



## RESEARCH PAPER

### External Invasions in Afghanistan: A Comparative Analysis of USSR and USA

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> July 03, 2021</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> August 01, 2021</p> <p><b>Online:</b> August 04, 2021</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Afghanistan, America, Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden Soviet, Taliban,</p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author:</b></p> <p>aamirjunaid798@gmail.com</p>	<p>Afghanistan is a country that has been suffering for the last forty years. The new generation of Afghanistan has not seen peace in the country. First Soviets invaded and approximately after one decade, America invaded Afghanistan. Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and remained till 1989. Thousands of Afghan men, women and children have been killed by the Soviet military. A large number of people migrated towards Iran and Pakistan. After a deadly civil war, the Taliban emerged and established a government in Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan faced brutalities of the Taliban. Taliban remained in power from 1996 to 2001 ruled the country with strict laws. The incident of 9/11 changed the security decorum of the world. America blamed Osama Bin Laden for the 9/11 tragedy and demanded Osama Bin Laden from the Taliban regime. Mullah Omer was the chief of the Taliban militants and he refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden to the American authorities. The United States attacked Afghanistan in October 2001 to demolish the Taliban and Al Qaeda nexus in Afghanistan. After 20 years of war in Afghanistan, America could not defeat the Taliban militants. America has spent over 3 trillion dollars and lost over 2500 soldiers in Afghanistan. America has signed a peace agreement with the Taliban militants to end the longest war of American history. This paper compares the invasions of America and the Soviets in Afghanistan. This research enables readers to understand the commonalities between both wars.</p>

## Introduction

Afghanistan always had a very complex political and security situation. Borders of Afghanistan had been decided before the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Central governments in Afghanistan had been weak enough to control the country's territory. Foreign forces have been invaded Afghanistan since the start of history. Afghanistan has a vital strategic position with Tehran, Moscow, Beijing and Islamabad as neighbors. Most of the rulers who ruled in the Indian sub-continent came from Afghanistan. Afghanistan has

been the source of the rift between Moscow and London for the last two centuries. After the independence of the Indian sub-continent from the British, Afghanistan has been the fault line between Moscow and Washington (Pant, 2017).

Moscow and London were colliding in Afghanistan and sure that the winner in Afghanistan would dictate world politics. The modern history of Afghanistan has started with the demise of King Nadir Shah, who was killed by a student who belonged to the Hazara community. After the assassination of Nadir Shah, his son Zahir Shah took power and ruled Afghanistan for the next four decades. Zahir was an educated person who got an education from France and Afghanistan. King Zahir Shah trusted his uncles Mahmoud and Hashim and both became the prime ministers under Zahir Shah. Muhammad Daoud Khan, who also served as prime minister of Afghanistan, was the cousin of King Zahir Shah. Afghanistan's diplomatic envoy presented its credentials in 1921 to the President of the United States (Shams, 2019; Muzaffar, et. al. 2021).

America was not keen to establish ties with Afghanistan till the Second World War. At the start of World War II, Afghanistan supported the Nazis in Germany but later when Russia and Moscow attacked Iran and put pressure on Afghanistan to expel the envoys of Germany. Kabul accepted the demands and removed the German diplomats. Afghanistan has been played the role of a buffer state between the world powers. The King and his ministers tried their best to get benefits simultaneously from both sides Russia and Washington. America supported Afghanistan in agriculture and other fields but denied selling arms to the Afghan military. The United States has been in a military aligned with Pakistan. During the regime of President Truman, Kabul requested to get weapons from America, but America denied to say that who is your enemy (Riedel, 2014).

