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Historical Security Council Research Report

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Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications on International Security: January 10 1980 Meeting.

DEFINITIONS:

USSR: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), commonly known as the Soviet Union, was a transcontinental country that spanned much of Eurasia from 1922 to 1991. It was led by the Communist Party and played a major role in international politics during the Cold War.¹

Cold War: a period of global geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the United States that lasted from 1947 to 1991. It was distinguished by nuclear arms races, espionage, and proxy wars. However, there were no confrontations during this period, which ended in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union itself.²

Afghan Mujahideen: groups of Afghan fighters who fought against the Soviet Union over Afghanistan from 1979 up to 1989.³ They fought using guerrilla tactics and support from other countries, especially the United States and Pakistan.⁴

The Brezhnev Doctrine: was a Soviet foreign policy that proclaimed that any threat to "socialist rule" in any state of the Soviet Bloc in Central and Eastern Europe was a threat to all of them; and therefore, it justified the intervention of fellow socialist states.⁵

PDPA: The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was a Marxist–Leninist political party in Afghanistan established on 1 January, 1965. The party was committed to a pro-Soviet political line. Four party members won seats in the 1965 Afghan parliamentary election, reduced to two seats in 1969, although both before the party was fully legal. For most of its existence, the party was split between the hardline Khalq and moderate Parcham factions.⁶

^{1 &}quot;Soviet Union." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, <u>en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union</u>. Accessed 8 November 2024.

^{2 &}quot;Cold War." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, <u>en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War</u>. Accessed 8 November 2024.

^{3 &}quot;Afghan Mujahideen." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, <u>en.wikipedia.org/wiki/</u> <u>Afghan_mujahideen</u>. Accessed 8 November 2024.

⁴ Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War, www.files.ethz.ch/isn/96457/02_Jan.pdf. Accessed 8 Nov. 2024.

^{5 &}quot;Brezhnev Doctrine." Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brezhnev_Doctrine. Accessed 10 November 2024.

⁶ Amstutz, Bruce. "People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Democratic_Party_of_Afghanistan. Accessed 10 November 2024.

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DRA: The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), was the Afghan state during the one-party rule of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) from 1978 to 1992. It relied heavily on assistance from the Soviet Union for most of its existence, especially during the Soviet-Afghan War.⁷

Coup D'état: a coup d'état, or simply a coup, is typically an illegal and overt attempt by a military organization or other government elites to unseat an incumbent leadership.⁸

BACKGROUND:

The topic focuses on the Soviet Union's military invasion into Afghanistan, one of the major turning points of the Cold War. The invasion happened after events that shook the Afghan government and destabilized it. In 1973, Mohammad Daoud Khan led a coup against the King of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zahir Shah (who was abroad for medical treatment). He was assisted by army officers and civil servants from the Parcham faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, including Air Force Colonel Abdul Oadir. Daoud also had the support of Air Force personnel stationed at Kabul International Airport and Bagram Air Base. Even though a lot of members were killed it was described at the time by staff from the United States National Security Council as a "well-planned and swiftly executed coup". This coup ended over two centuries of monarchy, establishing the Republic of Afghanistan with Daoud as president. While Daoud's early actions were aligned with the Soviet Union and he avoided any major economic confrontations, after a while his policies began to diverge from the PDPA and the Soviet Union, particularly as he attempted to reduce Soviet influence in Afghan politics.

This led to power struggles and rebellion in 1978 (known as the Saur Revolution) that started occurring after the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a communist group, staged a coup and overthrew Daoud because of his actions against the Soviet Union and his suppression of communists. Hafizullah Amin, leader of the coup, became the leader of Afghanistan.¹⁰

^{7 &}quot;Flag of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Afghanistan. Accessed 10 November 2024.

⁸ This content comes from the Knowledge Graph, Google's collection of information about people, places and things.

