The Hidden Hands Soviet-Afghan War 1979-89, U.S Policy, and External Actors

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Abstract
In the last month of 1979, Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and Soviet-Afghan War 1979-89 was born. The U.S and number of other states rejected this invasion and U.S influence towards this region was very open. American administration also reformed its foreign policy and developed alliance with other nations to expel out the Soviets from Afghanistan. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran, and Egypt governments were at front line to support of U.S foreign policy during whole the war and worked together particularly Pakistan-U.S-Saudi security agencies trained the thousands of Afghan Mujahedeen in Pakistani training camps and funneled billions of dollars and arms against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Further, most of weapons for these Mujahedeen were purchased from China, Iran and Egypt. After all, under the U.S foreign policy, these all states played the vital role against the Soviets Red Army in Afghanistan and punished them and expelled them out from Afghanistan.

Keywords: Soviet-Afghan War; U.S Foreign Policy; Mujahedeen; External States.

1. Soviet-Afghan War, U.S Alliance Policy, and External Actors

Soon after the Soviets’ invasion of Afghanistan during the last months of 1979, Soviet-Afghan war emerged and U.S not only condemned the Moscow’s steps towards Afghanistan and took the critical decisions by own-self but also developed the alliance with other nations to punish the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Hence, U.S high ranking officials visited to other regional states to inform them about the actual political environment about the Soviet-Afghan War. U.S officials got the confidence of the regional countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran, and Egypt and encouraged them to support the Afghan freedom fighters (Afghan Mujahedeen) against the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. These external actors agreed with U.S policy soon, because every state has their own agendas and interests in this war.

2. External Actors and Own Agendas

Each of state involved in this game have its own agendas. United States had lost the Vietnam War from Democratic Republic of Vietnam backed by Moscow. Thus Brzezinski affirmed, they should take revenge and gave them back the same pain (Gates, 2006). Others, such as Egyptian and Chinese were going to sale their arms (Crile, 2003, p.463). China’s involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War was full secret and even to date, no anyone acknowledged that they funneled the Soviet make arms and other support to Afghan freedom fighters (Ibid, p.268). However, China publically condemns the Soviet Red Army’s involvement in Afghanistan and said a famous sentence that “Soviet causes belli, can fool no one” (Bradsher, 1985, p.201).

It was, then, much difficult to convince Chinese Government about the Soviets involvement in Afghanistan and got their support. But U.S high ranking official Joe Di Trani, Chief of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Beijing Station, took this risk and finally got Chinese Government confidence so now China not only to send their arms to Afghan freedom fighters, but U.S also can fly over China for the Afghan cause (Crile, 2003, p.268). One another American stake holder affirmed that Chinese weapons were quantitative and cheap, which could help to American cause towards Afghanistan (Ibid, p.269). Chinese cheap arms down the international market so other nations slashed their prices such as Egypt.
Further, the Wilson traveled to regional countries such as Pakistan, Egypt, and Iran and encouraged them for more help of Afghan freedom fighters to punish the Soviets (Ibid, pp.113-114 & p.33 & 143).

3. Pakistan - No Way to Jump Out

As the Soviet troops in Afghanistan garnered the global attention, on the same time, this issue also alarmed Pakistani government to do something. Afghan neighboring countries witnessed their relationship with it but Moscow changed this within a matter of days. Pakistani government also soon experienced the substantial change in their relationship with Americans and a number of Middle Eastern states. Within this mind, it can be easily understood how Pakistan was caught in the trap of Afghan-Soviet War and why Pakistani administration has no way to get out from this fire.

To better understand Pakistan’s participation in this war, it is also important to examine the Pakistan’s previous history towards their geopolitical relations with his neighboring countries particularly with India since the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Although this is beyond the scope of this topic but is important to understand the reasoning behind Pakistan’s decision to participate in this war as ally of United State. Soon after Pakistan’s creation, Pak-India relations always zigzag and fought three wars but India has good relations with Soviet Union. Geographically, India and China located on East-North side and Iran and Afghanistan on West-North, hence, soon after the Soviets invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan need to important decision to safe its territory. Although Soviets didn’t interference into Pakistan but it was big threat to Pakistan’s security, so Pakistani administration decided to respond the Moscow (Hussain, 2005, p.3).

On the other hand, however, Pakistani President Zia-Ul-Haq’s human rights record was very poor but was ignored by U.S administration when compared with Soviet’s move towards Afghanistan. Soon after the Soviet’s troops entered into Afghanistan, Carter personally telephone to Zia with offering of millions of dollars in military and economic aid in exchange as alliance with U.S against the Soviets Red Army in Afghanistan and support of Afghan freedom fighters.³ Furthermore, Pakistan was going to build the atomic bomb “Islamic bomb” so, along with other interests; they needed the U.S alliance and support U.S foreign policy towards Afghanistan. Actually, Pakistani President Zia-Ul-Haq had struck an agreement with Americans:

“Pakistan would work with the CIA against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and in return the U.S. would not only provide massive aid but would agree to look the other way on the question of the (“Islamic”) bomb.”

Steve Coll mentioned in his memories, Ghost Wars, that Pakistani administration was already willing for joining this war and agreed to support the Afghan freedom fighters but wants American’s hand on their back so they can get more objectives from this new ground. The author further affirmed that President Zia was concerned that unless the U.S administration committed to protect the Pakistani territory from Soviets retaliation, Pakistan, “could not risk Soviet wrath” as supporting of Afghan freedom fighters (Coll, 2004, p.44).

It was reaffirmed during a meeting between Pak-U.S official on October 24, 1979, that: "in the event of Afghan aggression against Pakistan we would consider the 1959 bilateral agreement to be relevant....".

Eventually, U.S guaranteed to Pakistani government to protect their territory if the Soviets take any aggression against them and now Pakistan don’t have other way to jump out and also found safe way to jump in the Afghan fire and started the key role in this war (Gates, 2006, p.149).