When the British went back from the Indian sub-continent, Pakistan inherited the Western border with Afghanistan. The Kabul regime did not accept the legitimacy of the border with Pakistan. Afghans have argued that it was imposed on Afghanistan by an imperialist power using force. But after the referendum in tribal areas, people decided to live with Pakistan and the British announced its legitimacy with clear intentions. Afghanistan did not accept the Durand Line till today and it was the reaction of Afghanistan that voted against Pakistan in the United Nations in 1947 (Rahi, 2020). America established ties with Pakistan instead of the Kabul regime. Pakistan tilted towards the United States and the United Kingdom to get military and economic aid in the Cold War era. Pakistan joined Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954; its main purpose was to tackle the expansion of the Soviet Union in Asian states. In the very next year, in 1955, Pakistan has joined Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), which connected North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to contain the Soviet Union and China (Jabeen & Mazhar, 2011, Muzaffar, et. al. 2019).

Pakistan had become the most important American ally in the region. Still, in contrast, America denied providing arms assistance to Kabul in 1954 and stressed that Kabul should settle the dispute of Pashtunistan with its neighbor Pakistan. Moscow took it as a chance to enhance its influence in Afghanistan. Soviet and Afghanistan signed an agreement in 1950 to strengthen trade ties between both countries. Moscow opened a trade office in Kabul and started to provide oil to Afghanistan and return to get wool from Afghanistan. America was supporting Pakistan with economic and military aid.

Afghanistan decided to turn towards Moscow to get arms. Czechoslovakia was the puppet state of Moscow, Afghanistan signed an arms deal with Czechoslovakia under the prime minister ship of Muhamad Daoud Khan in 1953. Daoud also signed an arms deal with Moscow in 1955 worth \$32.5 million (Hilali, 2005). Nikita Khrushchev first visited Kabul as a communist party leader in 1955 and supported the Afghan stance on Pashunistan (Rubin, 2002).

Moscow had supported Afghanistan with \$1 billion in military aid and \$1.25 billion in economic assistance to Afghanistan by 1979. On the other hand, America only provided \$ 25 million in military expenditures to Afghanistan (Riedel, 2014). America and Russia has supported Afghanistan at various times with economic and military aid. Moscow and Washington both fought with Islamic militants in Afghanistan and this paper compares both invasions of Soviet and America's in Afghanistan. This research shows the similarities between both superpowers' wars in Afghanistan.

### **Literature Review**

Afghanistan's Endless War's by Larry P. Goodson explains the history of wars in Afghanistan. In his book, the author focused on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Soviet invasion in Afghanistan provided a chance to Americans to enter into Afghanistan. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, along with America, supported the militants against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. America supported Pakistan with weapons and money to train militants to fight against Kremlin. The writer also explains the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and their popularity in public, especially in the country's rural areas. Finally, the author describes the wish of neighboring states to bring durable peace to Afghanistan. Afghanistan has always remained a focal point for the world powers and the regional powers for a long time (Goodson, 2001).

The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan: Lesson to be learned? Paul Dibb defines his experience of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. USSR invaded in 1979 and remained till 1980. It shows the mindset of Soviet leadership towards expansionism of communism in the world from the 1970s to the 1980s and it was a costly war for the Soviet Union. The writer considers the Afghan war a most important event towards the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The failure of Soviet forces in Afghanistan played a significant role in the breakdown of the USSR. The writer discusses the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan against the Mujahedeen. The author also highlights the challenges America is still facing in Afghanistan (Dibb, 2010).

The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan by Amin Saikal and William Marley explains what happened after the USSR invasion of Afghanistan. After nearly a decade of bloodshed, this war was proved a nightmare for the people of Afghanistan. They lost thousands of lives and properties and migrated from their homeland to the neighboring states, especially Iran and Pakistan. The war-damaged the Afghan people and had shaken the basics of the USSR and, after the sudden withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, created a vacuum in the country. Then the civil war erupted and peace in Afghanistan became a dream for the local people and the world community. Amin Saikal and William Marley describe the condition of the common man in Afghanistan. The authors also explain Afghan society's political and social structure (Saikal & Marley, 1989).

