 February 2008, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://www.proquest.com>; Internet; accessed March 11, 2008.

¹⁵⁸Yochi J. Dreazen, "Politics & Economics: U.S. May Look to Send More Troops to Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal*, 22 December 2007, Eastern Edition, <http://www.proquest.com>; Internet; accessed March 11, 2008.

first used in Basra in 2004.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, it is also suspected that many Al Qaeda fighters are moving to Afghanistan considering it a much purer fight than the sectarian conflict which is ongoing in Iraq. All this points to an alarming trend of information and tactics sharing between insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan further complicating the situation.

Soviet Comparison

The Soviets were not hampered by any such dilemma of diversion of resources and their full effort was focused on subduing Afghanistan. Even then they were unable to do so because of the inherent problems of the terrain and the resilience of the opposition. Recently, the US has realized the criticality of situation in Afghanistan and more troops are being dispatched to Afghanistan. In addition to that, at the eve of ‘Bucharest Summit,’ the NATO countries have also agreed to come up with some more forces for Afghanistan to help stabilize the country.

SECURITY

One of the key tenets of the ISAF’s commitment in Afghanistan is to improve the level of security in the country. The ISAF and the Afghan government repeatedly claim that they have made significant progress in this regard. These claims ring hollow due to the fact that the attacks by the Taliban are increasing day by day. As per a United Nation Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) report, the number of attacks carried out by them last year was the highest since their ouster (Ref Figure 4.8).

¹⁵⁹Haseeb Humayoon, “The Iraqization of Insurgency in Afghanistan,” Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies Afghanistan, <http://www.caps.af/publication.asp>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

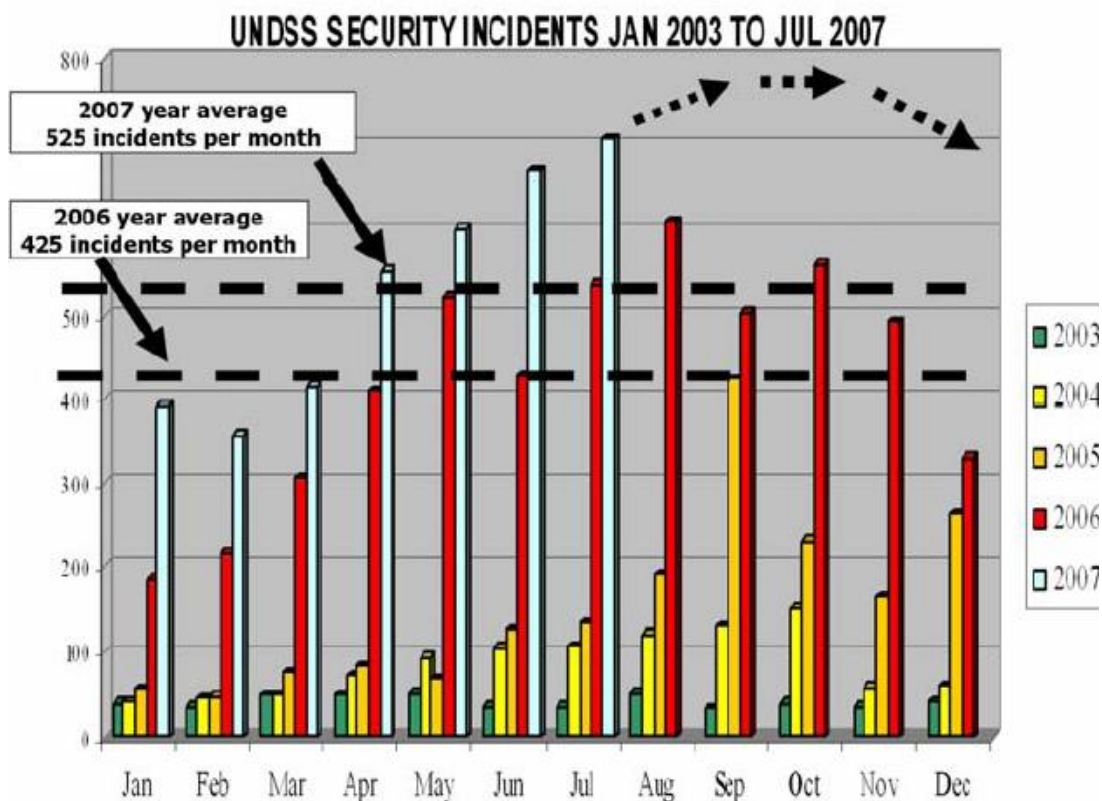


Figure 4.8: Distribution of incidents over the years¹⁶⁰

Source: United Nations Department of Safety and Security

As per a recently released report by NATO at the eve of Bucharest Summit, south and east of the country has been the subject of major attacks by the Taliban (Ref Figure 4.9).¹⁶¹ As per the NATO document, the districts of Helmand and Kandahar and Uruzgan are the most affected and suffered the maximum number of attacks. However, the document claims that the other areas of the country are relatively peaceful and no major attacks have been reported from there.

¹⁶⁰UNDSS, "Half-Year Review of the Security Situation in Afghanistan," <http://www.afghanconflictmonitor.org/UNAMA13082007.pdf>; Internet; accessed 11 March 2008

¹⁶¹NATO, "Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2-4 April 2008," http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/progress_afghanistan.pdf; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008

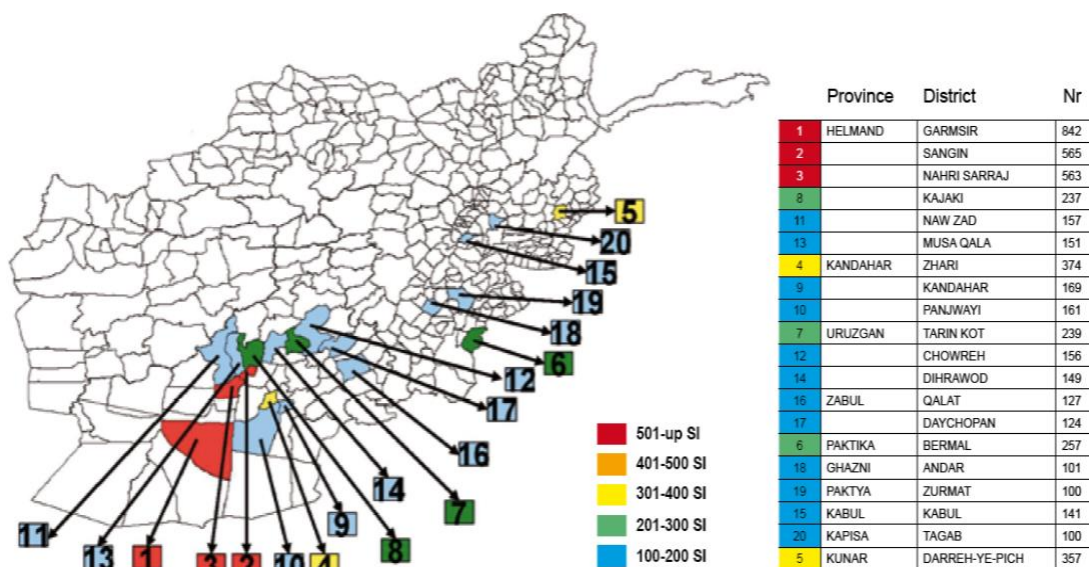


Figure 4.9: Distribution of incidents of violence by district¹⁶²

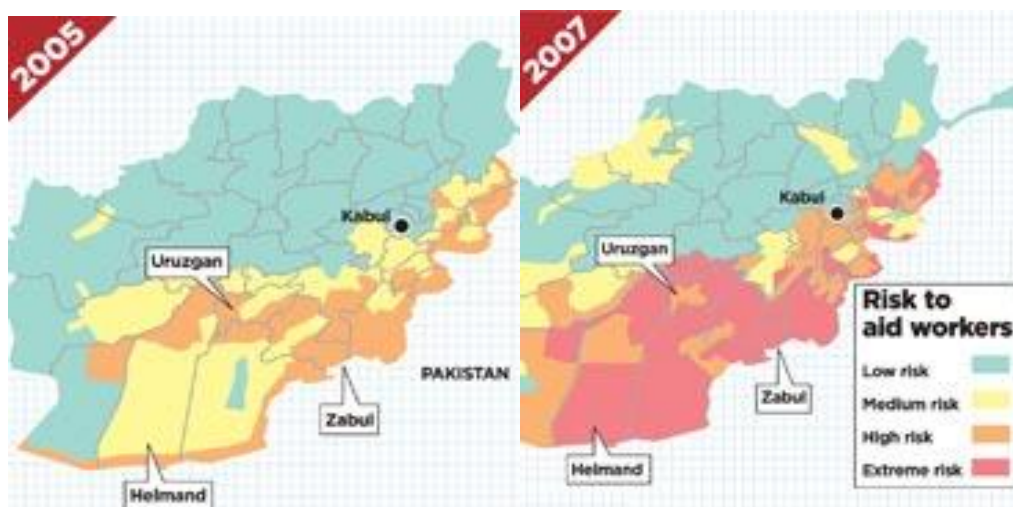
Source: NATO, "Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2-4 April 2008."

However, as per a secret report by the UN in December 2007, the risk to aid workers is increasing in Afghanistan (Ref Map 4.2)¹⁶³ If we compare the situation of 2005 and 2007, it becomes clear that the area with greater risk has greatly increased and is slowly expanding westwards as well. This is in contrast to the claims being made by ISAF and Afghan government that the situation is under control.

As per UNDSS also, the situation improved in north eastern parts whereas it deteriorated in the south and east of the country (Ref Map 4.3). All these reports clearly point to one fact that the situation is much worse in the south than it is in the north where it is relatively much better.

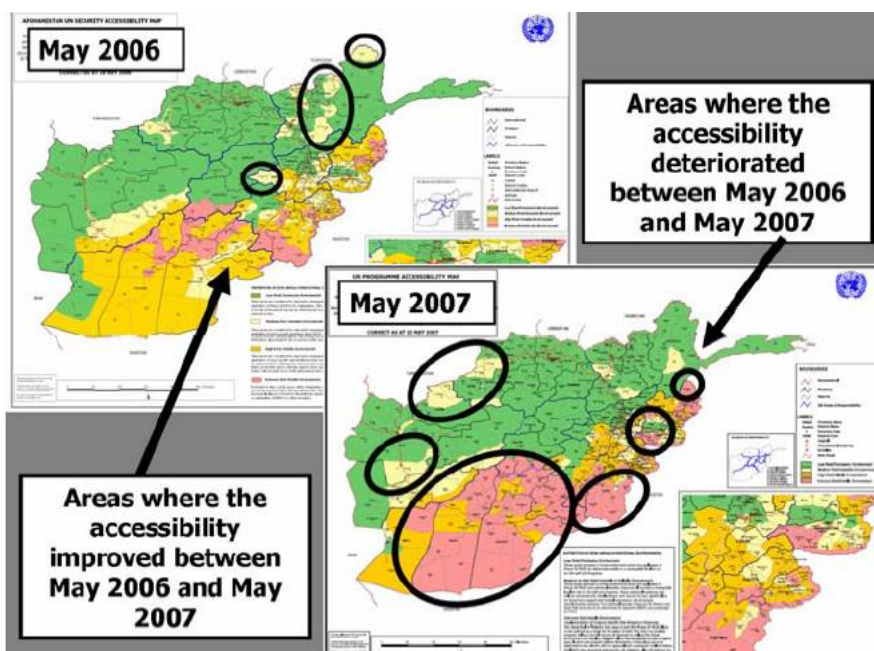
¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³Nick Meo, "Leaked Aid Map of Afghanistan reveals expansion of No-go Zones," *The Times*, December 5, 2007 available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article3000067.ece>; Internet; accessed 11 March 2008.