4. Soviet-Afghan War and Pakistan’s Role

History has demonstrated that during Soviet-Afghan War, Pakistan played the vital role as U.S ally against the Soviet Union. During 1979, President Carter signed a paper to authorize the covert aid to Afghan freedom fighters, according to John K Cooley (2002, p.55) mentioned in Unholy Wars, in the form of medical aid and modest program of propaganda. American aid arrived in the form of medical and radios to Afghan insurgent’s movements through Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), Steve Coll affirmed in Ghost Wars (Coll, 2004, p.44).

A meeting between William Casey, the Director of CIA and biggest anti-communist, and Zia hold on April 6, 1980, and during this meeting, Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq encouraged the Casey to support the Afghan insurgents and pointed out the regional security issue how Soviet Red Army’s control of Afghan region would drive a wedge between Pakistan and Iran, including the alarming of Persian Gulf region. Zia further explained the regional history and mentioned that British-Soviet governments made an agreement and drown a line on Oxus River and made clear that no party would pass this otherwise it would contest. Resultantly, Soviets didn’t crossed the line almost a century. Soon after WW-II, a vacuum was developed and eventually Soviets got the chance to deploy their troops in Afghan in the last months of 1979. In the final of his briefing to Casey, Zia emphasized U.S has a duty to warn Soviets on their steps towards Afghanistan and should draw a line between Iran-Pak borders and make clear to Soviets that any move would be contested (Gates, 2006, pp. 251-252).

As the American were already involved in this war, therefore, soon Zia got the confidence of Casey and he was agreed with Zia to support the Afghan freedom fighters and would pressure on Soviets for their Afghanistan invasion. Pakistani leader further asked for provision of anti-aircraft equipment and said that “the Pathans are great fighter, but shit-scared when it comes to air power.” On his returning to U.S, Casey raised the issue to increase the aid for Afghan insurgents, but he failed and these insurgents would have to wait more (Gates, 2006, p. 252).

Immediately, Pakistan provided U.S with a new door for gathering intelligence against Soviets in Afghanistan but there was considerably more to the two nation’s alliance during Soviet-Afghan War. Pakistan received billions of dollars in return for support of Afghan freedom fighters and carry out U.S foreign policy towards this war. U.S also developed its relations with Southwest Asian states and reforms their policies towards this region. Further, to supply the American aid to Afghan freedom fighters, Brzezinski wrote a memorandum to President Carter and asserted that:

“To make the above possible we must both reassure Pakistan and encourage it to help the rebels. This will require a review of our policy toward Pakistan, more guarantees to it, more arms aid, and alas, a decision that our security policy towards Pakistan cannot be dictated by our non-proliferation (of nuclear weapons) policy (Levy, 2007, p.64).”

President Jimmy Carter (U.S), President Zia-Ul-Haq (Pak), and Zbigniew Brzezinski

http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-7-TFGEdrDhg/TwoDvDULrviIAAAAAAAQ0s91DqfedB71M/s1600/General+Zia+Jimmy++Carter+Zbigniew+Brzezinski.jpg

In 1982, Casey and Zia met again and Zia explained that Romanian high ranking official Nicolae Ceausescu told him about Moscow’s hidden objectives towards Afghanistan and said that “Pakistan and Iran had used the Islamic card in Afghanistan, and this was alarming position for Soviet’s with its own Muslim states; and Moscow could intervene in Iran if required”. Pakistani leader was agreed with Romanian official but would add that Soviet troops expectedly moved towards Strait of Hormuz and might be move towards Pakistani Gwadar Coast to gaining the access of sea (Gates, 2006, p.252). Zia said to Casey that our both nation’s objectives in Afghanistan should be “to keep the pot boiling, but not boil over” and to provoke the Moscow’s Red Army influence in Pakistan. Zia also agreed about the provision of arms to Afghan freedom fighters but also asked for provision of anti-aircraft arms for Mujahedeen (Ibid).

Soon after the President Ronald Reagan assumed the Presidential chair, he reformed U.S policy towards Pakistan and opened his hands for friendship with Pakistan. He told to Pakistani President Zia that although we have some problems on some critical issues but it’s times to change the things (Kux, 2001, p. 256).
The Reagan Administration finally got confidence of Pakistani government with offering three billion military and economic aid package. Reagan’s team also accepted Zia as key ally of United States. John K Cooley (2002, p. 55) gave a historical statement in his account, Unholy Wars: that:

“Pakistani support for the operation was the most vital component, as its geographical and ethnic ties to Afghanistan provided a secure base to flood the country with weaponry. The agreement between Pakistan and the United States could be summarized as follows: the CIA was to supply arms, finance, and training for the mujahideen, but it “...must be provided through Pakistan and not directly from the CIA....”

He further stated that:

“Zia placed three absolute conditions for allowing shipment of the arms... First, the countries concerned... were to maintain absolute silence about the shipments... Second, arms and other war supplies were to be shipped to Pakistan by the fastest available means. Third, the shipments by air were to be limited to two planeloads per week (Ibid.)”

In whole, Pakistan played key role as U.S ally in Soviet-Afghan War and both nations got confidence of each other. One step forward, both the nations played critical role as training to Afghan Mujahedeen in Pakistan and established the number of camps to train them and to use them against Soviets troops and Afghan Government.