⁹ Rahi, Arwin. "Remembering President Daoud's Coup: Lessons for Afghanistan's Future." – *The Diplomat*, The Diplomat, 18 July 2020, <u>thediplomat.com/2020/07/remembering-president-daouds-coup-lessons-for-afghanistans-future/</u>.

^{10 &}quot;1973 Afghan Coup d'état." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, <u>en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973 Afghan coup d%27%C3%A9tat</u>. Accessed 13 November 2024.

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Though Hafizullah Amin's policies aligned with the Soviet Union, his leadership style has caused much unrest in the country, with many rebellions that were met with harsh retribution and thousands of persons "disappearing" after being apprehended by state forces. The Soviet Union decided to intervene, since they sought to prevent a hostile, anti-communist government from emerging and aimed to stabilize its socialist ally and ensure a reliable, pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union sent military forces and invaded all major urban centers in Afghanistan on December 24th, 1979. Amin was assassinated by Soviet Union military personnel and was replaced by Babrak Karmal, another pro-communist leader of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

CURRENT SITUATION:

On the 24th of December 1979, the Soviet Union sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan and immediately undertook complete military and political control of Kabul and many areas of the country. This event began a brutal attempt by the USSR to subdue the Afghan civil unrest and maintain a socialist government on its border as its ally. It was a turning point of the Cold War, marking the only time the Soviet Union invaded a country outside the Eastern Bloc, which was a strategic decision met by nearly worldwide condemnation. Leaders in the USSR had hoped that a rapid and complete military takeover would secure Afghanistan's place as a paradigm of the Brezhnev Doctrine, which held that once a country became socialist, the USSR would never permit it to return to the capitalist camp.

The U.S. saw the actions by the USSR as a direct threat to both regional stability and the balance of power in the Cold War. Consequently, they responded with diplomatic protests, enacting economic sanctions and providing aid to the Mujahideen, the resistance fighter movements that acted against Soviet presence in Afghanistan, as a countermeasure. The U.S took these measures since they wanted to drain Soviet resources and force a withdrawal.¹¹

The measures stated before had great significance for other countries in the region, most prominently Pakistan, which effectively turned into an important logistical base to support the Mujahideen with the needed support. In addition, Iran saw the Soviet presence in Afghanistan as a danger to its security. While neighboring countries like China didn't take

^{11 &}quot;Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations." *Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian*, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan. Accessed 10 November 2024.

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part in the conflict directly, they were concerned about Soviet expansion. The Cold War dynamics also led to China providing limited support to the Mujahideen, while attempting to balance its concerns about Soviet power along its western border. ¹²

As the January 10, 1980, UN Security Council meeting was approaching, the tensions between all sides were high. The world watched as each side prepared to defend their positions on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which was a move that threatened to shift the balance of the Cold War. This meeting would test global diplomacy, raising the question: could peace be maintained, or was the world on the brink of deeper conflict?

RELEVANT COUNTRIES:

USA:

In the United States, there was a widespread belief that failing to act against the Soviet Union could embolden Moscow to further expand its international influence. In response, President Jimmy Carter implemented a series of measures: he imposed a trade embargo on Soviet shipments, including grain. Carter also suspended high-technology exports to the Soviet Union. The invasion of Afghanistan, alongside other significant events, highlighted the instability of the broader region for U.S. foreign policy.

In his 4 January 1980 Address to the Nation, President Carter described the Soviet invasion as a serious threat to global stability:

"Massive Soviet military forces have invaded the small, nonaligned, sovereign nation of Afghanistan, which had hitherto not been an occupied satellite of the Soviet Union ... This is a callous violation of international law and the United Nations Charter ... If the Soviets are encouraged in this invasion by eventual success, and if they maintain their dominance over Afghanistan and extend their control to adjacent countries, the stable, strategic, and peaceful balance of the entire world will be changed. This would threaten the security of all nations, including, of course, the United States, our allies, and our friends."

¹² Central Intelligence Agency, *Central Intelligence Agency*, <u>www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp87t00495r000800770004-5</u>. Accessed 13 Nov. 2024.