The Taliban at War by Antonio Giustozzi explains the style of fighting the Taliban militants in Afghanistan. In this book, the author discusses that the Taliban have enhanced their influence in Afghanistan and captured more areas than in 2001. Afghanistan has been in war for the last four decades and now the Taliban has become a new powerhouse in Afghanistan. Taliban have defeated America, NATO and Afghan forces at the same time. The author discusses the establishment of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. The author explains the strategy of the Taliban militants' right after the demise of the Taliban regime in 2001. The Afghan government and its allies America and NATO considered that we had defeated the Taliban, came back strongly in 2003 and captured more territory than before in Afghanistan (Giustozzi, 2019).

Afghan Peace Process: Prospects and Challenges by Aamir Junaid, Yeldaiz Fatima Shah and Dr. Ghulam Mustafa discuss prospects and challenges in the way of peace in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has strategic importance for the world and regional powers. Afghanistan has been in a war-like situation for the last 40 years. Soviet forces invaded in 1979 to install their puppet regime in Afghanistan. After one decade of fighting, Soviet troops failed to take over Afghanistan and went back empty-handed. Civil war erupted and as a result of the Civil war, the Taliban emerged. The incident of 9/11 changed the security dynamics of the world and America invaded Afghanistan to eradicate the terrorists of Al Qaeda. The authors highlight the efforts America has made to bring durable peace to Afghanistan. Peace in Afghanistan is necessary to bring prosperity to Afghanistan and the neighboring states (Junaid, Shah, & Mustafa, 2021).

The researchers worked on different aspects of the Afghan war. Additional efforts were made to bring permanent peace to Afghanistan. There is a need to highlight the similarities and differences of the wars of American and Soviet in Afghanistan. This paper highlights the similarities and differences between wars in Afghanistan.

### **American and Soviet Wars in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan's strategic position attracts world powers. The invasion of two superpowers, the Soviet Union and America is the prime example of its importance (Muzaffar, et. al, 2017). Afghanistan has been at war for the last four decades. War in Afghanistan not only harms its people and economy but also affects the neighboring states. Peace in Afghanistan is essential to its growth and for the growth of its neighbors. Afghanistan's neighboring states China, Iran and Pakistan, are very keen to bring durable peace in Afghanistan except for China; both countries share long borders, ethnicities and cultures with Afghanistan (Mustafa, Ahmed, & Junaid, 2020). Wars in Afghanistan killed thousands of innocent Afghans and hundreds and thousands migrated to neighboring countries. First, in the 1980s, Soviet forces tried to install their puppet regime in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union always tried to make Afghanistan the Democratic Republic. A group of Soviet-trained Afghan officers took control of Afghanistan and announced establishing the Democratic Republic, a state-run by Communist party like in USSR. Nur Muhammad Taraki was the person installed by the Soviets. He started different programs to complete the Soviet's plan in Afghanistan. Nur Muhammad Taraki announced land distribution, change in women status and rooted out the old pattern of social order in Afghanistan. The most important thing was that Nur Muhammad had very little support in masses. Afghan religious factors showed resistance to the Soviet communist agenda and declare jihad against the communist regime in Afghanistan. Different groups of