5. The Dangerous Ground

U.S government needed alliance with Pakistani government and its ISI’s capabilities including Pakistani land, then, American aid can be put in the hands of Afghan Mujahedeen and can organize a big opposition against the Soviet Red Army and pro-Soviet Afghan government. Without cooperation of Pakistani government, it was impossible for U.S government and his policy makers to provide aid, training, and arms to Afghan Mujahedeen. Therefore, to win the war, under U.S foreign policy, American administration and his policy makers got advantage of Pak-U.S coalition and both administrations made plan to train and arms the Afghan freedom fighters (Mujahedeen) in Pakistan against the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan and Afghan government and this critical job was done by Pakistani security agency ISI. ISI’s Afghan bureau, a committee of Pakistani high ranking intelligence officers those overall controlled Mujahedeen, managed international and Pakistani aid for Mujahedeen regularly. By mid of 1983, this Afghan bureau employed almost over sixty officers, more than three hundred junior officers and various other staff. It often enrolled colonels and majors from northern areas of Pakistan those easily spoke Pashto (Afghanistan national language). Although these new Pakistani officers belong to Pakistani, tribal areas so cannot be detected by any external and can easily operate in Afghanistan in civilian dress. This new Afghan bureau was a secret agency and some of their officers could not transform to other places in Pakistan (Coll, 2004, p.64).

Mujahedeen’s training was diverse and Pakistani ISI and CIA began various different specialized courses for Afghan Mujahedeen. A most comprehensive 10 days course offered how to use mortars and rocket propelled grenades (Ibid, p.103). Still other most critical programs were taught to trainers that how to use car, camel or bicycle bombing in urban areas and how to assassination (Crile, 2003, p.335). To trained and arms to Afghan Mujahedeen, American Administration funneled the billions of dollars and most expensive arms to Afghan Mujahedeen through Pakistani ISI. However, Pakistani administration make strict policy to keep Americans away from Mujahedeen training camps; but American high ranking official Casey insisted ISI to visit training areas (Coll, 2004, p.100).

Casey requested to Pakistani ISI leadership to see true training camps of Afghan Mujahedeen in the frontier area of Pakistan. All convincing efforts of Pakistani ISI failed to keep Casey away from training camps, finally, Casey visited true training area of Mujahedeen, and ISI’s leader General Akhtar Abdur Rahman showed Casey guerrilla training course of Mujahedeen. Akhtar declared in his speech to Afghan movement’s commanders and trainees to put pressure on Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan and Afghan government and emphasized “Kabul must burn” (Ibid, p.103).

Mujahedeen training was underway under the U.S foreign policy and American’s were watching all the game in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Once again, Howard Hart visited, U.S Station Chief in Pakistan, to Mujahedeen training camp and he estimated that there might be more than twenty thousand Mujahedeen in training camps.

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2 NSA, Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.
Hart also was quartermaster and ordered more arms for Mujahedeen from CIA headquarters to Afghan Mujahedeen camps through ISI and supervise the Mujahedeen’s training programs in Pakistan. Afghan Mujahedeen were motivated under U.S foreign policy by ISI to fight against Soviets aggressors and Afghan government time-by-time (Ibid, pp. 56-58). Steve Coll mentioned in his memory, *Ghost Wars*, most of CIA including U.S administration and his policy makers want to kill the Soviets more and more. On the same way, Hart announced a reward policy towards the killing of Soviet soldiers: “ten thousand rupees for a Special Forces soldier, five thousand for a conscript, and double in either case if the prisoners were brought in alive.” The author further mentioned that it was revenge of Vietnam War and Vietcong and the peoples who served in this war. Hart openly announced the rifles for everyone who wants to join the Afghan war (Ibid, p. 59).

**CIA mujahedeen camps in Pakistan for extremist Arab & Afghan fighters**


George Crile mentioned in his account “Charlie Wilson’s War” that a high ranking U.S official, John McGaffin, asked to Hart during his visit to Pakistan “You’re the guy on the ground” and “This is your war out there. Just tell us what you need” (Crile, 2003, pp.96 & 126). Back in Washington, the policy makers were discussing whether or not to increased aid for Mujahedeen. In answering during a meeting, Hart had confidently replied that Mujahedeen were worth additional aid and could punish the Soviet Red Army as there were thousands of Mujahedeen willing to die for cause. Hart also proudly reported to his seniors that he has developed his relations with Zia and Akhtar and both were ready to more support of United State as well as Mujahedeen (Ibid, p.125). During his time as Station Chief, Hart regularly met with Akhtar at ISI headquarters Rawalpindi and long conversations about Afghan Mujahedeen and agreed that all training and arms to Mujahedeen within Pakistani training camps would be distributed by Pakistani ISI. Further, agreed that no CIA official allow to train or arms direct to Mujahedeen and when any new and complex weapons were entered in system, Pakistan would allow to CIA to train our trainees on their use. Several meetings with Akhtar, Hart said, on how to best arms for Afghan Mujahedeen, Hart taken that information and, “Spelled out what we wanted and why, and Chuck signed off on it. That was the beginning of the big time,” He said (Ibid, p.127).

**Brzezinski training to Pakistani trainers**

https://wondersofpakistan.wordpress.com/author/wondersofpakistan/page/182/

Suddenly, ISI endorsed a formal request to Washington through CIA headquarters in Pakistan for provision of buffalo guns including night-vision goggles and high powered scopes for Mujahedeen to hit his target in the dark nights.
The new request alarmed U.S policy makers and CIA officers in Washington that demand of dangerous weapons might be dangerous in future. After a several meeting, a compromise was reached that guns could be provided to Pakistani ISI but they should remove the night-vision goggles and scopes. U.S trainees trained to ISI trainees on the buffalo rifles for further training of Mujahedeen. Eventually, hundreds of buffalo rifles shipped to Pakistan for further handover (Coll, 2004, p.137).

During Hart’s tenure, truck after truck, ships after ships were secretly supplied by CIA to Afghan Mujahedeen in Pakistani tribal areas through ISI. President Ronald Reagan openly declared U.S aid to Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviets in Afghanistan. Journalists and tourists from Europe and America traveled to Afghanistan published stories that Afghan freedom fighters were receiving substantial aid from external hands (Ibid., p.70). Another senior delegation of U.S officials visited CIA Headquarter in Islamabad and met with ISI Chief Akhtar. The new delegation carrying substantial aid and arms including satellite maps, and offered a program of advanced explosives (Ibid., p.129).

