

Week 5: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

Study Questions

1. Why did Washington take such a prominent role in aiding Afghan Mujahideen?
2. How did the resistance movement in Afghanistan contribute to the radicalisation of Islamists in the broader Middle East?
3. What were the consequences of this proxy war?



- Afghanistan did not have a centralised government; instead top-down repressive state structure – strongly tribal.
- Context of the Cold War, providing the guiding narrative, prestige politics. Additionally, late 1970's pan Arabism had folded – Egypt had signed a peace treaty with Israel: effectively aligning to the USA
- US willingness to utilize the Mujahedeen in a proxy war against the Soviet Union greatly affected the regional popular perception of the USA.
 - US foreign policy helped create forces and leadership structure of militant Islam
- Moscow concerned about the possibility of an unchecked spread of religiously inspired destabilisation in the Muslim-dominated provinces, post-Iranian-revolution.
- Theories for Soviet Intervention:
 - Central Asia?
 - Prevent destabilization of the southern, Muslim dominated Soviet Union, eg. the fear another Islamic revolution could further destabilize the regional power balance
 - Iran?
 - Containment of Iran as a sovereign power: fears that post-1979 Iran had sufficient religious, political, and economic motivations to expand revolution northward into the Soviet Union and/or eastward into Afghanistan.

- Political Islam?
 - Iran (population 65 million) was technologically sophisticated and well armed with Western (largely US) military technology –direct conflict undesirable. But the invasion of impoverished, technologically unsophisticated Afghanistan would demonstrate Soviet power to those seeking to challenge the regional power balance, supply an eastern flank to Iran and provide a warning that the Soviet Union would act militarily to protect its regional interests
- US role?
 - Soviet perception that the US was looking to Afghanistan to replace the loss of its regional stalwart of the Shah’s Iran and use the country to undermine the southern Soviet region

Brezhnev Doctrine 1968 “When forces that are hostile to Socialism try to turn the development of some Socialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem of the country concerned, but a **common problem and concern** of all socialist countries.”

April 1978 The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), come into power after a military coup.
Resistance to the PDPA based on political ambitions of local leaders, and, the rejection of the secular orientation of the new regime. Forced secularisation: mandatory education of women and Socialist regime. 5 million displaced into Pakistan organising insurgency.

- Treaty with the PDPA and the Soviet Union, with a clause that asserts the right of the PDPA to call on Soviet Union for military assistance – reflects the Soviets desire to institutionalise regime.
- The USA uses Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) to support anti-Communist forces inside Afghanistan – allowing for plausible deniability
 - US using captured Soviet weapons from Israeli wars funnelled into Afghanistan via Pakistan
 - Pakistan emerged from the conflict as an important player in the increasingly internationalised political area of Central Asia.
 - Pakistan vulnerable to Soviets expansionism – therefore motivated by self-interest to support the Mujahedeen
 - Pakistan became the base for the mujahideen
 - Regionally, Pakistan was most vulnerable to the expansionist tendencies of the Soviet Union, therefore by default - as well as ideological similarities- it supported the Muhajideen
 - The call for volunteers to fight the ‘godless’ Soviets was issued and tens of thousands responded, potential recruits assembled in Pakistan –a major boost to the country’s prestige in the Muslim world and, ironically, its relevance in Washington
 - Pakistan saw this as a potential opportunity to strengthen itself against India through the creation of an ‘Islamic bloc’ in Central Asia

December 1979 Soviet Union enters Afghanistan with 40,000 troops based on geopolitical and ideological motivations.

- Troop deployment capped at 120 000
- Superior military capabilities resulted in the Soviet Union’s ability to inflict massive casualties
- Complete Soviet aerial dominance a feature of the war
- The right and responsibility to counter threats of socialism in any one state of the socialist community
- US interpret this as aggressive and seek to establish their own presence in Kabul

The contrast between the secular atheist superpower and the Islamic resistance became the overreaching image of the Afghan war. Rambo: Hollywood working with the Defence Department to sell arming the Mujahedeen

Carter Doctrine 1980 ‘Let our position be absolutely clear, an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the USA. And such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary “

- **Rationale for involvement: based on 3 points**
- **Deniability:** Rebels initially supplied with weapons of Soviet origin (either weapons captured by the IDF in Lebanon in 1982 or bought from China)
- **No direct weapons transfers:** Supplying rebels was left to Pakistan's intelligence service, the ISI
- **Maintaining of status-quo:** Before 1985 the weapons provided were sufficient to cause Soviets casualties but not sufficient to win the war (it was feared that overt support could trigger Soviet retaliation against Pakistan).
- Deployment figures vary: 118,000 - just under the 120 000 cap. This was sufficient to maintain the status quo but not enough to decisively crush the resistance.
- Various theories exist for the limited Soviet deployment
- domestic constraints
- status quo
- political indecision
- a limited effort was politically expedient as it would give the Soviets time to achieve several important goals: creation of strong party and state organizations, education of a new generation of Afghans loyal to the Soviet Union and the development of close cultural, social, and economic ties with the urban areas. This long range perspective was evident in Moscow's policy of sending Afghan children, particularly war orphans, to the Soviet Union for education
- US aid to the Mujahideen, while significant, belied similar objectives...it enabled the resistance to harass rather than defeat the Soviet forces
- Between 3.5 and 4.5 million Afghans (from a population of 17 million) became refugees

National Security Advisor Brzezinski (26 December 1979)

- Domestically: Soviet determination in Afghanistan could make America's lack of direct intervention in the overthrow of an ally in Iran look weak rather than restrained
- Internationally:
 - the danger of a direct superpower confrontation
 - the fear of a Soviet drive to the Indian Ocean
 - possible destabilization of Pakistan
 - and most interestingly, a fear that the China would view developments as proof of the US' inability to restrain Soviet assertiveness in the region

The Regan Doctrine 1985

'We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives...on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua...to defy Soviet aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth. Support for freedom fighters is self-defence.'

- Justification of US support of anti-Communist groups
- Heritage Foundation was influential in the development of this doctrine.

Stinger Missile Controversy 1986

- High-tech weaponry American made – the end of plausible deniability, publically acknowledgment of a proxy war – however, able to break status quo in Afghanistan
- The Stinger missile was widely believed to be the sole weapon capable of breaking the military status-quo in the Afghan war
- Technology loss (capture and counter-measure)
- Depletion of US stockpile
- Lack of accountability and control
- The possibility that intensifying the conflict in Afghanistan could trigger a Soviet invasion of Pakistan to cut the supply line of the Mujahideen
- Early in 1985 the Soviet forces intensified their tactical campaign, but did not exceed the 120,000 deployment cap
- US Congress had been stirring public sentiment behind the Mujahideen cause
- In 1985 Gorbachev came to power, his commitment to the conflict was

unknown and Washington decided to test his resolve

- Previous concerns regarding possible retaliatory action against Pakistan were dismissed
- National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 166
- Creating an environment where Soviets could not back down – instead had to match US aggression.
- Lack of accountability and control – 50-60% of Stinger Missiles unaccounted for after the war

The Geneva Accords 14 April 1988

Pakistan and Soviet supported Kabul Government – no representative from the Afghan people.

- Criticisms:
 - Ambiguous wording
 - failure to include representation of the Mujahideen or civilian population
 - provision of a nine-month period for withdrawal (especially considering the continuation of conflict)
- Major success was the withdrawal (on the scheduled date of 15 February 1989) of all foreign military forces from Afghanistan
- Some academics argue the Accords provided the Soviet Union with a graceful exit from a conflict which had reached a stalemate

Outcomes:

- Approximate total of 90,000 Afghan combatants killed and 90,000 wounded
 - Including civilian casualties, estimates are that 10% of the total population was killed
 - Approximately 15-22,000 Soviets were killed and 75,000 wounded
- Approximately 6 million refugees were driven into surrounding countries
- Approximately US\$50bil in damage to Afghanistan, about 1/3 to 1/2 the net worth of the country
- 70% of Afghanistan's paved roads destroyed; 1 million mines laid in over 2% of the country
- Militarization of Islamist movement/global jihad: Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989)
- Rise of the Taliban (Sep 1996-Oct 2001)

The Taliban

- Formed in 1994 (context of post 1992 civil war which followed the collapse of the Communist gov), initially seen as a stabilizing force
- Largely Pashtun refugees residing in Pakistan (ethnic group spanning the Afgh/Pak border); militant worldview fused with an often KSA funded religious education
- support from Pakistan ISI (Pak as US ally in Cold War, keeps Pashtun unrest in FATA and NWFP directed at Kabul not Islamabad)
- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan established in 1996; control of Afghanistan recognized only by UAE, Pakistan and KSA
- Taliban links with Al Qaeda and 9/11
 - AQ arriving in Afghanistan (1996) from Sudan
 - 1998 US embassy attacks and 9/11 planned in Afghanistan, leading to 2001 war

Study Questions

1. What was Washington's position in relation to the Iran-Iraq war? Why?
2. How did the Iran-Iraq war affect the dynamics of regional politics? Winners? Losers?
3. Why did Iraq invade Kuwait?
4. Why did the United Nations endorse the use of force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait?
5. How did the Second Gulf War affect regional politics?