Map 4.2: This map shows the increase in areas from 2005 to 2007 having greater risk to aid workers¹⁶⁴

Source: Meo, “Leaked aid map of Afghanistan reveals expansion of No-go Zones.”



Map 4.3: Areas showing the increase / decrease in Stability.¹⁶⁵

Source: United Nations Department of Safety and Security.

¹⁶⁴The map has been produced in an article written by Nick Meo, “Leaked Aid Map of Afghanistan reveals expansion of No-go Zones,” *The Times*, December 5, 2007 available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article3000067.ece>; Internet; accessed 11 March 2008.

¹⁶⁵UN Department of Safety and Security, “Half-Year Review of the Security Situation in Afghanistan,” <http://www.afghanconflictmonitor.org/UNAMA13082007.pdf>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008

Another worrying trend has been the increasing use of IED by the Taliban. After failing to beat the international forces on the conventional battlefield they are now increasingly turning to the terror tactics and the use of IEDs has become a principle weapon of choice. The trend really picked up after 2003 and there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of attacks against the coalition forces indicated in Figure 4.10.

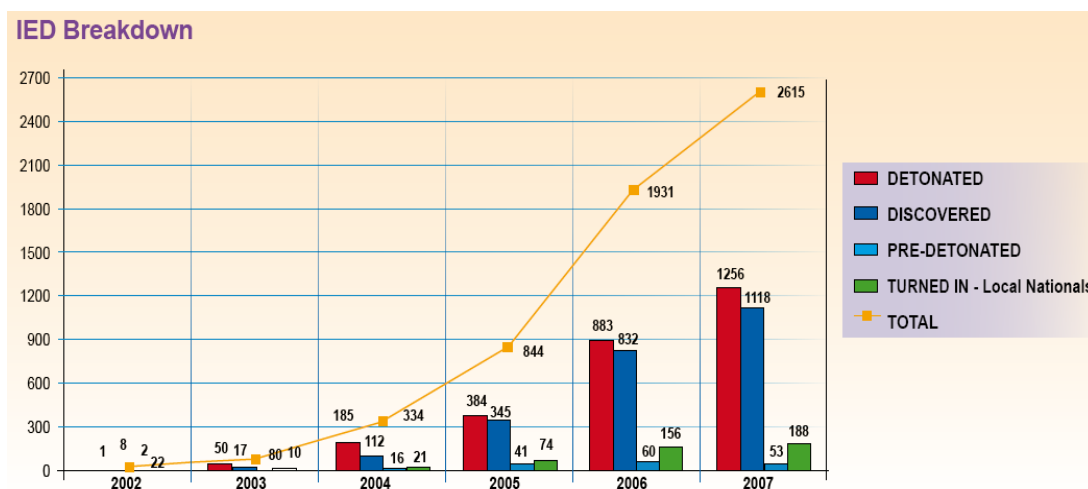


Figure 4.10: Graph showing the increase in the number of IED attacks in Afghanistan¹⁶⁶

Source: NATO, “Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2-4 April 2008.”

The Soviets were beset with the similar situation where they were unable to provide security to the people in general. As a result, there was a growing uncertainty amongst the supporters of the government as they were always under threat from the Mujahideen. The ISAF has tried to provide security to the people by establishing the Afghan National Police (ANP). The ANP has achieved approximately 90 percent of its strength but it has been unable to assert itself and is plagued with corruption, non-

¹⁶⁶NATO, “Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2-4 April 2008,” http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/progress_afghanistan.pdf; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008

professionalism and nepotism.¹⁶⁷ The projected and the present strength of ANP and ANA are shown in Figure 4.11.

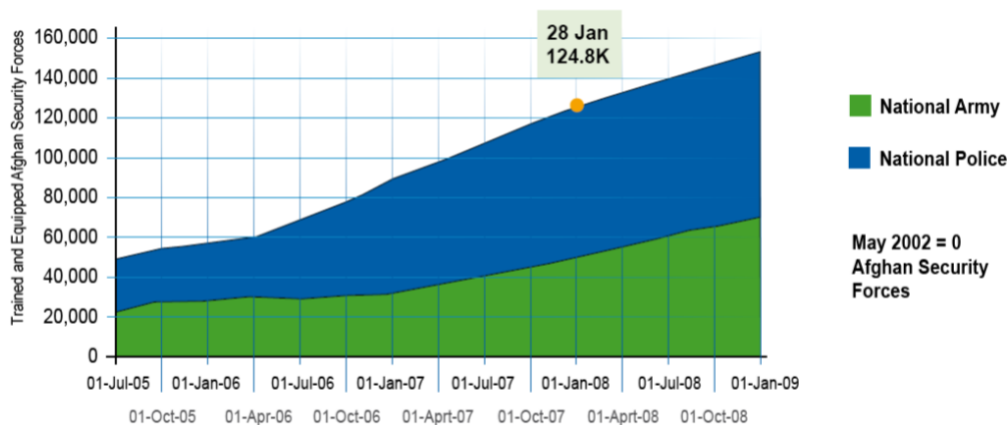


Figure 4.11: Graph showing the increase in the number of ANA and ANP over the years¹⁶⁸

Source: NATO, “Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2-4 April 2008.”

During the recent polls conducted in the southwest as shown in Figure 4.12 below, the police presence has gone down in the people’s perception whereas the number of people strongly opposing Taliban has also gone down from 72% to 50%. This can be attributed to the increased activity by the Taliban in the south as explained earlier and failure by the police to put an effective check on these activities. The rise in Taliban popularity may be attributed to the growing disenchantment with the government’s failure to provide them with adequate basic facilities.

¹⁶⁷J. Michael McConnell, “Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Armed Services Committee 27 February 2008,” <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2008/February/McConnell%2002-27-08.pdf>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008

¹⁶⁸NATO, “Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2-4 April 2008,” http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/progress_afghanistan.pdf; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008

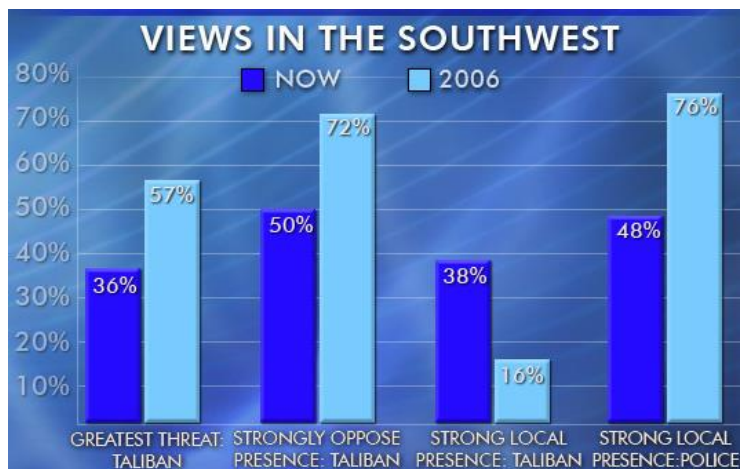


Figure 4.12: Chart showing the perception of Local populations regarding the Taliban and Police.¹⁶⁹

Source: ABC News, BBC, ARD Poll.

GOVERNANCE

One of the key problems which plagued the Soviet intervention was the failure to establish a legitimate government able to establish its writ over the entire territory. The ISAF has been better in this regard as it has been able to install a representative government by holding elections all over Afghanistan. This government has international recognition and legitimacy all over the world.

Control of Areas by Taliban

However, the questions remain whether it has been effective at home? President Karzai has now been in power since 2001 and the performance of his government has been much lower than expectations. His administration is considered to be weak, corrupt and he himself is looking increasingly vulnerable with his emotional outbursts at various

¹⁶⁹ABC News, BBC, ARD Poll, "Where things Stand in Afghanistan," <http://ABCnews.go.com/PollingUnit/popup?id=3932920&contentIndex=1&page=1>; Internet accessed 9 March 2008.

occasions. The rampant corruption in Karzai administration has stalled various projects which were to be undertaken by the Government with the help of international donors.

The failure of the government to impose its writ on the rural areas has allowed the Taliban to make a resurgence. The Central government has limited ability to intervene in the far flung provinces leaving the local power brokers in control. Moreover, the US reliance on the factional militias during the OEF also led to the strengthening of the local warlords, which are still hesitant to relinquish their power.¹⁷⁰

According to a recent US intelligence study, US officials acknowledged that Taliban controlled 11% of the territory whereas the federal government has control over only 31% with the remaining area being under the control of local/tribal leaders. Even President Bush acknowledged this fact once he stated that the “Taliban have not been defeated, they keep coming back.”¹⁷¹

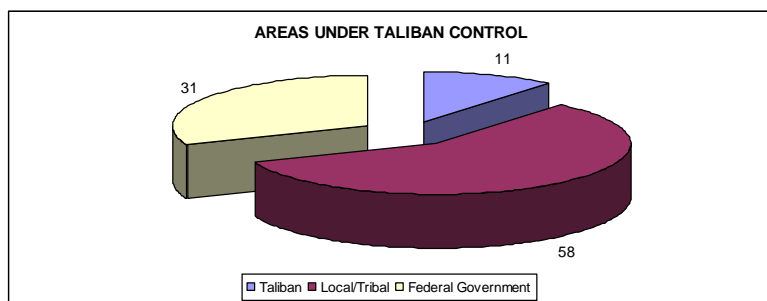


Figure 4.13: Chart showing the area under control of Taliban¹⁷²

Source: VOA News.com

¹⁷⁰Ali A. Jalali, “The Legacy of War and the Challenge of Peace Building,” in *Building a New Afghanistan*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg, 22-55 (Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 44.