To review Afghan program, “Robert M Gates mentioned in his account, From the Shadows” Gates, then Deputy DCI, visited to Pakistan in October 1986. He spent a lot of time with Akhtar and other ISI officer involved with Afghan Mujahedeen and was briefed by CIA and ISI officers about Mujahedeen training, arms and their courses. He further mentioned secretly meeting with Masood’s men, the Mujahedeen commander of northern Afghanistan. Masood’s men complained him that ISI had selected some his own Mujahedeen movements and not providing arms to them that were needed. I was promised and later ask to ISI command for provision of required arms to all Mujahedeen movements, Gates said. He also added that next day, they visited Mujahedeen training camps, and see thousands of Mujahedeen were training on rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPG) and heavy machine guns. I observed that some veer yards away the shape of Soviet tanks and Mujahedeen were hit on them, and after each hit they jump up and yelling “Allah-o-Akbar” (Gates, 2006, p. 429).

Almost thirty five thousand Muslim Mujahedeen, according to Ahmad Rashid in “The Taliban: Exporting Extremism”, from forty countries participated in Soviet-Afghan War. Most of them came for study in Saudi-funded training camps in Pakistan, where they promoted Islamic fundamentalism. Eventually, more than one hundred thousand Mujahedeen were trained and influenced during Soviet-Afghan War (Rashid, 1999). In 1981-83, the numbers of Mujahedeen were estimated at some forty five thousand but sudden this number increased to one hundred fifty thousand in 1985. This big influence was due to U.S financial aid and the use of Islamic card by ISI (Grau and Gress, 2002, p.24).

Front row, from left: Major Gen. Hamid Gul, Director General of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), Director of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Willian Webster; Deputy Director for Operations Clair George


Peoples Canada Daily News newspaper published a story on July 7 about the U.S policy towards Afghanistan and Secretary of State George Shultz’s attempts to get behind the U.S foreign policy. The report published that Shultz proclaimed in front of Afghan Mujahedeen gathering in Pakistani training camps that “This a gathering in the name of freedom, a gathering in the name of self-determination, a gather in the name of getting Soviet forces out of Afghanistan...fellow ‘freedom fighters’ we are with you (Emadi, 1999).”
On the same way, Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, publicly praised Afghan Mujahedeen and said, “I want you to know that you are not alone. You will have our support until you regain the freedom that is rightfully yours” (Kux, 2001, p.271). U.S official in Pakistan stated that during the Soviet-Afghan War, everyone was welcome and doors were opened for everyone with arms and training to punish the Soviets, it does not matter if participants were from Bahrain or Bosnia.

6. The Wonder Weapons and Afghan Mujahedeen

The U.S, along with his allies and non-allies, and political and Afghan Mujahedeen leaders, formed an organization with the object to wage the Afghan war and expelled out the Soviets from Afghanistan with punishment. The organization was organized under the umbrella of CIA;

Once given approval by the Carter administration to go into action, it scrutinized all intelligence pertaining to Afghanistan to assemble a suitable plan of action. Both China and Pakistan were enlisted by Washington to act as ‘anchors’ in the first stage of the operation (Cooley, 2002, p.48).

Pakistan’s ISI played key role to pass through American aid from CIA to Afghan Mujahedeen. A close men of Charles G Cogan, Chief of Near East and South Asian Division of the CIA’s Directorate of Operations, summed up the Pak-U.S relations towards this war; “We took the means to wage war, put them in the hands of people who could do so, for purposes for which we agreed” (Charles, 1993).

U.S more developed his foreign policy towards this war and supplied the more sophisticated arms and war items to Afghan Mujahedeen. U.S shipped tons of C-4 plastic explosives for sabotage purpose and British made M16 for bridge attack, to Afghan Mujahedeen chest through Pakistani ISI. Soon after 1985, remote control detonator devices, electronic timing and “time pencil” a chemical device that set off rocket or bomb and most sophisticated electronics “E Cell” delay detonators were also supplied to Afghan freedom fighter by CIA through proper channel. These dangerous and sophisticated devices were used by Mujahedeen against the Soviets and Afghan Government within Afghanistan (Coll, 2004, p.135).

Now Afghan War had become the big challenge for CIA, U.S Administration and his policy makers including Pakistani ISI. All the stake holders took it more serious and expanded war tactics. CIA began to supply the “dual use” weapons system that could be used against the Red Army Troops in Afghanistan and Afghan forces. This new package included more sniper rifles, new electronic detonators and malleable plastic explosives for Afghan Mujahedeen (Ibid., pp.135-36).

Milton Bearden, U.S new Station Chief in Pakistan, joined the Afghan war and found a new title of “Ships of Mules” as supplying of arms to Afghan Mujahedeen. CIA purchased Soviets made weapons from China and other sophisticated technology for use against Soviets troops in Afghanistan and Bearden helped to arrange these weapons from China to Pakistani training areas. These important weapons were supplied to Mujahedeen through CIA and ISI against Soviets in Afghanistan, which got the big achievements (Ibid., p.148).


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Now more and more U.S trainers arrived to Pakistan to teach the Pakistani trainees about the new sophisticated and technical weapons which were provided for Afghan cause by CIA, China and other nations. All this ensure that Pakistani ISI’s Muslim alliance particularly Hekmatyar including Rabbani, Sayyaf, and various other Islamic movements leaders those operated in-out of Af-Pak borders, such as Jalal-ud-Din Haqqani- won the biggest share of U.S aid (Ibid., p.131).

The Afghan Mujahedeen began urban guerilla style war, strategy described by Yousaf and he further emphasized that “We must keep the pot boiling at a certain temperature. We must not allow the pot to boil over” (Yousaf et al, 1992, pp.87-93). This strategy was used to avoid the Moscow’s direct influence with Pakistan so Yousaf concentrated on soft targets and a strategy for warfare as “death by a thousand cuts” (Ibid).