Lines in the Sand: Shiites as % of Muslim Population



- Iraq gained independence 1932 – Kuwait established and recognised by Iraq 1972, 60% of Iraq is Shi'a – the new Shi'a Republic of Iran agitates the Sunni ruling elite in Iraq.
- Iran 1979 revolution: Desire to be the largest regional influence, ambitious
- Shatt al-Arab waterway in Iraq, Iran will get access if it stops arming Kurdish insurgences inside Iraq. Iraq-Iran War 1980 – 1988 (Algiers agreement)
- Saddam Hussain: minority Sunni control: Ba'ath party, bolstered by tribal alliance.
- Soviet Position:
 - Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Iraq's anti-Israeli and anti-US position suggested it was a natural Soviet ally
 - The removal of the pro-US regime did, however, present the Soviet Union with new opportunities for alliances with Iran
 - Regional considerations were important
 - an Iranian military victory would add prestige to the revolutionary regime and its aim of exporting the revolution throughout the region, including Central Asia
 - By the close of this conflict the Soviet Union was a declining power in the region

- The US position:
 - The Iraq/US relationship had been difficult due to a history of Iraqi anti-Israeli rhetoric
 - Iraq broke off all diplomatic ties with the US after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war
 - By 1980, however, the containment of revolutionary Iran was the overriding US concern
 - Full diplomatic relations were restored in 1984
 - Iran's expansionist tendencies and the possibility it could foster Shia rebellion in the crucial Persian Gulf states emerged as important regional considerations

Shi'a v Sunni Conflict : Persian v Arab Conflict	
October 1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iranian Ayatollah steps up and supports Kurdish Iraqis • Saddam positions Iraq as the buffer to the Persian/Shi'a invasion, Saudi Arabia prepared to support Iraq
22 September 1980 Iraq invades Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was the longest running conventional war in the 20th century <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ characterized by a continual ebb and flow –no dominant side ○ longest trench war in 20th century ○ Between 850 000 and 1 million people were killed • Chemical weapons were used against civilians • Early gains by the Iraqi army were significant, yet by 1982 these were largely reversed • Israeli attack on Osirak nuclear plant in Iraq (1981) • US was increasingly involved in bolstering Iraq (after 1984) • Use of chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians (Halabja massacre - March 1988)
Iran-contra controversy (1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sandinistas, a leftist movement, came to power in Nicaragua • The Contras, a rebel 'movement' developed a relationship with elements of the CIA, the White House and the Pentagon • A congressional ban on funding sub-state organizations prevented the US Administration from directly supporting the rebels • Weapon sale to Iran in order to fund for the Contras <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arms for hostages (Nov 1979-Jan 1981)? Iran put pressure on Hezbollah to release US hostages • Arms for influence?
UNSC Res 598 (20 July 1987)	<p>The UNSC 'Deploring the initiation and continuation of the conflict, Deploring also the bombing of purely civilian population centers, attacks on neutral shipping or civilian aircraft, the violation of international humanitarian law and other laws of armed conflict, and, in particular, the use of chemical weapons contrary to obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol. Deeply concerned that further escalation and widening of the conflict may take place' called for immediate cease fire, for the deployment of UN observers and repatriation of prisoners.</p>
US involvement/Continuation of conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 1987: Kuwait seeks superpower assistance = Operation Earnest Will • 17 May 1987: Iraqi fighters accidentally bomb the USS Stark • 14 April 1988: USS Samuel Roberts hits an Iranian mine =Operation Praying Mantis • 3 July 1988: Iran Air Flight 655 is accidentally shot down by a US warship killing 290 people • 18 July 1988: Iran unconditionally accepts UNSC Resolution 598
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Iranian regime was increasingly isolated and was viewed as disruptive and expansionist, despite Iraq's initiation of this conflict • Iraq, as a result of massive war debts, was economically devastated • US support for Iraq radicalized anti-US sentiment in Iran • Iraq became overly confident of US support and US acceptance of Iraq's regional policy