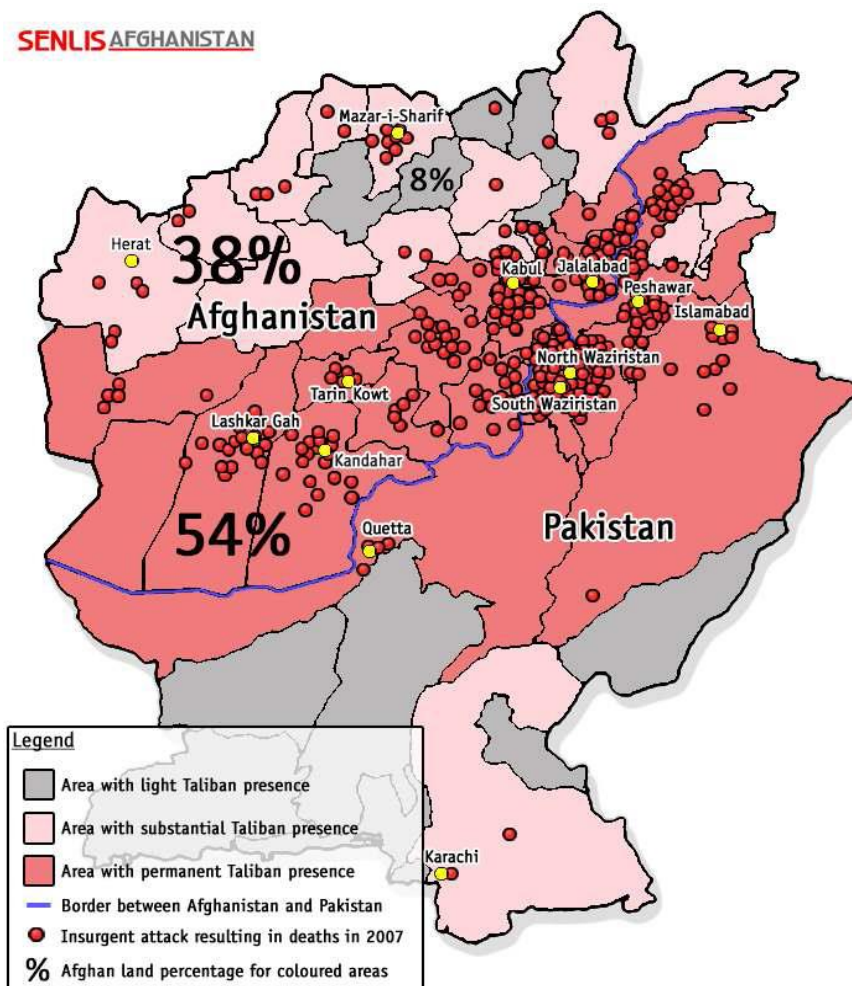
¹⁷¹Anwar Iqbal, “Bush urges to bolster strength in Afghanistan,” *The Dawn*, 21 March 2008, <http://www.dawn.com/2008/03/21/top4.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 March 2008.

¹⁷²Deborah Tate, “US Official Says Afghan Government Controls Only 30 Percent of Country,” *VOAnews.com*, 27 February 2008, <http://voanews.com/english/2008-02-27-voa67.cfm>; Internet; accessed 9 March 2008.

On the other extreme, ‘Senlis Afghanistan’ in a recent study concluded that 54% of the country had a permanent Taliban presence and it considers that they are controlling the infrastructure including roads and energy supplies more than before (Ref Map 4.4). Most important as per the Senlis Study, the Taliban are being increasingly legitimized in the eyes of the people as they consider the coalition forces incapable of providing the desired results.¹⁷³ The marked difference between the two reports points to the difficulty in collection of data in Afghanistan with all players interpreting the data as per their own perception. However, the figures from both the sides seem to be on the extremes with actual figures somewhere in between.

The Taliban have reasserted themselves in the country side especially in the southern and eastern provinces. They distribute pamphlets at night to farmers and coerce them to act according to their wishes. This trend could have been neutralized to a great extent if an effort had been made to provide basic facilities to people. In their absence, it becomes much easier for Taliban to influence the people as they do not have any stake in conforming to the authority of the central government.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*



Map 4.4: Map showing the levels of Taliban presence in Afghanistan¹⁷⁴

Source: Senlis Council

Human Development

As per the UNDP report of 2007, the Afghanistan has Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.345 which is lower than its regional neighbours (Ref Fig 4.14) and 174 out of 178 countries in the world. The literacy rate remains abysmally low and the maternity and infant mortality rates remain one of the highest in the world highlighting the great

¹⁷⁴Senlis Council, "Afghanistan on the Brink," http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/publications/Afghanistan_on_the_brink; Internet; accessed 25 December 2007.

amount of effort required to improve these areas.¹⁷⁵ However, the Afghan government has made significant strides in the health care and education sectors. The number of children enrolled in for primary schools has increased from 900,000 to nearly 5.4 million in the last five years.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, in the health sector the government's basic health package is now available to 82% of population compared to none a few years ago.

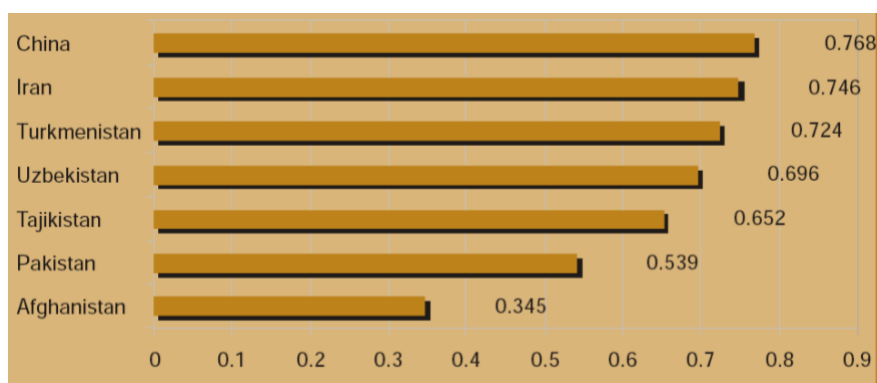


Figure 4.14: Comparison of Afghanistan's HDI with its neighbours¹⁷⁷

Source: UNDP, "Afghanistan Human Development Report."

Emancipation of Women

This has been one of the most important issues in modern Afghanistan. The women in Afghanistan are again making an emergence in the public life after the harsh Taliban rule. The DRA Government faced major opposition once it tried to implement its decree for the education of women as it was considered against the tribal customs and traditions. Although a lot of time has passed since then but some of those taboos remain

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶UNDP, "Afghanistan Human Development Report," available at www.undp.org; Internet; accessed 11 March 2008.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*

in place even today. Most of the people in the West consider the ‘Burqa’¹⁷⁸ as an ultimate measure of the discrimination of the women. Some journalists eagerly reported after the fall of Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif that the women have been liberated from their ‘burqas’ because it is considered as an impediment to their progress. However, the challenges faced by the women are far more than the removal of veil only, which has been a part of the culture in Afghanistan since long and at times provides more security to the women than going without it.¹⁷⁹ It will take time for the women to meet all those challenges of literacy, health care and others to become a productive member of the society in the long run.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

The ISAF has tried to help by formulating Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in various provinces to undertake various reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. There are at present 26 PRTs working all over the country and their locations are shown in Map 3.4. There is no central direction for the PRTs and every lead nation has adopted its own concept of the tasks to be undertaken dwindling away the effectiveness of these teams. The Afghan Central Government has no or limited say on the projects being undertaken, further reducing their overall effectiveness. As per an Oxfam report, the

¹⁷⁸Complete veil from head to toe used by some women in Afghanistan and other Muslim countries as well

¹⁷⁹Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, “Afghan Women on the Margins of the Twenty-first Century,” in *Nation-Building Unraveled? Aid, Peace and Justice in Afghanistan*, ed. Antonio Donini, Norah Niland and Karin Wermester, 95-116 (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2004), 102.

PRTs have exceeded their mandate and have impeded the development of local government bodies and are no substitute for long term community development work.¹⁸⁰

POLITICAL PROBLEMS

The Soviets tried their best to form a representative government during their stay. They did this by using the PDPA party structure to grant legitimacy to Afghanistan's leaders but were not successful as the PDPA had a very limited support base. Moreover, the leaders appointed by them were considered to be puppets only as he had to follow the directions of the Soviets or he was removed from power. Hafizullah Amin and Babrak Karmal are the prime examples who were removed once they started asserting their authority too much.

Composition of Afghan Government

If we look at the formation of present Afghan government, it becomes obvious that the problem started as soon as the NA took over Kabul in spite of US efforts that it should avoid doing so.¹⁸¹ Once the transitional government was formed, NA heavily dominated the transitional government and there was no effort to make a broad based government incorporating all segments of the society.¹⁸² A relatively less powerful Pushtun leader, Hamid Karzai was selected to lead the interim government on the

¹⁸⁰Oxfam, "Afghanistan: Development and Humanitarian Priorities," January 2008, http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/publications/briefing_papers; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

¹⁸¹M. Ismail Khan & Danish Karokhel, "Northern Alliance troops enter Kabul," *The Dawn*, 14 November 2001, <http://www.dawn.com/2001/11/14/top2.htm>; Internet accessed; 19 March 2008.

¹⁸²Afghan government, "Government - Afghan Bonn Agreement."

strength of coalition firepower.¹⁸³ Moreover, most of the warlords and former Mujahideen which were in favour of the US were rewarded and were eligible to run in the elections held in 2004. This allowed most of them to enter the national assembly and continue to exert their influence in the new assembly as well. These include Abdur Rashid Dostum, Abd-i-Rab Rasool Sayyaf, Yunas Qannoni and Hazrat Ali amongst several others.¹⁸⁴

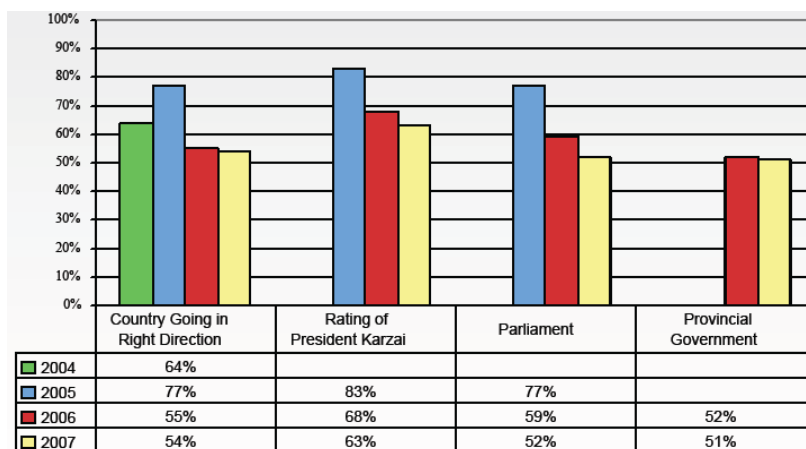


Figure 4.15: Chart showing the Afghan views of Government, President and the future.¹⁸⁵

Source: Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Report.”

Western Installed Leader

Another problem is that Hamid Karzai is considered as a leader installed in power by the west with very less support at the grass root level and Taliban are fully exploiting this fact. Although he won the election in 2004 but his own and the government’s popularity graph are sliding down (Ref Figure 4.15). He is in a difficult position because

¹⁸³J. Alexander Their, “The Politics of Peace-building,” in *Nation-Building Unraveled? Aid, Peace and Justice in Afghanistan*, ed. Antonio Donini, Norah Niland, Karin Wermester, 39-60 (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2004), 46.

¹⁸⁴ Kenneth Katzman “Afghanistan: Elections, Constitution, and Government,” CRS Report for Congress, <http://italy.usembassy.gov/pdf/other/RS21922.pdf>; Internet; accessed 11 April 2008.

¹⁸⁵Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Report.”

he cannot antagonize the West too much but at the same time he does not seem to be taking dictation from the West, which will undermine his position in the tribal Afghan society. Therefore, some times his actions create resentment in the international community. The decision to expel two western diplomats for talking to Taliban¹⁸⁶ and the refusal to accept Lord Ashdown as the special representative who was termed as viceroy by some media outlets are few of such instances.¹⁸⁷ However, this has not helped matters and relations between the British and Karzai administration are at an all time low because of these incidents.