Eventually, the Afghan war entered into new era soon after the provision of stingers to ISI by CIA, which changed the whole war scenario. According to Steve Coll, “Ghost Wars”, that Pakistani ISI found the Abdul Ghaffar, a military engineer trained in Moscow, to use stingers against Soviets air force. Ghaffar first fired on Soviet’s helicopter Mi-24D but missed, soon after this, more missiles were fired and smashed two Soviet’s helicopter. The author further said that soon after this big achievement, ISI Chief telephoned to Bearden on this huge success and Bearden further sent a cable to his seniors in Langley to describing them about the new situation. Next day, Pak-U.S officials watched satellite photos, which clear showed the destruction of Soviet’s helicopter at Jalalabad airport. The victorious cable from Langley mentioned that: SATELLITE IMAGERY CONFIRMS THREE KILLS AT JALALABAD AS REPORTED. PLEASE PASS OUR CONGRATULATIONS FOR A JOB WELL DONE (Coll, 2004, pp.149-50).


The Soviet’s Red Army still was not willing to withdraw from Afghanistan until 1985 and they used their best military capabilities against the Afghan freedom fighters. However, the use of stingers in mid-1986 dramatically changed the war map and Mujahedeen strengthened their ability to counter the Soviet’s troops. Resultantly, the cost of war was raised day-by-day for the Soviet’s Air Force as shooting down their aircrafts every day. After all, Pakistani ISI became the key component in Soviet-Afghan War as they played the bridge role in this war and received best regards and aid from U.S and other commonest oppositions. ISI received the bulk of arms and other material aid from U.S, Saudis, Iran, Egypt, China, and various other hidden players and put this aid in the hands of Afghan Mujahedeen to punish the Soviets on their wrong decision (Edwards, 2002, pp.76 & 161).

7. Out of the Borders

Under the new strategy “death by a thousand cuts,” Yousaf began guerilla tactics on Soviet’s command post within Afghanistan particularly in Kabul. Yousaf saw Kabul as Soviet’s Headquarter of this war; if this became secure shelter then it would be impossible to push Soviet’s back to their homes (Coll, 2004, p.132).
Therefore, Yousaf began this war ‘out of border’ and supplied detonated bomb to Afghan Mujahedeen for guerilla tactics within Kabul University, killed Afghan female teacher including nine Moscow officials. Yousaf trained his guerilla team particularly for bombing in Kabul University professors and Soviet officials since they were encouraging to students against Islamic insurgents. Yousaf’s team later assassinated seven Soviets within year. Yousaf affirmed that guerilla team trained by him and explosives and detonators were supplied by CIA. Guerilla attacks were felt as big fear among Moscow’s troops in Afghanistan and they began to find this hidden death from lighters, watches, and even pencils. A Soviet’s reporter wrote a story that “Hidden death has been camouflaged so masterfully that only someone with a practiced eye can see it” (Ibid, p.132). Zia heavily relied on his most trusted ISI Commander Akhtar, also very conscious about ISI’s guerilla tactics on Soviet’s troops within Afghanistan. Steve Coll mentioned in his account “Ghost Wars” that Pakistani President Zia didn’t want to take any risk of direct military confrontation with Soviets and reminded to Akhtar time-by-time that, “The water in Afghanistan must boil at the right temperature (Ibid, p.63).”

During November 1988, another action “Operation Ghashey” was taken by Mujahedeen against Afghan government and Soviet’s forces in Afghanistan (Grau& Ali, 2001). In this operation, more than two thousand Mujahedeen participated and blocked 70 kilometers stretch of Jalalabad-Kabul road. In this action, Soviet troops and Afghan government suffered more than five hundred casualties and almost two hundred imprisons including lost fifty armed vehicles, sixty supply trucks and last amount of arms and ammunition. The Mujahedeen’s loss was very small than other. This big victory was due to CIA’s support through ISI chest (Ibid, p.184). Hart now understood the Moscow was not re-organiz their troops in Kabul. He believed that “The fuckers haven’t got the balls, they aren’t going to do it,” Hart further concluded “It is not going to happen, boys and girls, so don’t worry about it.” We, American, were wining (Ibid, p.70).

8. Saudi Arabia

Same as Pakistan, soon after Soviet’s invasion of Afghanistan, a dramatic change happened in U.S-Saudis relationship. Both the nations worked together on the same platform for Afghan cause (Long, 1985, pp. 10-66). Saudi Arabia also began coordination with U.S government in essentially under U.S leadership same as Zia’s team. Saudis and various other Muslim nations, those supported Afghan Mujahedeen during this war, emerged with the cause that non-Muslim ruler was going to control the Muslim nation and the Afghan nation was fighting for their independence (Bradsher, 1985, p. 224). George Crile mentioned in his account “Charlie Wilson’s War” that Saudis convinced that Moscow forces would move towards Persian Gulf Oil and Warm Water, if we don’t stopped them here and also began supply aid for Afghan Mujahedeen in 1979 (Crile, 2003, p. 165). Soon after U.S-Saudis alliance, CIA began to help Saudi General Intelligence Directorate (GID) computer system and installed sensitive program to intercept from Moscow’s sources (Coll, 2004, p.80). To make the strongest alliance between Saudis-U.S, Brzezinski traveled to Saudi Arabia in the first months of 1980 and cemented agreement with Saudi government to match dollar with dollar for support to Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviets (Gates, 2006, p.148).
Every year Turki-al-Faisal, head of GID, sent Saudis part of money in their embassy in Washington and further transformed this fund in CIA’s account and CIA use this account to purchased arms for Afghan Mujahedeen (Coll, 2004, pp.81-82). GID worked with CIA and ISI while overseeing Saudis in supplying dollars, weapons, and Arab’s Mujahedeen to Pakistani training camps.