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Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, Pakistan lobbied the U.S. and its allies to send material aid to the Afghan Mujahideen. The support was part of Operation Cyclone, a covert CIA operation run through Pakistan's ISI. Initially, non-military aid was provided, including cash, medical supplies, and radio transmitters. By January 1980, the CIA had delivered the first shipment of weapons to Pakistan, signaling the start of direct U.S. military support for the Afghan resistance.

Pakistan:

In response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan, under President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, quickly became a key player in supporting the Afghan Mujahideen. At a meeting of his military government, Zia instructed the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) and military leaders to formulate a strategy to counter Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, which led to Pakistan providing substantial covert aid to the insurgents. Pakistan saw the Soviet invasion as retaliation for Soviet support of its regional rival, India, in the wars of 1965 and 1971. Pakistan also provided training and logistical support to the Mujahideen fighters, who were heavily involved in the conflict. In retaliation, the KHAD (Afghan security service) launched several attacks against Pakistan, including bombing raids and airstrikes, causing significant casualties and damage. Pakistan also took in millions of Afghan refugees, primarily Pashtuns, many of whom were housed in camps in Balochistan. Despite concerns over the growing influence of fundamentalist fighters, Pakistan continued its support for the Mujahideen, seeing it as a necessary step in opposing Soviet expansion in the region.

The UK:

The United Kingdom played a significant yet often covert role in supporting the Afghan resistance during the Soviet-Afghan War. Unlike the U.S., which primarily provided financial and material aid, the UK focused more on direct combat support, particularly through the Special Air Service (SAS) and MI6. British aid to the Afghan Mujahideen began even before the Soviet invasion, with early operations coordinated through MI6 and Pakistan's ISI. After the invasion, MI6 increased its involvement, providing training and supplies to resistance groups like Ahmad Shah Massoud's faction in the Panjshir Valley, which received limited support from the U.S. and Pakistan. The UK also sent weapons, such as the Blowpipe missile launchers, although these proved ineffective compared to U.S. Stinger missiles. Britain's covert support for Afghanistan was one of its most extensive operations since World War II.

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China:

China strongly condemned the Soviet takeover and its military buildup in Afghanistan, viewing it as a direct threat to Chinese security, given that both the Soviet Union and Afghanistan shared borders with China. Beijing described the invasion as the most significant escalation of Soviet expansionism in over a decade and warned other Third World leaders with close ties to the Soviet Union. Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping expressed admiration for the "heroic resistance" of the Afghan people. China also argued that the weak international response to the Soviet's actions in Vietnam earlier in 1979, during the Sino-Vietnamese War, had encouraged the Soviets, making them feel freer to invade Afghanistan.

East Germany:

During the Soviet-Afghan War, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) supported both the Soviet military campaign and the communist government of Afghanistan. East Germany was one of the first countries to publicly endorse the Soviet invasion in 1979.

India:

A close ally of the Soviet Union, India supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and refrained from condemning it. Throughout the conflict, India was heavily reliant on Soviet military and security assistance, which influenced its stance on the invasion. By the end of the war, India even offered to provide humanitarian aid to the Afghan communist government. India's failure to publicly condemn the Soviet intervention, along with its support for the Soviet-backed Kabul regime, strained its relations with Afghan resistance groups and created challenges in Afghan-Indian relations.¹³

¹³ Curtis, Mark. "Foreign involvement in the Soviet–Afghan War." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_involvement_in_the_Soviet%E2%80%93Afghan_War. Accessed 12 November 2024.