Pushtun Factor

Pushtuns form 42 % of the population but they did not have an adequate representation in the government formed after 2001.¹⁸⁸ Pushtuns have been the traditional rulers of Afghanistan and it was very difficult for them to be dominated by the Tajiks and Uzbeks which were predominant in the interim administration. President Karzai tried to take care of the Pushtun sensitivities when he inducted more Pushtuns as cabinet ministers after presidential election in 2004.¹⁸⁹ However, in the elections for *Wolesi Jirga* (National Assembly) in 2005, the Afghans voted on ethnic lines and there was 47.4% Pushtun representation in the assembly.¹⁹⁰ These measures have not helped because the

¹⁸⁶Jerome Starkey and Anne Penketh, "Western diplomats expelled from Kabul," *The Independent*, 26 December 2007, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/western-diplomats-expelled-from-kabul-766814.html>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹⁸⁷Alastair Leithead and Charles Haviland, "UK's Ashdown too 'super' for Kabul," *BBCnews.com*, 28 January 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7213786.stm; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

¹⁸⁸CIA, The World Factbook, "Afghanistan"

¹⁸⁹Katzman "Afghanistan: Elections, Constitution ...,"

¹⁹⁰Pbs.org, "A Woman among warlords, Handbook, Wolesi Jirga versus Meshrano Jirga," <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/warlords/handbook.html>; Internet; accessed 12 April 2008.

insurgency remains the strongest in the south and east of the country which are Pushtun dominated areas indicating dissatisfaction with the current setup.

Policy of Non-Negotiation

Karzai administration is following a strict policy of no negotiations with Taliban precluding the possibility of a peace between the Taliban and the government. This has further complicated the issue as it is amply evident that there can be no final military solution to the problem. Ultimately it is the political solution which has to prevail. Initially the DRA also did not carry out any talks with the Mujahideen portraying them as tools of western imperialism. However, Najibullah's policy of reconciliation greatly helped in winning over the various mujahideen and enabled his government to survive even after the withdrawal of Soviet forces.

ECONOMY

Afghanistan's economy has been a mess since 1979 once the Soviet Union invaded the country. Since then the country has been the recipient of massive foreign aid which has helped the country to keep functioning. There was still some semblance of the government infrastructure and effort to steer the economy in the last years of the PDPA government. The Afghan government was unable to function once the Soviet Union cut off its aid to Afghanistan resulting in the fall of Najibullah Government.

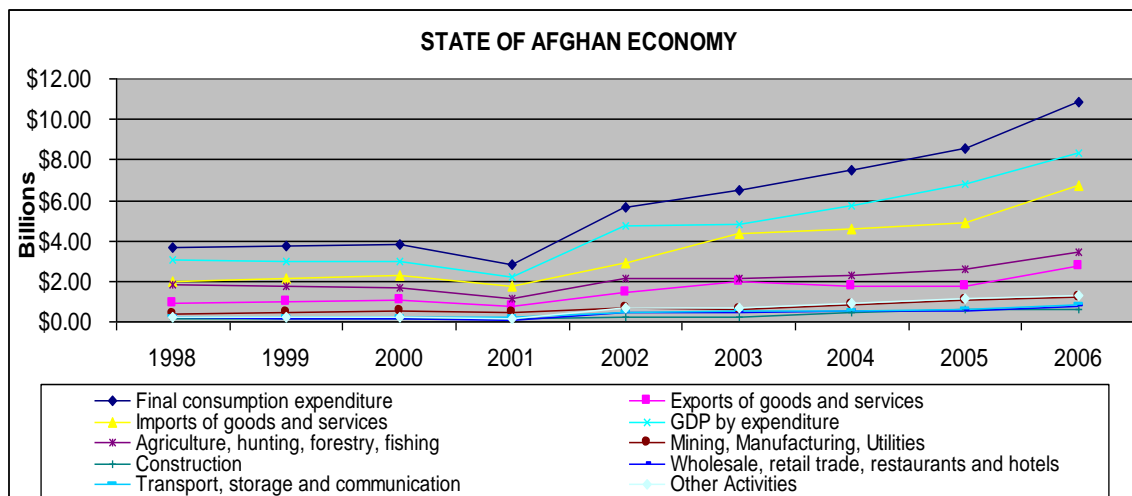


Figure 4.16: Chart showing the State of Economy before and after the US operations in 2001¹⁹¹

Source: United Nations Statistics.

If we analyze Figure 4.16, it becomes clear that the government expenditure has greatly increased in the aftermath of the US invasion. However, the baseline sectors have not increased at the pace of the expenditure for e.g. construction, agriculture, wholesale retail and restaurant business etc. There has been a massive increase in the imports probably financed by the extra money coming in form of aid and somewhat modest increase in the exports compared to imports. The availability of extra cash has helped revive the economy as now more money is available with the government to spend on the development projects resulting in the rise in standards of living of the population.

¹⁹¹Compiled from Data available from, United Nations Statistics, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/dnllist.asp>; Internet; accessed 27 Jan 2008.

Foreign Aid

The international community reaffirmed its commitment to Afghanistan at the Berlin's Donors conference in 2004 and \$ 8 billion dollars of foreign aid to help revive the economy was promised.¹⁹² The figure showing the major contributors is as below:-

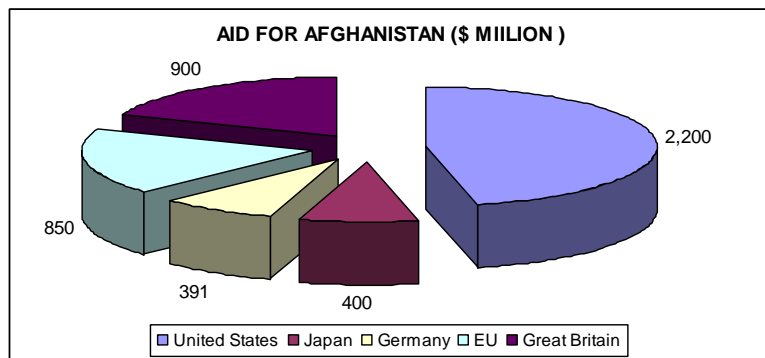


Figure 4.17: Chart showing the Aid promised to Afghanistan by major donors.¹⁹³

Source: US Department of State

However, most of these promises failed to materialize and the required aid has never been provided to the full. It was estimated by Afghan government in 2004 that it would require \$27.5 billion or \$138 per capita of the aid but so far it has received only \$83 per capita during the period 2002-05.¹⁹⁴ Even then, the Afghan government at present is heavily dependent on the foreign aid for its functioning as it was on the Soviet aid in the previous times.

¹⁹²U.S Department of State, "The Berlin Donors' Conference: Helping Afghanistan Move Forward," available at <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/fs/32094.htm>; Internet accessed 16 March 2008.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴UNDP, "Afghanistan Human Development Report," available at www.undp.org; Internet accessed 11 March 2008.

External Budget versus Core Budget

Another problem that has been associated with the aid has been the donors' insistence to fund the projects directly or through NGOs instead of giving the money to Afghan government. This also involves the expenditure on maintaining the expatriate staff in Afghanistan incurred by the various governments and agencies.¹⁹⁵ This trend is reflected in the form of Core Budget which is spent by the Government and External Budget which is spent by the Donors directly. If we compare the figures between 2005 and 2006 (Ref Figure 4.18) the external budget seems to be declining but still a major portion is spent directly by the donors, which is not that beneficial as the core budget spent through the government.

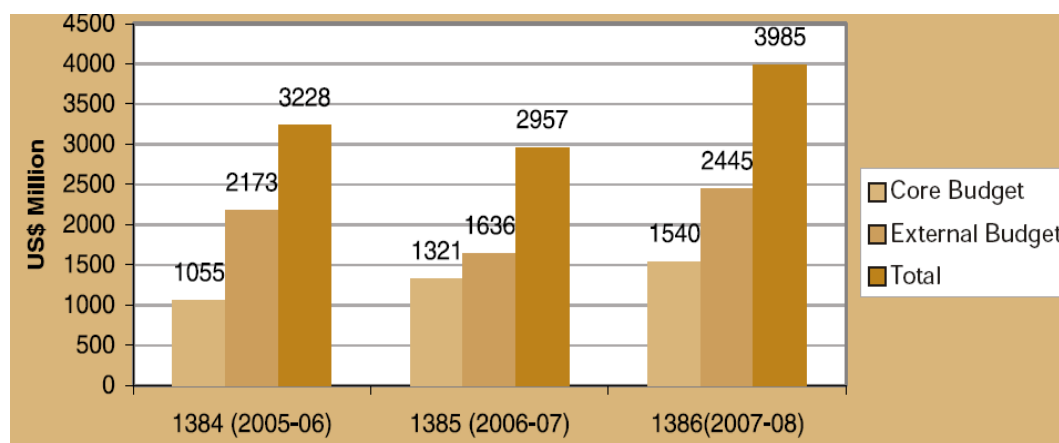


Figure 4.18: Chart showing the figures for core and external budget as per the Afghan fiscal year.¹⁹⁶

Source: UNDP, "Afghanistan Human Development Report."

¹⁹⁵Oxfam, "Afghanistan: Development and Humanitarian Priorities," January 2008, http://www.oxfamamerica.org/newsandpublications/publications/briefing_papers; Internet; accessed 20 April 2008.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*

Security and Corruption

The security and corruption issues continue to haunt the government.¹⁹⁷

Meaningful development cannot be undertaken until the atmosphere is conducive for development work. This is the same dilemma which faced the Soviets once they started functioning in Afghanistan as it was not possible to undertake development projects especially in rural areas due to the lack of adequate security. The Taliban presence serves the same purpose today thereby restricting areas where development work can be undertaken. Similarly, misappropriation of the funds by government functionaries erodes the donor confidence and resultantly they are hesitant to engage them in conducting their projects instead preferring to adopt the more circuitous route. The security and corruption costs in Afghanistan in comparison with its regional neighbours are shown in Figure 4.18.

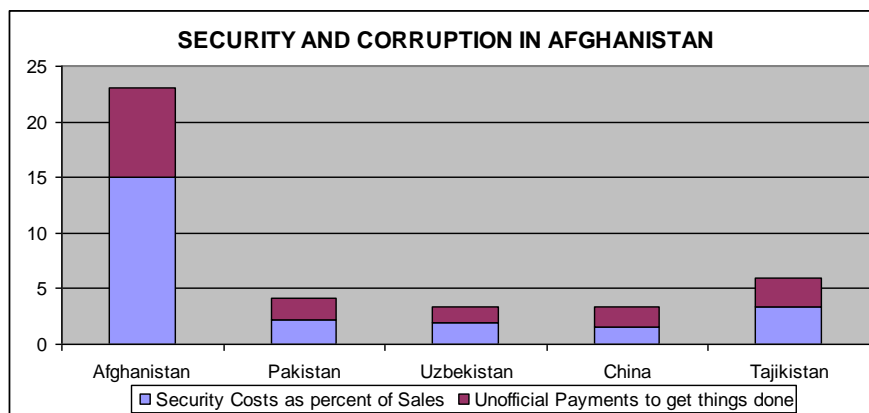


Figure 4.19: Chart showing the figures of corruption and security costs in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁸

Source: McKechnie, "Rebuilding a robust Afghan Economy."

¹⁹⁷Alastair J. McKechnie, "Rebuilding a Robust Afghan Economy," ed. Robert I. Rotberg, 98-133 (Washington D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 109.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 110-111.