Both the leaders of CIA-GID agreed on Pak-Af border as central battlefield to punished Soviets in Afghanistan. On April 13, 1980, U.S high ranking official Senator Bill Bradley stated, how both the nations could alliance to do so (Coll, 2004, p. 81; &Rubin, 2002, p. 196). Middle class and religious Saudi peoples also voluntarily participated in charity fund raised by Saudi government for Afghan Muslim brotherhood. The peoples of Saudi Arabia raised huge charity in the name of Islam in all shapes and sizes including bags of dollars in the name of Zakat, Islamic tithe; jewelry from Saudi women; fat checks from princes; bounty of dollars from Prince Salman, Jiddah’s governor; and more than all from Saudi government part to CIA’s account (Coll, 2004, pp. 83-84).

On the other hand, Saudi Government also alliance direct with Pakistani ISI for Afghan cause. According to Steve Coll “Ghost Wars”, Saudi leadership believed that Pakistani option was better than others and wrote; “Pakistan offered the best path to confront Soviet ambitions, and that if aid going to the rebels, should funneled through ISI – it could be very helpful in strengthening Pakistan as a regional ally for his Sunni-based nation (Coll, 2004, p.81; & Rubin, 2002, p.196).”

Turki also visited Pakistan to discuss about Afghan cause and got confidence of Pakistani administration. Then ISI Chief Akhtar traveled to Jiddah (Saudi Arabia) to meet with GID Commander Turki and his chief of staff, Ahmad Badeb. Akhtar warned GID officials about direct influence into Afghan War (Coll, 2004, p.74). Prince Fahad, becoming Saudi king, also saw Pakistan as most reliable and strongest supporter of Saudi Arabia in east region. He ordered Saudi intelligence GID to funnel bountiful aid to Pakistan (Ibid., pp.72-73). GID Commander Turki dispatched Badeb to Pakistan with 1.8 million U.S dollars from Saudis for Afghan Mujahedeen and ISI’s Akhtar welcome him at Karachi airport. Sometime this charity fund was more than CIA. These were the biggest hands from Saudis for emerging of Mujahedeen against Soviets in Afghanistan (Ibid, pp.71-72). Badeb declared the Saudi Administration’s message that Saudi had decided to funneled the dollars to Pakistani ISI so that they could buy arms and other weapons for Afghan Mujahedeen for Afghan cause (Ibid, p.72).

One step forward, ISI-GID developed collaboration and constructed roads and buildings along Pakistani frontier areas with the hope to easy punish to Soviets in Afghanistan. Prince Turki and Badeb visited to Pakistan as the projects under construction and ISI officials briefed them on projects and Afghan cause with maps provided by CIA. Saudi embassy in Pakistan hosted them, inviting various other diplomats, Islamic movements’ leaders and also Osama Bin Laden (Ibid.,p.156).

As the Afghan jihad entered in critical era, Bin Laden regularly met with Saudi high ranking officials including Prince Turki, Prince Naif and interior minister, those praised and encouraged him. Bin Laden developed his relations with GID and Saudi embassy in Pakistan during peak time of Afghan war and Saudi embassy played key role in this war (Ibid., p.888).
Steve Coll mentioned the Laden’s role in his account “Ghost Wars” that Laden played key role to construct roads in Pakistani frontier areas for supplying easily arms to Afghan Mujahedeen. The Mujahedeen praised Bin Laden as “a nice and generous person who has money and good contacts with Saudi government officials (Ibid).” During 1985-86, more and more Arabs joined Afghan jihad and CIA, ISI and particularly GID facilitate them to participate (Gates, 2006, p.349). Bin Laden also organized his own organization to escalate the Afghan jihad under the umbrella of ISI and CIA (Coll, 2004, p.146).

At that time, Saudi GID chief simply stated that “We were happy with him. He was our man. He was doing all what we ask him” (Ibid, p.88).” Saudi administration and its stake holders further encouraged Arab peoples to participate in Afghan war and played Islamic card for this purpose.

9. Arab Volunteers – Islamic Cards

The Soviet’s forces buildup in Afghanistan not only attracted Saudi government but also religious organizations. As one side, GID was cooperating with CIA and ISI in Afghan region, on the other side, they used religious card in the mosques and madrassas (Islamic religious schools) for the support of Afghan Mujahedeen. Arab religious volunteers also saw an opportunity to fight in the name of Islam and thousands of Arabs joined Afghan war against the godless (Adamec, 2003, p.25). It was also a big opportunity for Arabs to influence in new region of Afghanistan and spread their Wahabism through Afghan Mujahedeen. So Saudis organized their own training camps in Pakistan during Afghan War under the umbrella of Jamiat-ulma-e-Islam (JUI) and try to establish the Wahabism (Rashid, 1999).

Zia established number of madrasas with the Saudis charities along Af-Pak border, where religious teachers taught Kuran to Afghan refugees and others young students (Coll, 2004, p.886). From Afghan war to onward, Jihad emerged in Muslim nation day-by-day. Religious organizations around the world raised charity funds for Afghan cause and thousands of Arab volunteers joined this religious war against godless Soviet communist. Some of them religious fighters established their own units and operations against Soviet Red Army and Afghan government. These Arabs were strict follower of Wahabism and known as “Afghan Arabs”. These were more interested in fundamentalism than military or political thus avoiding from other Mujahedeen commanders (Roy, 1990, p.209).

GID also begun two main logistical programs to help Arab volunteers, first, named Muslim World League (MWL) led by Sheikh Abdul-a-Aziz the head of Saudis religious establishment (Rubin, 2002, p.197). The second was financial support and facilitating to these Arab fighters and Afghan Mujahedeen through Islamic Coordination Council (ICC) and his leader was Abdul Aziz. Abdul Aziz also collected charities from various Arab countries and sent it to Afghan Mujahedeen’s hands through different ways (Ibid). Saudis also declared withholding aid for unity of Mujahedeen movements and united them strong opposition. Saudi Arabia also aided to various Islamic organizations within Afghanistan to spread Wahabism in the region.  