US Policy towards Iraq under George Bush Senior

- The incoming Bush Administration (1989) followed the Regan approach: constructive engagement
- Economic incentives were used to try and lure Saddam into a relationship with the US and to moderate his foreign policy behavior
- The 'Iraq as a buffer against expansionist Iran' concept retained significant influence in Washington
- 'Honey-trap' allows the sovereignty of Kuwait to be violated and international response to be mustered – solidifying superpower status

Tensions between Iraq and Kuwait

- Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the 1991 Gulf war – expose the divide between the ideology of nationalism and the reality of factionalism led to a de facto collaboration between Israel and Arab members of anti-Iraq coalition during the conflict
- Saddam perception that his regime was under pressure from international and domestic actors – destabilisation paranoia
- Iraq had a \$10 billion loan from Kuwait, used to pay for the Iraq-Iran conflict – overall \$80 - \$100 billion in debt, Saudi Arabia acknowledge Iraq's role in stopping Iran and waives debt, Kuwait advantageous and tried to secure land and settle boarder disputes in exchange for waiver.
- Warba and Bubiyan - Islands in the Shatt al-Arab waterway which Kuwait had refused to hand over during the war
 - Borders - especially the Rumeila oilfield, which Iraq claimed the Kuwaitis had been illegally operating
- Iraq accused Kuwait and the UAE of over-producing their OPEC-set levels of oil - Impact on Iraq's economic recovery post-Gulf war

Saddam on 17 July 1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Thanks to our new weapons, the imperialists can no longer launch a military attack against us, so they have chosen to wage an economic guerrilla war with the help of those agents of imperialism, the leaders of the Gulf states. Their policy of keeping oil prices at low levels is a poisoned dagger planted in Iraq's back. If words fail to protect us, we will have no choice other than to go into action to re-establish the correct state of affairs and restore our rights' • Two weeks later Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait (2 Aug. 90) • The US freezes all Iraqi funds, bans trade and travel to any Iraqi port by US citizens, EU places a boycott on Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil and bans on the sale of weapons • US forces arrive in Saudi Arabia
UNSC Resolution 660 (2 August 1990)	Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait)
UNSC Resolution 661 (6 August 1990)	mandatory arms and economic sanctions on Iraq
UNSC Resolution 678 (29 Nov 1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq was ordered to fully comply with earlier resolutions calling for its withdrawal by the 15 January 1991 • The UNSC further authorised member states 'to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660...and restore international peace and security in the region'
Operation Desert Storm 16 Jan 1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad international coalition against Saddam • President Bush Senior called for popular uprising against Saddam. • Rebellions in North and South (Kurds & the Shia) – the great betrayal as US did not come to their aid

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Fly Zone • Ends the conflict after 100 hours • UN sanctions 1990 – 2003 • Saddam remained in power
Regional Impact: Israel and the PLO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq launched a total of 93 missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel • 39 Scuds landed on Israeli soil in a clear attempt to draw the IDF into the conflict and shatter the Arab-US alliance • Fears of chemical or biological attacks sparked public outcry • The PLO supported Saddam - a public relations disaster for its leadership
UN Sanctions (1990-2003) Results by the American Educational Trust 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1996 the price of wheat flour had increased by 33 times since 1993 and over 11,000 times since July of 1990, prior to the institution of economic sanctions by the U.N. Security Council • The rate of malnutrition among children under the age of five in Baghdad has increased over four-fold since 1991. • Community based surveys indicate Iraq suffered nearly a five-fold increase in mortality among children under the age of five in Baghdad compared to the period prior to the imposition of economic sanctions.
Some Outcomes of Desert Storm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSC Res. 678 re removing WMD (April 1991) • Desert Storm revealed the 'new world order', the emergence of the lone superpower, and entrenched its active presence in the region • The war completed the shattering of the myth of Arab unity as 'Arab brothers' joined the West against Iraq

Saudi Arabia and Osama Bin Laden:

- Bin Laden offers to protect Saudi against Iraq by activating Islamist cells in defence of the holy site of Islam (median and mecca). Saudi monarch refused and allowed US boots on Islamic soils; 'Desert Shield' breaks the relationship with Al Qaeda and Saudi Arabia.