Refugees Repatriation

Another indicator which can be used as a comparison is the presence of refugees in Pakistan and Iran. The repatriation of more than 2 million refugees so far from both the countries shows the people's confidence in the circumstances prevalent in the country. This inflow as compared to the continuous outflow during the Soviet occupation can be regarded as a major achievement for the government and vote of confidence for it.

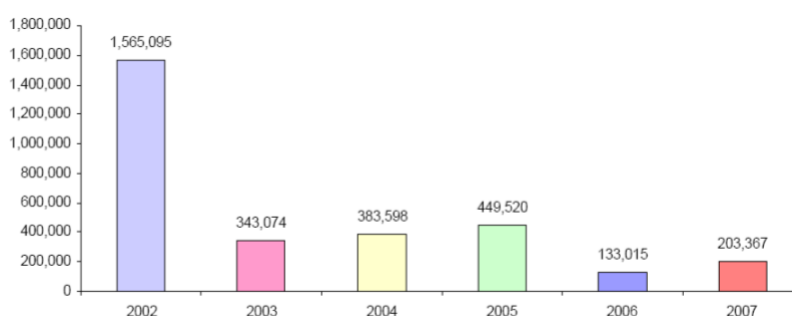


Figure 4.20: Chart showing the rate of return of Afghan refugees over the years from Pakistan.¹⁹⁹

Source: UNHCR

These returning refugees need to be integrated into the economy to ensure that they settle down and do not become refugees again. However, most of them have not adjusted inside the country. Of the two and a half million which remain in Pakistan according to a survey 82% are hesitant to return with poor security and lack of jobs being one of the key issues in their return.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹UNHCR, "Voluntary Repatriation from Pakistan Statistical Overview: Repatriation of Afghans without POR Cards, 1 March – 15 April 2007."

²⁰⁰UNHCR, "Voluntary Repatriation from Pakistan Statistical Overview: Repatriation of Afghans without POR Cards, 1 March – 15 April 2007," Available at www.unhcr.org; Internet; accessed 9 February 2008.

Soviet Comparison

The Afghan economy is in much better shape than it was in the previous times. During the Soviet era, the growth was stagnant and they could never really rejuvenate the economy (Ref Figure 2.8). Moreover, the socialist model was not suitable for the tribal society of Afghanistan which still has strong feudal characteristics. Moreover, Afghans being traders generally would feel more comfortable in a free enterprise capitalist system than in the suffocating environs of a socialist system. It is a fact that if the economic opportunities are there, it will enable the people to live a better life and make them less susceptible to Taliban and other extremist forces.

DRUG ECONOMY

Afghanistan was the top producer of opium in the world in 2007. A staggering 8,200 tons of opium was produced which is 93% of the world's production.²⁰¹ It was cultivated on 193,000 hectares which is more than the entire land used for cultivating drugs in Latin America.²⁰² Opium cultivation picked up during the Soviet era and has been continuously increasing since then except for a brief dip during the last year of Taliban rule in 2001. This has become a major problem for the ISAF as according to estimates, opium industry has become a \$3.1 billion dollar enterprise and constitutes about 50% of the legal GDP.²⁰³

²⁰¹*Ibid.*

²⁰²UNODC, "Afghanistan, 2007 Annual Opium Poppy Survey," http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf; Internet; accessed 24 March 2008.

²⁰³UNDP, "Afghanistan Human Development Report."

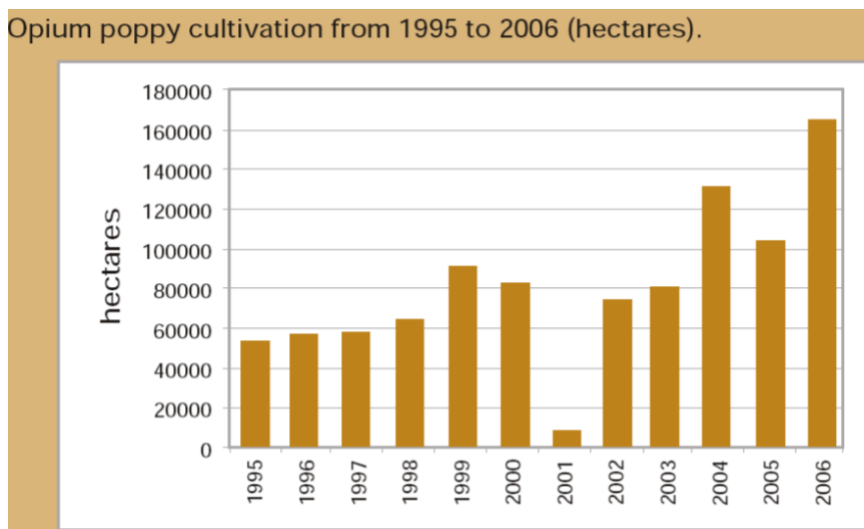


Figure 4.21: Chart showing the growth of Opium cultivation from 1995 to 2006.²⁰⁴

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

If we see the regional distribution of the opium cultivation pattern, it is mostly concentrated in the south and south west with Helmand producing 51% of the entire opium as per the UNODC report (Ref Figure 4.22).²⁰⁵ The issue of dealing with this problem has created a catch 22 situation for ISAF who does not want to be seen as destroying the livelihood of the people and at the same time it can not allow the cultivation to go on unchecked.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*

²⁰⁵UNODC, “Afghanistan, 2007 Annual Opium Poppy Survey.”

Cultivation trend in 2008	No. of provinces	Provinces
Poppy-free	12	Balkh, Bamyan, Ghazni, Khost, Kunduz, Logar, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktya, Panjshir, Parwan, Wardak
Decrease	7	Badakhshan, Baghlan, Hirat, Kabul, Kapisa, Kunar, Laghman
Sharp decrease	3	Faryab, Jawzjan, Nangarhar
Increase	6	Badghis, Farah, Ghor, Kandahar, Samangan, Uruzgan
Sharp increase	1	Nimroz,
Stable	5	Day Kundi, Hilmand, Sari Pul, Takhar, Zabul

Figure 4.22: Map and Table showing the Opium Production trends in Afghanistan.²⁰⁶

Source: UNODC

Moreover, there has been a rift between the Karzai administration as well as between coalition partners in the ISAF themselves as the best way to deal with the problem. Mr Karzai blamed west for the increase in drug production saying that the coalition was not respecting the Afghan government ideas in fighting against this

²⁰⁶UNODC, Afghanistan, "Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey," <http://www.unodc.org/afg/>; Internet accessed 9 February 2008.

menace, a claim which was refuted by the UK, which is leading the drive against poppy eradication. He did not give the specific measures which were not adopted by the International community.²⁰⁷

The US is willing to do aerial spraying which is opposed by the UK which wants to eradicate the crop by ground spray or other means.²⁰⁸ The aerial spraying is opposed by the Afghan government as well and in a recent interview to Washington Post, President Karzai commented that he is very strongly opposed to the aerial spraying of the poppy fields.²⁰⁹

The economy in rural areas has become dependent on the opium production due to the large profit margins involved. At places the insurgents and the drug smugglers force the farmers to grow opium as it provides them source of funds to continue their fight against the western forces. Apart from the economy, the opium production is giving rise to corruption amongst the government functionaries as the cultivation, processing and transportation is not possible until the time they have contacts in the government departments thereby eroding the authority of central government.²¹⁰

DIPLOMATIC

The Soviets were never able to achieve international legitimacy for their intervention. ISAF's mission has been sanctioned by the UN and more and more

²⁰⁷Aunohita Mojumdar, Alex Barker and James Blitz, "Karzai blasts west over opium policy," *FT.com*, 29 August 2007 [journal online], available at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e5fc94f0-5659-11dc-ab9c-0000779fd2ac.html>; Internet accessed 19 March 2008.

²⁰⁸Declan Walsh, "Afghanistan's opium poppies will be sprayed, says US drugs tsar," *guardian.co.uk*, 11 December 2006, [journal on-line], <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/dec/11/afghanistan.declanwalsh>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

²⁰⁹Washingtonpost.com, "A Conversation With Hamid Karzai," 27 January 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/25/AR2008012502782_pf.html; Internet; accessed 8 April 2008.

²¹⁰UNDP, "Afghanistan Human Development Report," available at www.undp.org; Internet accessed 11 March 2008

countries have joined the mission which highlights the positive light in which the ISAF's missions is viewed by the international community. The US has also been successful in bringing all the Afghanistan's neighbours together as well cutting off the source of overt aid to Taliban. This is a major success as the Soviets could not achieve it throughout their stay in Afghanistan.

REGIONAL SCENARIO

Afghanistan sits at the cross roads between the south, central and western Asia thereby generating tremendous interest from all countries in the region. However, if we look at the regional setting we find that it has always been affected by the developments in the region since the ancient times. During the Soviet invasion, one of the critical issues facing the Afghanistan was the inability of Afghan government to keep peace with its neighbours especially Iran and Pakistan. As a result, both of these countries provided active assistance to the Mujahideen frustrating efforts by the Soviet and the DRA forces to pacify the country.

Pakistan

At present, although Afghanistan is having much better relations with Iran but its relations with Pakistan are far from ideal. The Karzai administration continues blaming Pakistan for problems in his country. In 2006, while on a visit to Kandahar school, Mr Karzai said, "Pakistan hopes to make slaves out of us, but we will not surrender ...

Pakistan wants you to be a gatekeeper at the hotel in Karachi ... Pakistan still hasn't given up the hope of making us slaves. But they cannot.”²¹¹

His frequent outbursts have ensured that the two countries relationship remains rocky instead of stabilizing. However, in the recent times, he has softened his tone against Pakistan but still insists that Pakistan should do more to eradicate terrorism in its north-western region. Such comments do not go well with Pakistan responding to accusations from Afghanistan in very strong terms at times further complicating the relation between the two countries.²¹²

Pakistan has been making active efforts to control Taliban in its border areas but it was continuously being accused of complicity by Karzai administration. Pakistan has employed its troops along the border with Afghanistan, initiated Madrassah reforms and has been bearing the burden of millions of Afghan refugees for the last three decades now. Even after repatriation of about 2 million refugees from Pakistan, there are still 2.154 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan which have become a tremendous strain on the country. The bulk of these refugees are located in the North West frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan with smaller numbers spread out all over the country. (Ref Figure 4.23)

²¹¹Dawn.com, “Frustrated Karzai again lashes out at Pakistan,” 14 December 2006, <http://www.dawn.com/2006/12/14/top7.htm>; Internet; accessed 7 April 2008.

²¹²CNN.com, “Pakistan President Blasts Afghan Leader,” 5 March 2006 [journal online], <http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/asiapcf/03/05/musharraf/index.html>; Internet; accessed 26 March 2008.

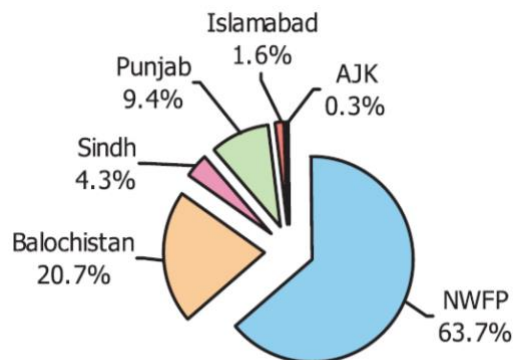


Figure 4.23: Chart showing the distribution of Afghan refugees in Pakistan²¹³

Source: UNHCR and National Database and Registration Authority Pakistan.