During 1986, Yousaf, ISI head, made a comprehensive program for Mujahedeen training in Pakistani training camps. Almost sixteen to eighteen thousand Mujahedeen passed out every year through Yousaf’s training camps. Guerrilla and Sabotage training was also given to Mujahedeen in these training camps. Yousaf estimated that approximately six to seven thousand Mujahedeen trained this way every year and some of them were Arab Mujahedeen. Steve Coll mentioned in his memories, Ghost Wars, that under the training camps of Brigadier Yousaf, thousands of Arabs were also trained and arms against the Soviet army (Coll, 2004, p.144). Haqqani also announced the charity fund in Persian Gulf region for Arab fighters and Wahabi madrasas and facilitated the thousands of Arab Mujahedeen in tribal areas. He also organized Arab organization in which thousands of Arabs participated to fight for Afghan causes (Ibid.,p.157).

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4 NSA, Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.
Osama Bin Laden as Freedom Fighters during Soviet-Afghan War in 1989
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/02osama-bin-laden-obituary.html?_r=0

10. China’s Role

Same as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Chinese Administration also played the key role in Soviet-Afghan War. Soon after Soviet’s Red Army blatant intervention into Afghanistan, Chinese government felt threat to their regional interests and ready to play their role in this war. U.S also took initiatives for coordination with China and U.S Secretary of Defense Brown wrote a memorandum to President Carter on December 29, 1979 and mentioned his meeting with Chinese leadership regarding Afghan developments. He wrote “Soviet’s interventionism is not accepted by any mean and they should pay the high political price”. He further mentioned “U.S-China-Saudis worked together and supplied the requirements to Afghan Mujahedeen through Pakistan.”

Another meeting between Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Vice Premier Geng Biao of China held on January 7, 1980 in Beijing regarding Afghan War. A Chinese government official stated during this meeting that: “The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan poses a major threat not only to the region but to the peace and stability of the world as a whole. The reason I say is that the Soviets are directly involved with their own troops.”

On the same meeting hold on January 7, 1980 in Beijing regarding Afghan War, during the meeting, the Secretary of Defense stated why U.S influence in Afghanistan and what they have interests towards this region. He further said that Soviet’s move towards Afghanistan alarmed the Persian Gulf and the oil of Middle East so U.S already had begun to take actions against the Soviet’s move. The Secretary further stated that now U.S is going to coordinate with his allies and other nations to stand against the Soviets and also took appropriate actions to raise the political costs of its invasion. The Secretary Brown further called to Chinese and asked them for their support for Afghan Mujahedeen.

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Geng Biao, Vice Premier of China, replied that Chinese government is happy that U.S already begun aid to Afghan Mujahedeen and affirmed that “we have been giving aid to Pakistanis and they are satisfied with what we have done.” He continued that China has also plan to supply aid to different Afghan Mujahedeen movements, organizations, and the peoples of Afghanistan through Pakistani ISI for punishing the Soviets. However, aid would be limited as medicine, clothes, quilts, and small weapons. He also thanks the American to encourage them and support of Afghan Mujahedeen.8

Brzezinski wrote a memo to President Carter on January 4, 1980 and mentioned that Chinese administration is extremely interested in Afghan affairs and added that, according to Brown visit to China, “Brown reportedly obtains Chinese government permission for planes carrying weapons to Afghan rebels to overfly Chinese territory”. He further said that “China and United States have “taken [a] big step in strategic relations”.9 New and more effective arms were supplied by Chinese government to Afghan Mujahedeen through CIA and ISI. Chinese intelligence cemented a secret deal with CIA and sold them thousands of Soviet made AK-47s, ROG-7, Chinese mortars, 12.7 machine guns for Afghan Mujahedeen (Coll, 2004, p.66). Chinese government also deal with Pakistani President Zia in 1984 and supplied thousands of Soviet’s made weapons by cargo ships from Shanghai to Karachi for Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviet forces in Afghanistan.10

11. Iranian and Egyptian Involvement

To repelled the Soviets from Afghanistan, U.S Government and his policy makers including U.S nation were willing to use all means despite Iranian government was holding U.S hostages but U.S also alliance with them to support the Afghan Mujahedeen, in doing so can protect the Persian Gulf region.11 Therefore, Iranian Administration and Americans were collaborating to supply the aid to Afghan Mujahedeen against the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. A number of stories also emerged that CIA was collaborating with other nations particularly with Iran to aid the Afghan resistance movements against the Soviets troops despite their diplomatic relations with Iran (Bradsher, 1985, p.222).

An authentic report published on June 30, 1980 by Iranian newspaper and mentioned that as the Soviet’s invaded Afghanistan in the last months of 1979, soon after this, Iranian government begun to train more than thousand Mujahedeen on different basses in Iran. The report further mentioned that various groups by name being supplied by Iranian government and these groups are protecting the American interests in the region (Bonosky, 1985, p.181). Throughout the first months of 1980 to June 1982, Iranian Government supplied M-1, G-1, landmines, heavy machineguns, anti-tank missiles, landmines, boots, and uniforms to Gulbadan Hikmatyar, head of Sunni Islamic movement of Mujahedeen, for operations against Soviets in Southeast regions of Afghanistan. At the same time, Iran supplied heavy financial aid including arms to Shitti and Islamic groups in Hazarajat, a west and central regions of Afghanistan.12

In the first months of 1983, the Afghan freedom fighters movements in Peshawar based Pakistan, organized a strong organization, and Hazara Shiite party emerged as strongest out of them due to Iran influence. Before it, Iranian administration maintained strong relations with Afghan Shiite groups particularly with Niruh (force), Nast (victory), Sepah (corps), and Hesb-e-Allaha (party of God) groups and supplied them financial aid, training, arms and other logistical support.13 Soviet Administration publicly and privately condemned the Iran’s involvement in Afghanistan, also warned that relationship between both countries could be suffered unless Iran halts its involvement in Kabul.14