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TIMELINE:

- 1838-42 British forces invade and install King Shah Shujah. He was assassinated in 1842. British and Indian troops are massacred during the retreat from Kabul.
- **1878-80** Second Anglo-Afghan War. A treaty gives Britain control of Afghan foreign affairs.
- 1919 Emir Amanullah Khan declares independence from British influence.
- 1926-29 Amanullah tries to introduce social reforms, which however stirs civil unrest making him flee.
- 1933 Zahir Shah becomes king and Afghanistan remains a monarchy for the next four decades.
- 1953 General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister. He turns to the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance and introduces social reforms, such as the abolition of purdah (the practice of secluding women from public view).
- 1954 The United States begins selling arms to its ally, Pakistan, while refusing to sell them to Afghanistan out of fear that the Afghans would use the weapons against Pakistan. Consequently, Afghanistan drew closer to India and the Soviet Union due to their willingness to sell them weapons.¹⁴
- 1962 China defeated India in a border war, and as a result, China formed an alliance with Pakistan against their common enemy, India, pushing Afghanistan even closer to India and the Soviet Union.
 - 1963 Mohammed Daud was forced to resign as prime minister.
- 1964 Constitutional monarchy was introduced, leading to political polarization and power struggles.
- 1973 Mohammed Daoud Khan, backed by Soviet-trained Afghan Army officers and a strong base of Afghan Commando Forces, overthrew King Zahir Shah in a bloodless coup and established the first Afghan republic. Following his rise to power, Daoud revived his Pashtunistan policy and began engaging in a proxy war against Pakistan, supporting anti-Pakistani groups by providing them with arms, training, and sanctuary.

^{14 &}quot;Soviet-Afghan War." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet%E2%80%93Afghan_War#Background. Accessed 12 November 2024.

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1978 - General Daoud is overthrown and killed in a pro-Soviet coup. Amin, an important figure from the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), had come to power during the Saur Revolution of April 1978. This operation marked the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan Situation.

1979 - on December 24th, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. In a military operation taking place on December 27 named The Tajbeg Palace assault, or Operation Storm-333, Soviet special forces and airborne troops stormed the heavily fortified Tajbeg Palace in Kabul, where they assassinated Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin, propping up the communist government.¹⁵

1980 - Babrak Karmal was installed as ruler, backed by Soviet troops. But opposition intensified with various Mujahideen groups fighting Soviet forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms to the Mujahideen.¹⁶

^{15 &}quot;Soviet–Afghan War." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet%E2%80%93Afghan_War#Background. Accessed 12 November 2024.

^{16 &}quot;Afghanistan profile - Timeline." *BBC*, 9 September 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253. Accessed 11 November 2024.

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CRITICAL EVENTS:

The split of the PDPA 1967:

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) splits into two rival factions; the Khalq faction led by Nur Muhammad Taraki, characterized by radicalism, aiming to rapidly transform Afghanistan into a communist society, even through violence if necessary. The Parcham faction led by Babrak Karmal, who were moderates, favoring a gradual transition to communism, arguing that Afghanistan was simply not ready for Communism and would not be for some time.¹⁷

The Saur Revolution:

Also known as the April Revolution, took place on April 27-28, 1978, when the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew President Mohammad Daoud Khan, who had established an autocratic regime after the 1973 coup. Daoud and his family were executed, and his supporters purged. The revolution led to the creation of a socialist government aligned with the Soviet Union, with Nur Muhammad Taraki as its leader. The uprising, ordered by PDPA member Hafizullah Amin, resulted in heavy fighting and up to 2,000 deaths. It marked the beginning of a long period of conflict in Afghanistan and remains a pivotal event in the country's history.¹⁸

The Tajbeg Palace assault:

Also known as Operation Storm-333, took place on December 27, 1979, marking the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan War. Soviet special forces and airborne troops stormed the heavily fortified Tajbeg Palace in Kabul and assassinated Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin, who had come to power in the 1978 Saur Revolution. This operation was part of a broader Soviet strategy to secure Afghanistan, supported by the Parcham faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which opposed Amin's hardline Khalqist faction. Despite heavy resistance from Afghan forces, the Soviets succeeded in killing 30 palace guards and over 300 army personnel while capturing 150 more. Amin's assassination led to the installation of Babrak Karmal, the Parcham leader, as the new president. Several key government buildings were seized, and the operation was considered a major success by Soviet veterans. 19

^{17 &}quot;Soviet-Afghan War." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet%E2%80%93Afghan_War#Background. Accessed 12 November 2024.