It is no surprise that Pakistani government and the people are asking that the refugees should be repatriated as the conditions in Afghanistan have improved. The refugees are considered to be responsible for many problems like drug smuggling and introduction of Kalashnikov culture in Pakistan. Moreover, these refugees also become a source of recruits for Taliban as more than 70% of them are still illiterate and out of 30% who have some education, 5% have obtained informal religious education in various madrassahs becoming an easy recruit for the religious extremists.

²¹³National Database and Registration Authority Pakistan and UNHCR, “Registration of Afghans in Pakistan,” <http://www.unhcr.org.pk/emergency/Registration%20Report.pdf>; Internet accessed 16 March 2008

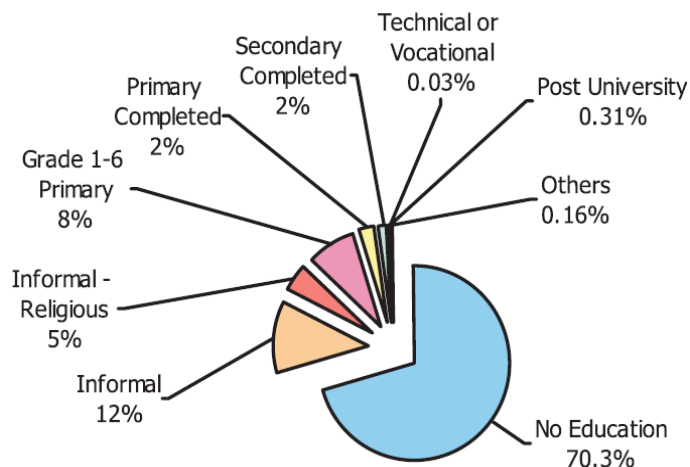


Figure 4.24: Chart showing the educational level of Afghan refugees in Pakistan²¹⁴

Source: UNHCR and National Database and Registration Authority Pakistan.

One of the major impediments between the improvements of relations between both the countries is the Afghan government's intransigence on raising the issue of Pushtunistan and Durand line. Pakistan categorically rejects any such claims by Afghan government and is supported in this regard by the international community as well. This, however, creates a lot of unnecessary confrontation between both the two governments and gives rise to problems in the relations between them.

²¹⁴National Database and Registration Authority Pakistan and UNHCR, "Registration of Afghans in Pakistan."



Map 4.5: Map showing the Pushtun dominated area along Pak-Afghan border²¹⁵

Source: University of Texas Libraries, “Afghanistan-Pakistan Border.”

In spite of all the animosity between the two countries, the trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan is booming. Apart from the transit trade facilities which Pakistan has been providing Afghanistan since long, the volume of trade between both the countries has crossed \$ 1 billion mark and growing with the passage of time. In fact if

²¹⁵University of Texas Libraries, “Afghanistan-Pakistan Border,” http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghan_paki_border_rel88.jpg; Internet accessed 16 March 2008

we see Figure 4.23, it becomes clear that Pakistan is the leading trade partner of Afghanistan in terms of both imports and exports.

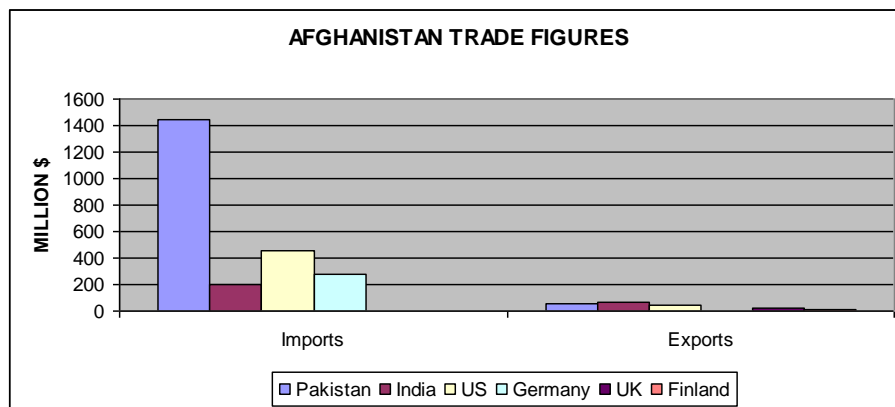


Figure 4.25: Chart showing the volume of trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan.²¹⁶

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook.”

During the Taliban era, oil and gas pipelines and transit trade facilities from Central Asia were under great discussion. In fact, it was said that the Taliban were supported by UNOCAL and Pakistan government based on the likelihood that it would provide the requisite security for trade with Central Asia. It is surprising that there has been no talk about this now which seems to indicate that all the major players have considered the security situation in Afghanistan being too uncertain to enable any concrete measures to be undertaken.

Iran

Iran also has exerted considerable influence over Afghanistan in the past. In fact, Shah of Iran played a key role in normalizing relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. During the Soviet era, Iran kept supporting the Hizb-e-Wahdat organistaion

²¹⁶Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Factbook.”

which was composed mainly of Shiites. Iran could not become the conduit for US and Western weapons because of the Iranian Revolution. Similarly, the Arab aid could also not go through Iran because of historic animosity between them. In spite of this, Iran played a major role in the Afghan resistance movement and was a host to millions of Afghan refugees. Its role increased once the Taliban came to power and Iran felt that its interests were being threatened. It provided support to the NA which was opposing the Taliban and the relationship continued after the Afghan transitional government was formed.

However, Iran worsening relationship with the United States has affected negatively on its relations with the Afghan government. Iran is in an unenviable position nowadays that it has US dominated alliances operating on its western and northern borders i.e in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran has been accused by various Western leaders including the Canadian Defence Minister of providing support and weapons to the insurgents in Afghanistan.²¹⁷ Other ISAF officials have also accused it of providing assistance to the insurgents in Afghanistan.²¹⁸ It cannot be ruled that Iran may be used as a transit route for the insurgents to move from Iraq to Afghanistan thus providing a continuous exchange of ideas to each other.

²¹⁷Cbcnews, "MacKay says Iran giving weapons to Taliban," <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2007/12/25/mackay-afghanistan.html>; Internet accessed 19 March 2008.

²¹⁸John Ward Anderson, "Arms Seized in Afghanistan Sent from Iran, NATO Says," *Washington Post*, 21 September 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/20/AR2007092001236.html>; Internet accessed 19 March 2008.

Central Asian States

Central Asian states border Afghanistan on the north and northwest. These were used as launch pads by the Soviet Union during the 1979 invasion and combat aircraft based in the Central Asian region carried out air strikes against the Afghan Mujahideen. During the Taliban era, these states felt threatened by the Taliban militia and provided military support to NA. The US used Central Asian republics for staging CIA and Special Forces in Afghanistan. Even now NATO forces are operating from bases in Central Asia and carrying out bombing runs against the Taliban.

India

India has been active in Afghanistan since independence. Once the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, India was one of the few countries which had good relations with the Afghan government. This unsettled Pakistan because of its fears of having an opposing regime on its western border as well. Pakistan's support of Taliban and their growing successes caused a lot of concern in India. They provided NA with arms and ammunition when the Taliban threatened to take over the entire country. Once the US started OEF, India provided full support to the US-led coalition. Moreover, after the success of US forces in Afghanistan when the NA led government formed the transitional government in Afghanistan, it had good relations with the Indian government. This created a difficult situation for Pakistan as it found that in spite of all the efforts made by it over the decades, it had a seemingly unfriendly regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan watched with concern the establishment of Indian consulates in Jalalabad and

Kandahar and accused India of interfering in its internal affairs and inciting the insurgency in Balochistan and North West Frontier Province (NWFP).²¹⁹



Map 4.6: Map showing the location of Indian Consulates in Afghanistan.²²⁰

Source: Economist.com

Although President Karzai has declared at various occasions that he will not allow his country's territory to be used against any other state, the apprehensions of Pakistan remain. The India-Pakistan peace process and the inclusion of Afghanistan in South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have improved the situation to a great extent. India is the only country in the region which has had good relations with both the DRA and Karzai administration and at the same time has also been improving

²¹⁹Scott Baldauf, "India-Pakistan rivalry reaches into Afghanistan," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 September 2003, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0912/p07s01-wosc.html>; Internet; accessed 20 March 2008.

²²⁰Economist.com, "The Great Game revisited," [journal on-line] http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8896853; Internet; accessed 24 Jan 2008.

relations with the US. It has also provided \$750 million in aid to Afghanistan since 2001 as compared to \$150 million by Pakistan for various development projects, which has helped it to increase its influence in Afghanistan. However, India knows that without improving relations with Pakistan, it cannot fully exploit the opportunities available in Afghanistan and Central Asia because all such routes have to pass through Pakistan. It therefore acts as a further impetus for the two countries to improve their relations in order to be able to fully exploit the economic opportunities available.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

After carrying out an analysis and comparison of Soviet Intervention with ISAF's present role in Afghanistan, it can be said that the two operations have a lot in common even though they took place in different circumstances at different timeframes. An effort will be made to assess how the ISAF has fared keeping in view the lessons learnt from the Soviet experience and what improvements can be made in this regard.

MILITARY

Employment of Sufficient Numbers

The number of troops committed by ISAF is far less as compared to the Soviet Union and seems to be inadequate for the purpose. The Soviets could not achieve their mission even after employing a larger number of troops than ISAF (Ref Table 4.2 and 4.3). Afghanistan's terrain demands more troops on ground to establish control over the country side as even the modern technology is not able to cover the battlefield fully. Although ISAF has recognized this aspect and is increasing its strength it is still far short of the requirement. If the NATO nations can not provide the forces, these forces can be procured through the UN as well. Maybe, the time has come to convert this mission into a more UN led mission so as to increase the number of troop contributing nations.

Presence of National Caveats

The presence of national caveats in ISAF greatly erodes the flexibility of ISAF Commander as he cannot employ them according to the job requirement. There does not

seem to be a possibility of these caveats disappearing at any time sooner and are having a serious effect on operations. If the ISAF wants to be effective, it either has to get rid of caveats or find more troops which are willing to operate all over the country and carry out all types of operations without any encumbrances.

Withdrawal before Completion of Mission

The danger of premature withdrawal of foreign forces is constantly looming over Afghanistan. Although at present the probability of its happening in the near future is small but if ISAF withdraws before the country is stabilized, it will have very grave domestic, regional and international circumstances. The problem will be to determine whether the country has achieved sufficient stability to enable the withdrawal of foreign forces. It is likely to take a long time and at this moment it cannot be said that how long the people of troop contributing nations will be willing to make sacrifices in Afghanistan.

Comprehensive Approach

The Soviet Union with all its military might failed to crush the Mujahideen and was forced to withdraw after 10 years in Afghanistan. It laid much greater emphasis on the military approach and failed. The survival of Najeebullah's regime for three years after the withdrawal of Soviet forces was a surprise for all concerned. However, it was made possible by his policy of national reconciliation. At present, the Karzai administration is loathe to any negotiations with Taliban, it has to be understood that there is no military solution for Afghanistan and there is a need to focus on the political aspects of the problem. The ISAF can only achieve its mission if it adopts a

comprehensive approach of the issue including the development and diplomacy aspect as well.