9Telegram From Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to President Carter, Secretary of State Vance, the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Claytor), and the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski), January 12, 1980, “China Visit—An Assessment”, FRUS, Volume XIII, Document-295, pp.1082-84.
13Ibid.
14Iranian Support to the Afghan Insurgents, NSA, Volume II.
Afghan guerrillas those were supported by Iranian


Shiite group, backed by Iran, played the key military role in the west region of Afghanistan but failed to get the control of this region due to separation from Peshawar base Sunni group. This part was controlled by Hikmatyar’s party backed by CIA-ISI provided them bountiful quantity of arms, which were used against every one even Afghan insurgent’s movements. U.S-Iranian collaboration towards Afghan cause was emerging strong day-by-day and both the nations worked together to punish the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. Further, Iran also direct supplied to Shiite groups in Afghanistan including their training and arms.

On the other hand, American policy makers didn’t miss the chance to alliance with Egypt, soon after Soviet’s blunt in Afghanistan; Brzezinski flew to Egypt and met with Anwar-ul-Sadat, Egyptian President, and asked him for their support for Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviet troops in Afghanistan and as return U.S provided economic and military aid to Egypt. Sadat recalled U.S message to his nation that U.S asked him to “open the Egyptian weapons stores for Afghan Mujahedeen and provide them what they need’ (Yousaf et al, 1992, pp.87-93). In addition, eventually, Sadat ordered to open the doors of stores and supply arms to Afghan Mujahedeen (Bradsher, 1985, p.223).

Sadat further ordered to provide ammunition, spare parts and Soviet made weapons to Afghan Mujahedeen and were first supplied to ISI usually flew from Egypt to Pakistani ISI via cargo aircrafts (Farr and John, 1987, pp.80-81). Authentic evidence by Department of Defense cable dated June 2, 1980 mentioned how Egyptian ship-aftership funneled to Pakistani ISI via Karachi port loaded with RPG anti-tank arms and other Soviet made weapons. 


15 NSA, Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.
16 Aid to Afghan Insurgents, June 2, 1980. NSA, Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.
Egyptian President personally confirmed, during an interview with NBC, that soon after Soviet’s invasion of Afghanistan, American contacted him for the support of Afghan Mujahedeen. He further added that we, Egypt, supplied Soviet made arms, anti-aircraft rockets, anti-tank missiles and other ammunition to Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviets in Afghanistan. Along with supplying of weapons, Egypt also provided thousands of religious fighters to Afghan Mujahedeen and some of them were students of Al-Azhar University and just wanted to join the Afghan jihad against Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. Sadat with his administration outspokenly declared their support for Afghan freedom fighters. Along with other sophisticated weapons and Mujahedeen, Egyptian government also offered a safe landing across the Atlantic Ocean for CIA’s supplies to Afghan Mujahedeen. On the same way, Sadat provided arms, intelligence network, and religious fighters to Americans such an opportunity to implement their policy.

12. Evils Withdraw

Gates mentioned in his book “From the Shadows”, that, on December 31, 1987, on the beautiful event of New Year party, spirited debates between U.S high ranking officials in which Shultz stated that he believed Soviet’s withdraw from Afghanistan in 1988 and U.S try to make it easy for Soviets to fulfill that decision (Gates, 2006, p.430). Vladimir Alexandrovich Kryuchkov, Russian diplomat, told to Gates on Afghan situation that Moscow now wants withdraw from Afghanistan but waiting for American’s cooperation to find the safe way. The Soviets were worried about emergence of Islamic force in Afghanistan. He further affirmed to Gates “You seem fully occupied in trying to deal with just one fundamentalist Islamic state” (Ibid, pp.424-25).

Finally, with the collaboration of all stake holders, a Geneva accord was signed on April 14, 1988 and Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, Secretary Shultz and Pakistani foreign minister and Afghan leadership were present; Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev’s address to nation on national television on February 8, 1988 and announced that “Soviet troop’s withdrawals from Afghanistan would begin on May 15 and would be completed by March 15, 1989” (Ibid, p.341). Eventually, Soviet’s troops began to withdraw from Afghanistan on May 15, 1988. Soviets try to get their hidden objectives in Afghanistan but U.S and his allies, under U.S foreign policies, gave tough time to Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan and funneled billions of dollar and world’s dangerous arms to Afghan freedom fighters against Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan chest through ISI and number of other nations also played the hidden role in this game and finally pushed the Soviets out from Afghan borders.

13. Conclusion

The work presented in this vital study provides new knowledge about the U.S and particularly about international community such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran and Egypt those played the vital role during Soviet-Afghan whole War between 1979-89.

17 Sadat Interview on Arms to Afghan Freedom Fighters, NSA, Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.
20 NSA, Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.
Soon after the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan, U.S Administration, and his policy makers reforms their foreign policy towards Afghanistan war and developed the alliance with regional states against the Soviets troops in Afghanistan. U.S, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were key external actors those funneled billions of dollars, world’s dangerous arms, and training to Afghan freedom fighters chest through Pakistani ISI.CIA, ISI and GID also developed the cooperation and established the hundreds of Madrasas and training camps in Pakistan for training and arms to Afghan Mujahedeen for punishing the Soviets in Afghanistan. China government also cemented hidden agreement with U.S and supplied the weapons and fly zoon for provision of arms to Afghan Mujahedeen against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Iran was at back door and trained the thousands of Iranian volunteers and arms them to participate in Afghan war against the pro-communist government. The Egypt administration openly announced the support of Afghan freedom fighters and supplied arms to U.S to fight against Soviets. After all, with the collaboration of U.S and other nations, Afghan Mujahedeen became much strong and they expelled out the Soviets from Afghanistan.

Reference