Mujahedeen were set up to protect the values and traditions of Afghan society. The communist party was also divided into two factions. At the same time, Hafeezullah Amin, the prime minister of Nur Muhammad Taraki, killed the President and took control of the government. It was devastating news for the Soviet leadership and it was the time that the Soviets decided to support militarily to its client state (Grau & Gress, 2002). The Soviet forces entered Afghanistan on December 25, 1979, killed the President and installed Babrak Karmal. The Soviet Union had decided that Soviet forces will train the Afghan army, bring stability, and withdraw from Afghanistan within three years of Soviet forces. Soviet forces took ten years to withdrawal from Afghanistan. Soviet troops killed hundreds and thousands of Afghans and millions migrated to neighboring countries. America, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were also part of that war and supported the Mujahedeen factor in Afghanistan against the Soviet troops (Mustafa, Yaseen, & Junaid, 2020). After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, civil war erupted in Afghanistan; different segments of Afghan society started to fight each other for the sake of power. As the result of the civil war, a new religious mindset emerged on-screen named the Taliban. The Taliban helped local Afghans and seized power in 1996 in Afghanistan. Taliban imposed strict Islamic laws in Afghanistan. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were the only states to recognize the Taliban regime (Gannon, 2018). The incident of 9/11 changed the whole scenario of the world. Terrorist attacks in America have changed the security dynamics of the world. America blamed Al Qaeda on these terror attacks. It demanded Osama Bin Laden from the Taliban leadership, but the Taliban refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden and demanded evidence against Osama Bin Laden's involvement in the 9/11 incident (Yusufzai, 2019). The Taliban were frustrated and due to their extremist policies, other countries were not in favor of recognizing the Taliban regime. America attacked and toppled the Taliban regime in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Northern Alliance and other neighboring states supported America against the Taliban. America supported Hamid Karzai as the President of Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai announced an amnesty for the Taliban militants but could get desired results. Hamid Karzai tried to bring stability to Afghanistan but failed. Ashraf Ghani, incumbent President of Afghanistan, also tried his best to convince the Taliban to enter national politics. Still, the Taliban always refused his proposal by saying that the Afghan government is an illegitimate regime (Gul, 2019). President Trump took office in 2016 and took concrete steps to end this long war. America started direct negotiations with the Taliban in Doha and reached an agreement after over one year of discussions to end this long war. America and the Taliban signed a peace accord on February 29, 2020, in the capital city of Qatar. America had to complete its withdrawal till May, but President Joe Biden announced that America would withdraw its troops from Afghanistan till September 2021 (Boot, 2021). After the American withdrawal, there is fear that civil war will be on the cards. Taliban are getting more power day by day. Ashraf Ghani and other segments of Afghan society do not want to accept the Taliban in power. Neighboring states are working hard to bring stability and peace to Afghanistan. Soviets and American invasions in Afghanistan have various similar aspects. After Soviet withdrawal, a bloody civil war erupted in Afghanistan among different segments of Mujahedeen. The Taliban emerged in Afghanistan in 1994 to protect the local Afghans from the cruelty of the civil war (Maizland, 2021). The people of Afghanistan had positive remarks about the Taliban at the beginning. Later the strictness of Sharia laws and human rights violations made the Taliban unpopular in the masses. The civil war destroyed the hopes of the common Afghans. Now the things are the same as they were in the 1990s in Afghanistan. America

will make a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan as USSR did in the 1990s without making a clear roadmap for the future. Ashraf Ghani has a weak central government and cannot control even Kabul without the help of foreign forces. Once again, Afghanistan will become a battlefield, and Afghan people will suffer as they faced after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

## **Conclusion**

Afghanistan has been in the war for many years. Two superpowers invaded Afghanistan within four decades. USSR and America tried their best to establish their puppet regimes in Afghanistan, but they were failed to establish a strong government accepted by the masses both times. USSR went back without getting its aims from Afghanistan after ten years of destruction in Afghanistan. USSR could not bring peace to Afghanistan and go back empty-handed without giving Afghans a proper roadmap for the future. After the withdrawal of the USSR, a civil war erupted and people suffered a lot. People were so frustrated that they accepted the Taliban as their well-wishers. Now the things are also the same after the three decades of USSR withdrawal from Afghanistan. America tried to control Afghanistan through a puppet regime but failed. The Afghan war is the longest in American history. It proves a white elephant on the American economy; America wants to end the Afghan war and thinks that a military solution is impossible in Afghanistan. The peace agreement is proving as a withdrawal ticket for America. The weak government of Ashraf Ghani cannot fight with the Taliban militants after the United States' absence. The Taliban are more strong than in 2001 and, capturing important districts. Other terrorist groups are also working in Afghanistan, like ISIS and Al Qaeda. Peace in Afghanistan cannot prevail shortly, and neighboring states will also be affected by the Afghanistan war. There is no difference between USSR and the American withdrawal from Afghanistan. Afghanistan will become a haven for terrorist organizations and it is difficult to assume that the people of Afghanistan will see durable peace in the country soon.

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