Access to Secure Bases and Funds

The Mujahideen had access to secure bases and massive funds which enabled them to continue their fight against the Soviets for ten years. The Taliban do not have that massive support available to them. Pakistan's efforts on its side of the border have denied that protected sanctuary to the Taliban to a great extent. There is some limited support available to them but it is much smaller as compared to what was available to the Mujahideen. There is a need of further cooperation between Pakistan and ISAF to remove any misunderstandings in this regard.

Increase in Capabilities of Local Forces

ISAF has been making efforts to increase the capability of the Afghan security forces. The Soviets achieved it to some extent before they left the country and this helped their protégé to survive for some time. The capability of the ANA and ANP to keep peace in the country at their own after the withdrawal of international forces is very limited at the moment and needs to be further improved in order to enable an exit strategy to be formed for the international coalition.

Air Superiority

The Soviets did not have complete air superiority at the end of campaign. ISAF enjoys it without any significant threat by the Taliban. This has enabled the unhindered

use of ISR assets and provision of fire support to the troops on ground at all times which is a great force multiplier and has ensured success for coalition troops at many difficult times. This needs to be maintained in order to conduct effective operations against the Taliban.

Support of Local Population

In any insurgency, population is the key. Taliban can not carry out their actions unless they have support of the local population. It was this support which enabled the Mujahideen to sustain the effort through out the 80's. Somehow, this myth has been created that the insurgency is being totally fed from Pakistan and if action against the tribal areas in Pakistan is taken, all the problems will be resolved. The failure of Afghan government and international community to put Afghanistan back on its feet has allowed Taliban to make resurgence amongst the local population and until the time the root causes are finished, it will not be possible to finish the insurgency.

Casualties

Casualties also played an important part in the Soviet decision to withdraw. The ISAF cannot afford to have too many casualties because it runs the risk of losing home country support if the number of casualties was to increase too much. The Taliban are aware of this phenomenon and are targeting specifically those countries which they perceive to be more sensitive in this regard. Although so far no nation has buckled under this pressure but it should be kept in mind that this state can not be maintained indefinitely. There has to be tangible progress in Afghanistan to ensure that the interest of

international community remains alive and the nations are willing to bear the sacrifices required for the purpose.

Training

The ISAF nations have made a concerted effort to train their troops for the mission and provide them with the best possible equipment as compared to the Soviets. However, different coalition partners have different levels of training which creates its own problems in combined operations. At present, Afghanistan has become more of a security mission which demands separation of the Taliban from the local population and becomes a very hard thing to do for soldiers trained to fight in a conventional manner.

Reconstruction and Development

The soldiers are increasingly being tasked to undertake reconstruction and development tasks through the PRTs for which they are not trained as such and the civilians are not ready to step in due to poor security situation. This results in wastage of effort and funds as well as distracting the soldiers from their original tasks. There is a requirement to induct more civilians in the development process in order for it to be more meaningful.

IRAQ WAR

The Iraq War has greatly affected the operations in Afghanistan in military, political and diplomatic fields. If Iraq War had not started it can be said that the conditions in Afghanistan would have been much different than today. There is a need to

bring the focus back on Afghanistan so that it can be put back on right track and does not suffer due to operations in Iraq. If the US was to commit more forces to Afghanistan, it is likely that the level of insurgency can be controlled to a great extent.

SECURITY

Resurgence of Taliban

Mujahideen controlled vast swathes of the territory during the Soviet era as compared to Taliban who are controlling much lesser portion of the territory than Mujahideen. There has been a significant increase in their activities in the recent years which belie the claims being made by the government and ISAF that the Taliban are on the run. They also target the local security forces and individuals who they perceive as cooperating with the government and ISAF. It requires putting more focus on provision of security to the local population through increased coalition presence and improving the capability of Afghan Security forces. Ultimately, it is the ability of the coalition to put more boots on ground either in the form of coalition troops or increasing the capability of the Afghan forces which is going to make the difference, a process which is painfully too slow.

Use of Proportionate Force

The Soviets did not worry too much about this aspect as they were not accountable to their population or the world to that extent for their actions. The ISAF is very sensitive on this issue as it is ultimately the battle of hearts and minds which is

going to make the major difference in this fight. Whenever any collateral damage takes place there is a lot of bad publicity which can undo the good work done over the years.

Reliance on Local Security Forces

ISAF has been training the ANA/ANP for quite some time but their performance has not been up to the mark and they have not been able to earn the full respect of the people or their trainers so far. It is a very important factor because the actions which can be taken by the local security forces cannot be taken by the international forces because of the legal and cultural sensitivities involved. It is essential that the Afghan security forces are brought to a level where they are much more effective than the present thus reducing the burden on ISAF troops.

Counter IED Measures

The IED has come out as the biggest threat for ISAF troops in the recent years. Although different vehicles with better armoured protection have been made available but they have not been able to fully mitigate the effects of IEDs. There is a requirement to focus on human intelligence aspect as well apart from the technological aspect so that the cells involved in the process can be infiltrated and apprehended before they actually place the IEDs.

GOVERNANCE

Good governance was a key issue which DRA failed to deliver during its time. We find that the Karzai administration is also faced with the same dilemma and has been unable to resolve this problem. Most of the state officials are perceived to be either

corrupt or inefficient. This has not helped to restore the people's confidence in the new government without which it is not possible to stop the insurgency. There is a need to have more transparency in the government processes and appointments so as to restore the people's confidence in the government of day

Although a lot of improvement has been made in the education and health sector but the Afghans government has to go a long way to provide the basic facilities like electricity, clean drinking water and affordable housing to the people. Until these basic facilities are provided, it will be very difficult for the government to justify itself. There has already been disappointment in this regard by the people as they want to see their country put back on the track quickly and may result in the erosion of support the government and the international community enjoy.

POLITICAL

Broad Political Base

Pushtuns were the former rulers of Afghanistan and have been in power since the birth of Afghanistan. In the present circumstances, they feel deprived of that privilege giving rise to resentment amongst them. During the Soviet era also, the Pushtuns were the backbone of the resistance movement whereas the northern part consisting of Tajiks and Uzbeks remained relatively peaceful, which is the pattern being repeated today as well. To have a lasting solution, it is essential to reduce the Pushtun grievances and include them in power sharing as well. Any political solution must involve the regional powers as was done in the case of 'Geneva Accord' resulting in the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

Political base in the masses

The legitimacy of the government was a problem which plagued the DRA throughout its tenure and their leadership was never fully acceptable to the people. Although Hamid Karzai has been elected by the elections process but any leader which is supported by foreign forces can never have full legitimacy in the Afghan society. It is doubtful whether he would have won the Presidential election if he did not have the US backing with him. It is essential to have a leadership in the country which is not seen as the lackey of West but is capable of making his own decisions through free and fair elections without any favourites in the electoral process.

Awareness of Local Customs and Traditions

The DRA government's callous attitude towards local customs and traditions played a major role in alienating the local populace. The ISAF has worked at it but there have been slippages occasionally with unintended consequences which it cannot afford as it can greatly affect the mission. This aspect is very damaging and must be catered for as it is ultimately the support of the population which is going to win or lose this fight.

Political Dialogue

The Afghanistan imbroglio can only be solved through political process. There is a need to incorporate the moderate elements present in the Taliban and other insurgent groups in dialogue. These should be brought in the mainstream political process so as to

have a broad based government representing the wishes of the entire population. Till the time it is not done the military effort cannot be fully successful.

ECONOMIC

Foreign Aid

Afghanistan has become highly dependent on foreign aid since the Soviet invasion due to lack of resources in the country. It was promised a significant amount of aid but these promises have not been fully realized. The aid promised to Afghanistan should be fully provided to help the country kick start its economy and this should be done through the Afghan government and not through the NGOs or directly by donors themselves in order for the full benefits to reach to people.

Provision of Livelihood Means/ Infrastructure Projects

It is essential to provide livelihood means to the population y rejuvenating agriculture sector to ensure that they remain positive about the government. This is happening at a very slow pace and it results in the disenchantment of the people. These unemployed individuals act as a perfect recruiting base for the Taliban as they have the ability to pay them regularly and at much higher rates than the government.

Even Development

The Soviets laid more emphasis on the development of Northern Afghanistan and neglected the southern half which was in the grip of insurgency. Even under ISAF, there is a significant difference in the progress in the north and south of the country. The progress is least in the south where it should be the most to draw people away from the

Taliban. Unless a more equitable progress pattern is not established, it will be difficult to decrease Taliban influence in the south.

Afghan Refugees

The Afghan refugees have been homeless for about three decades now. It is essential to ensure that all such refugees are repatriated so that they can start a new life in their country. It is also necessary because of the fact that while remaining in other countries they are more susceptible to exploitation by the insurgents. If they are integrated into their society they can become a very important contributor to the country's progress.

REGIONAL SCENARIO

Role of Pakistan

The role of Pakistan was critical in the struggle against the Soviets during the Soviet intervention. It is again critical today as it is providing support to the ISAF by sealing its border besides acting as a conduit for the bulk of logistic support to ISAF. However, the repeated allegations against Pakistan's sincerity have started affecting the public perceptions against the utility of maintaining this effort at the cost of Pakistan's own interests. There is a need to remove misperceptions in this regard and ensure that Pakistan remains in this fight because otherwise it will create innumerable problems for ISAF.

Pakistan has been trying to pacify the tribal areas as well by carrying out negotiations with the various tribes in the region. However, whenever any such

agreement is undertaken there is a lot of clamor from the other side of border as if the militants have been given a free hand to conduct operations in Afghanistan. It needs to be realized that there is no military solution for this problem and it has to be resolved politically.

Pushtunistan Issue

Afghanistan's insistence on keeping the Pushtunistan issue alive has already hurt its interests since independence and was a pivotal factor in Pakistan's decision to side with the US during Soviet intervention. From Pakistan's side, Pushtunistan is a dead issue. It is time for Afghanistan to realize the fact that internationally recognized borders cannot be changed like this and it is time to move on. It is essential for the international community to work in this regard so that this long festering problem can be resolved and both the countries can usher a new era of development in the region.

Regional Goodwill

The adverse relations between India and Pakistan inadvertently play out in Afghanistan as well. It is essential that both the countries resolve their differences as their poor relations inadvertently play a very important role in Afghanistan as well which becomes a party in their disputes. Apart from that, it is essential that Iran should also be brought on board regarding any discussions on Afghanistan. The interests of Afghanistan should be safeguarded first of all but if any solution is acceptable to all regional powers it will greatly increase the probability of its success.

DIPLOMATIC

This has been a great success for the ISAF as their mission is fully legitimized in the eyes of world. However, it is essential to keep all the neighbours of Afghanistan especially Iran and Pakistan on board so as to ensure that the Taliban do not start getting the amount of support which was enjoyed by the Soviets.

DRUG ECONOMY

The rapid increase in opium production is one of the major issues. There is a need to work out an eradication strategy for the purpose because otherwise the profit from this illicit trade will keep the country unstable and fuel the insurgency. Whether aerial spraying is to be done or some other methods is to be used should be decided quickly and the eradication strategy implemented before the problem becomes even worse. However, arrangements have to be made to ensure that alternate livelihood is provided to the people involved in production of opium so as not to alienate the local population and make these people as the potential recruits for the insurgents.