^{18 &}quot;Saur Revolution." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saur_Revolution. Accessed 12 November 2024.

^{19 &}quot;Tajbeg Palace assault." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajbeg_Palace_assault. Accessed 12 November 2024.

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TREATIES:

Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty (1921):

After renewed anti-British sentiment following the Anglo-Afghan War, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union formalized a non-aggression pact in 1921. The treaty granted Afghanistan transit rights through the Soviet Union and laid the foundation for friendly relations throughout the 1920s. Early Soviet support included financial aid, aircrafts, technical personnel, and telegraph operators.²⁰

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT):

They were two rounds of bilateral negotiations and corresponding treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union focused on arms control during the Cold War. These talks produced two main agreements: SALT I and SALT II.

SALT I: Negotiations began in Helsinki in November, 1969 and resulted in the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and an interim agreement between the two superpowers.

SALT II: An agreement was reached in Vienna in 1979, but the US Senate refused to ratify it in protest of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan later that year. Similarly, the Supreme Soviet did not ratify the treaty either.²¹

U.S.S.R and Afghanistan's Friendship Treaty (1978):

In an effort to support an unpopular pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union signed a "friendship treaty" with the Afghan government, agreeing to provide both economic and military aid. This agreement brought the Soviets closer to their involvement in the Afghan civil war, and consequently, the treaty did little to stabilize Afghanistan.²²

^{20 &}quot;Afghanistan-Russia relations." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan%E2%80%93Russia relations. Accessed 24 November 2024.

^{21 &}quot;Strategic Arms Limitation Talks." *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_Arms_Limitation_Talks. Accessed 24 November 2024.

²² U.S.S.R. and Afghanistan sign "friendship treaty" | December 5, 1978 | HISTORY, https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/ussr-and-afghanistan-sign-friendship-treaty. Accessed 24 November 2024.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What are the implications of this situation on global peace and stability?
- What role do external actors (such as the U.S., Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia) play in supporting the Afghan resistance, and how will this international involvement shape the outcome of the war?
- How will the war influence Afghanistan's political landscape in the long term, especially in terms of governance, tribal dynamics, and the rise of militant groups?
- How will the war affect the broader geopolitical balance in the Middle East and Central Asia, especially in relation to the U.S. and the rise of radical Islamic movements?
- What measures does the international community have to take in order to stop the bloodshed and prevent escalation?
- Is your country affected by this conflict?
- What is your country's stance in this conflict?
- How does the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan challenge the Cold War balance of power between the U.S. and the Soviet Union?
- How does the global media and public opinion shape international responses to the Soviet invasion, and how does this influence the conflict's trajectory?
- What role does your country play in providing aid, arms, or support to the Afghan resistance, and what are the implications of this involvement on your country's international relations?
- What are the economic impacts of the Soviet-Afghan War on your country, especially regarding trade, defense expenses, or regional economic cooperation?
- Does your country face any direct military threats or increased instability as a result of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, such as the spread of radical ideologies or proxy warfare?

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RELEVANT MEDIA:

Map of the Soviet invasion, December 1979²³



²³ Soviet–Afghan War. (2024, November 30). In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet%E2%80%93Afghan_War.

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HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Overview and Summary:

https://www.britannica.com/event/Soviet-invasion-of-Afghanistan

 $\frac{https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan}{afghanistan}$

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan%E2%80%93Russia_relations

https://makinghistoryrelevant.wordpress.com/2012/06/19/1979-1989-soviet-war-in-afghanistan/

Timeline:

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253

Foreign involvement:

https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/03387284

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_involvement_in_the_ Soviet%E2%80%93Afghan_War

Treaties:

 $\frac{https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/06/archives/20year-treaty-moves-afghans-closer-to-soviet-friendship-pact-calls.html}{}$

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