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan has been a very unfortunate country. Since the eighteenth century when it was formed it has been subject to intrigue and interference by the great powers. Its proud and valiant people have withstood all this and have resisted several foreign powers so far including the Britain and Soviet Union. The Soviet invasion of 1979 forced the Afghans to defend their homeland and it was the extraordinary sacrifices made by the ordinary Afghans which helped the international community to beat back a superpower.

The naked power struggle after the Soviet withdrawal left the ordinary people bewildered and confused. They welcomed Taliban because they brought order and peace in the country. However, they did not want the rigid interpretation of Islam as brought by them. They had even less enthusiasm for Osama bin Laden and his global ambitions because it was their country which had to suffer the consequences not anybody else's.

The western intervention has brought hope to millions of these people who rushed back from Iran and Pakistan to make a new beginning in the country they called home. Their dreams have however not been realized. The country remains backwards and mired in poverty and had been stuck in the middle ages whereas the rest of the world has moved on. It is this which frustrates the ordinary people more than anything else and fuels the movement against the government.

The Taliban are a reality and cannot be wished away. The emphasis on using military means for finding a solution has not worked for six and a half years and is not likely to work in the future as well. Moreover, with the amount of force deployed by NATO its chances of success are even remoter. There is a need to therefore use political

means along with the economic progress to control the insurgency. If a comprehensive approach is not adopted it may have dire consequences.

Afghanistan does not have a quick fix solution. It requires continuous engagement by the international community to resolve this problem. The Soviets spent a decade and could not get the desired results. If the international community really wants to see development in Afghanistan, it needs to be prepared for a long haul extending to decades rather than years. It is essential for the international community to continue its engagement and ensure that the promises of a better future which have been made to the ordinary Afghans are not broken once again and the country finally gets on the path of prosperity which is its destiny.

TREATY OF GANDAMAK, 1879

TREATY between the British Government and His Highness Muhammad Yakub Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies, concluded at Gandamak on the 26th May 1879, by His Highness the Amir Mahommed Yakub Khan on his own part and on the part of the British Government by Major (afterwards Sir Louis) P. L.N. Cavagnari, C. S. I.

1. From the day of the exchange of the ratifications of the present Treaty there shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government on the one part and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies, and his successors, on the other.
2. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies engages, on the exchange of the ratifications of this Treaty, to publish a full and complete amnesty, absolving all his subjects from any responsibility for intercourse with the British forces during the war, and to guarantee and protect all persons of whatever degree from any punishment or molestation on that account.
3. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees to conduct his relations with Foreign States in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British Government. His Highness the Amir will enter into no engagements with Foreign States, and will not take up arms against any Foreign State, except with the concurrence of the British Government. On these conditions the British Government will support the Amir against any foreign aggression with money, arms, or troops, to be employed in whatsoever manner the British Government may judge best for this purpose. Should British troops at any time enter Afghanistan for the purpose of repelling foreign aggression, they will return to their stations in British territory as soon as the object for which they entered has been accomplished.
4. With a view to the maintenance of the direct and intimate relations now established between the British Government and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan, and for the better protection of the frontiers of His Highness's dominion, it is agreed that a British Representative shall reside at Kabul, with a suitable escort, in a place of residence appropriate to his rank and dignity. It is also agreed that the British Government shall have the right to depute British Agents with suitable escorts to the Afghan frontiers, whomsoever this may be considered necessary by the British Government in the interests of both States, on the occurrence of any important external fact. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan may on his part depute an Agent to reside at the Court of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and at such other places in British India as may be

similarly agreed upon.

5. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies guarantees the personal safety and honourable treatment of British Agents within his jurisdiction; and the British Government on its part undertakes that its Agents shall never in any way interfere with the internal administration of His Highness's dominions.
6. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies undertakes, on behalf of himself and his successors, to offer no impediment to British subjects peacefully trading within his dominions so long as they do so with the permission of the British Government, and in accordance with such arrangements as may be mutually agreed upon from time to time between the two Governments.
7. In order that the passage of trade between the territories of the British Government and of His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan may be open and uninterrupted, His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan agrees to use his best endeavours to ensure the protection of traders and to facilitate the transit of goods along the well-known customary roads of Afghanistan. These roads shall be improved and maintained in such manner as the two Governments may decide to be most expedient for the general convenience of traffic, and under such financial arrangements as may be mutually determined upon between them. The arrangements made for the maintenance and security of the aforesaid roads, for the settlement of the duties to be levied upon merchandise carried over these roads, and for the general protection and development of trade with and through the dominions of His Highness, will be stated in a separate Commercial Treaty, to be concluded within one year, due regard being given to the state of the country.
8. With a view to facilitate communications between the allied Governments and to aid and develop intercourse and commercial relations between the two countries, it is hereby agreed that a line of telegraph from Kurram to Kabul shall be constructed by and at the cost of the British Government, and the Amir of Afghanistan hereby undertakes to provide for the protection of this telegraph line.
9. In consideration of the renewal of a friendly alliance between the two States which has been attested and secured by the foregoing Articles, the British Government restores to his Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies the towns of Kandahar and Jelalabad with all the territory now in possession of the British armies, excepting the districts of Kurram, Pishin and Sibi. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees on his part that the districts of Kurram and Pishin and Sibi, according to the limits defined in the schedule annexed, shall remain under the protection and administrative control of the British Government:

that is to say, the aforesaid districts shall be treated as assigned districts, and shall not be considered as permanently severed from the limits of the Afghan kingdom. The revenues of these districts, after deducting the charges of civil administration, shall be paid to His Highness the Amir.

The British Government will retain in its own hands the control of the Khyber and Michni Passes, which lie between the Peshawar and Jelalabad districts and of all relations with the independent tribes of the territory directly connected with these passes.

10. For the further support of His Highness the Amir in the recovery and maintenance of his legitimate authority, and in consideration of the efficient fulfillment in their entirety of the engagements stipulated by the foregoing Articles, the British Government agrees to pay to His Highness the Amir and to his successors an annual subsidy of six lakhs of Rupees.

Done at Gandamak, this 26th day of May 1879, corresponding with the 4th day of the month of Jamadi-us-sani, 1296 A. H.

AMIR MAHOMMED YAKUB KHAN

N. CAVAGNARI, Major

Source: <http://www.khyber.org/pashtohistory/treaties/gandamaktreaty.shtml>.

**DURAND LINE AGREEMENT
NOVEMBER 12, 1893**

**Agreement between Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, G. C. S. I., and Sir Henry
Mortimer Durand, K. C. I. E., C. S. I.**

Whereas certain questions have arisen regarding the frontier of Afghanistan on the side of India, and whereas both His Highness the Amir and the Government of India are desirous of settling these questions by friendly understanding, and of fixing the limit of their respective spheres of influence, so that for the future there may be no difference of opinion on the subject between the allied Governments, it is hereby agreed as follows:

1. The eastern and southern frontier of his Highness's dominions, from Wakhan to the Persian border, shall follow the line shown in the map attached to this agreement.
2. The Government of India will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of Afghanistan, and His Highness the Amir will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of India.
3. The British Government thus agrees to His Highness the Amir retaining Asmar and the valley above it, as far as Chanak. His Highness agrees, on the other hand, that he will at no time exercise interference in Swat, Bajaur, or Chitral, including the Arnawai or Bashgal valley. The British Government also agrees to leave to His Highness the Birmal tract as shown in the detailed map already given to his Highness, who relinquishes his claim to the rest of the Waziri country and Dawar. His Highness also relinquishes his claim to Chageh.
4. The frontier line will hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated, wherever this may be practicable and desirable, by joint British and Afghan commissioners, whose object will be to arrive by mutual understanding at a boundary which shall adhere with the greatest possible exactness to the line shown in the map attached to this agreement, having due regard to the existing local rights of villages adjoining the frontier.
5. With reference to the question of Chaman, the Amir withdraws his objection to the new British cantonment and concedes to the British Government the rights purchased by him in the Sirkai Tilerai water. At this part of the frontier the line will be drawn as follows:

From the crest of the Khwaja Amran range near the Psha Kotal, which

remains in British territory, the line will run in such a direction as to leave Murgha Chaman and the Sharobo spring to Afghanistan, and to pass half-way between the New Chaman Fort and the Afghan outpost known locally as Lashkar Dand. The line will then pass half-way between the railway station and the hill known as the Mian Baldak, and, turning south-wards, will rejoin the Khwaja Amran range, leaving the Gwasha Post in British territory, and the road to Shorawak to the west and south of Gwasha in Afghanistan. The British Government will not exercise any interference within half a mile of the road.

6. The above articles of agreement are regarded by the Government of India and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan as a full and satisfactory settlement of all the principal differences of opinion which have arisen between them in regard to the frontier; and both the Government of India and His Highness the Amir undertake that any differences of detail, such as those which will have to be considered hereafter by the officers appointed to demarcate the boundary line, shall be settled in a friendly spirit, so as to remove for the future as far as possible all causes of doubt and misunderstanding between the two Governments.
7. Being fully satisfied of His Highness's goodwill to the British Government, and wishing to see Afghanistan independent and strong, the Government of India will raise no objection to the purchase and import by His Highness of munitions of war, and they will themselves grant him some help in this respect. Further, in order to mark their sense of the friendly spirit in which His Highness the Amir has entered into these negotiations, the Government of India undertake to increase by the sum of six lakhs of rupees a year the subsidy of twelve lakhs now granted to His Highness.

H. M. Durand,
Amir Abdur Rahman Khan.

Kabul, November 12, 1893.

Source: <http://www.khyber.org/pashtohistory/treaties/durandagreement.shtml>.

Appendix 3

COMPARISON BETWEEN SOVIETS AND ISAF

	SOVIETS 10 year (1979 – 89)	ISAF/OEF 6.5 years (2001 – 07)
1. Military		
a. Average Military Strength	80,000	40,000
b. Afghan Army	40,000	40,000
c. Afghan Police/Militias	30,000	50,000
Total	150,000	130,000
d. Casualties (approx)	15,000	750
e. Insurgents - Total	100,000	10 – 15,000
Insurgents - Active	40,000	Same as above
f. Funds available to insurgents	Approx \$500 million annually	Approx \$50 million annually
g. Technology/Equipment	Limited	Good
h. Training	Improved overtime	Good
j. Morale	Poor	High
k. Unity of Command	Yes	Limited due to caveats
2. Security		
a. Control of countryside	Poor	Relatively good
b. Insurgent Attacks	Frequent	Frequent in southwest. Limited in other areas
c. IEDs	Nil	Frequent
3. Diplomacy		
a. International Legitimacy	No	Yes
b. Regional Support	No	Yes
c. IEDs	Nil	Frequent

	SOVIETS	ISAF
4. Governance		
a. Basic facilities	No	limited
b. Infrastructure Projects	No	No
c. Corruption	High	High
5. Political		
a. Representative Government	No	limited
b. Support of masses	No	Limited especially in southwest
6. Economy		
a. Foreign Aid	High	High
b. Agriculture Base	Destroyed	Not fully recovered
c. Refugees	Migrating to other countries	Repatriating back

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