Chapter IV

DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES OF INTERVENTION
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The Resistance

The violent resistance to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was not a spontaneous phenomenon. Resistance to the leftist regime commenced immediately on its take over of the Afghan Government in April 1978. This was general in nature but local in its origin. By early 1979, virtually no part of the country was secure except for the major cities, yet the revolt was fragmented. It was conducted by local groups that rose in defiance of provincial officialdom.

The social basis of the Resistance in Afghanistan is the household, extended kin group, the clan, the sub-tribe or tribe, often the hamlet or valley neighbourhood or sectarian community. The Resistance has frequently been organized and led by the traditionally respected and powerful members of the group. Yet it has been common for lesser members to come forward to lead the revolt.1

The fragmented resistance movement has been divided along regional, ethnic and sectarian lines. Local groups have coordinated their activities only within the limits of distinct regional or linguistic communities. Most prominent in this respect have been the Badakhshans, Hazaras, Nuristanis, and the numerous Pashtun tribes.2

2 Ibid.
The struggle against the Kabul Government has been carried out largely by country people, little touched by modern experience or education. Educated urbanites have been slower to join the Resistance.\textsuperscript{3} Until the spring of 1980, opposition in the cities had predominantly involved traditional minority communities as the Shias of Herat and Kabul.

The first of the regional groups to make their opposition known were the Nuristanis\textsuperscript{4} in the mountainous country north of the Khyber Pass. The Nuristanis have never fitted comfortably within the modern Afghan political system. They had grievances against the central government whose local and provincial officials were almost invariably Pashtuns.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{3} The educated class occupies a particularly vulnerable position in this struggle between the centre and the countryside. It is hard for an educated city man to participate in an essentially rural war. While individuals and families with advanced education may have strong personal roots in the villages, many such roots have been cut in the last generation. Few of this class are in a position to commit themselves openly to the cause of their rural cousins because their activities are under constant surveillance. In effect, the nature of the civil war politically emasculated most of the educated middle class.

\textsuperscript{4} The Nuristanis, divided into five major tribes, occupy the upper reaches of the Kunar river basin, whose ridges and peaks frequently reach more than 17,000 feet. In this rugged territory, the Nuristanis have developed an independent culture, whose origin is disputed. For centuries, the Nuristanis maintained a lifestyle that distinguished them from all other peoples in the country, specially with regard to religion. They were converted from Polytheism to Islam, just before the turn of the Twentieth century. Despite their conversion the Nuristanis have remained a people apart.

\textsuperscript{5} The Nuristanis, for several generations, since their conversion and absorption into the national political system, have felt at a serious disadvantage in matters of justice, taxation and economic competition.
The Nuristanis' history of friction with neighbouring Pashtun tribes and their visible role in the Republican Government of Mohammed Daoud made them targets for persecution as the Khalq faction of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) sought to win popularity with their neighbouring rivals. After the April 1978 coup, several leading Nuristani military officers were executed by the new regime and the Nuristani leaders who had mediated between the community and the government were arrested. In retaliation, the Nuristanis attacked police and minor government outposts in the Kunar valley in the summer of 1978. During this early period of Khalqi rule, the regime attempted to enlist traditional hostility against the Nuristanis by arming their Gujar and Pashtun tribal auxiliaries and police units were sent against them with little success. The Government also bombed some of their villages. However, the casualties caused did not weaken their ability to resist.

The location of Nuristani territory, adjacent to the border, simplified the Nuristanis' process of buying arms in Pakistan but shortage of supply largely restricted their purchases to outmoded hand weapons. Even so by early fall of 1978, they had consolidated their position throughout the upper valleys of the Kunar basin. They had driven off the Government auxiliaries and fought army units to a stalemate at the key valley town of Chiga-Sarai. In effect, they had

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6 Newell and Newell, n.1, p.92.
fought their way to political autonomy within their own mountains and valleys. So long as the border of Pakistan provided a means of supply and escape, their tactical advantage was beyond the army's ability to overcome. 7

Though limited, the struggle for Nuristan became the prototype for regional uprisings and Marxists responses elsewhere.

The two most active of the other regional groups have been the mountain Tajiks and the Hazaras. The Tajiks, whose home is the most remote valleys and mountains of Takhar and Badakshan provinces in the North-east live in an environment similar to that of the Nuristanis. They have experienced a history of interference and oppression at the hands of their ethnic neighbours, 8 oppressed and despised by the neighbours, they rose against a Marxist revolutionary government 9 that promised reforms to benefit the poorest and weakest elements of the population.

7 Ibid.

8 The Tajiks lost many people to the conquest and resettlement policies of the Uzbek chiefs in the Nineteenth century. Many of them were forced into the highest inhabitable valleys of the region, while Uzbeks and later Pashtuns took over the more productive and comfortable low lands. Ibid., p.101.

9 As the Tajiks have been in constant contact with their cousins across the border in the Soviet Central Asia, they have first hand knowledge of Marxist rhetoric and Soviet deeds. Ibid.
The Tajiks were sensitive to Pashtun domination. Faizabad, the capital of Badakshan, had become a Pashtun settlement since 1880 surrounded by valleys tilled by Uzbeks and Tajiks. When the officials of the Khalq government brought the gospel of radical reform, their activities were seen as a new wave of Pashtun interference rather than an effort to bring deliverance to the toiling masses. Late in the summer of 1978, Tajik-dominated Resistance gained control of large sections of the region and besieged Faizabad.

A similar set of circumstances brought similar results to a large part of Hazarajat, the central highland region. The Hazaras are the largest group that has been consistently oppressed by Pashtuns. Their distinctive Mongol appearance and their association with the Shia branch of Islam have caused them to be treated as inferior. When local Khalq officials mostly Pashtun abruptly introduced reforms, there was an adverse reaction among the Hazaras. 10

As a consequence of the resistance of the Nuristanis, Tajiks and Hazaras, a large part of Afghanistan came under the control of the minorities. These uprisings generally took the form of guerrilla attacks against officials and police detachments in the smaller towns and disruption of traffic on country roads.

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10 By the autumn of 1978, Hazara groups and government forces were fighting at the beautiful and historic town of Bamiyan, the North-east gateway to Hazarajat. They followed the familiar pattern of scaling off remote areas from government penetration leaving them vulnerable to bombing attacks. Ibid., p.102.
roads. This weakened government control and rekindled impulses to plunder. Notwithstanding the area under the control of these groups, it posed no danger to the government in Kabul. The hostilities involved a small portion of the population and did not affect the prosperous sectors of the country. However, it set a pattern of resistance.

Thus by mid-April 1978, stability was in danger in the provinces. Party officials began to carry around automatic weapons to protect themselves against attack. In many regions development programmes with foreign technical advisers in charge were halted with foreigners sent to Kabul for an indefinite period or dispersed back to their home country.11

Even in Kabul, an atmosphere of tension or at least an uncomfortable awareness of danger replaced the carefree mood in the large foreign community. Diplomats envisaged different scenarios: fighting between army units, mass risings of Kabulis, or even the eruption of tribal Lashkars into the city as had happened in 1929 when Nadir Khan’s tribal supporters had looted Kabul.12

The secret police went much further than under previous regimes in terrorising actual and potential opponents in a cool calculated drive to keep the Khalq party in power. In

12 Ibid., p.105.
fact the leaders of the Khalq regime, had never made secret of their determination to crush the resistance against the revolutionary gains by all means available expressed in various formulations. 13

Resistance to the regime accelerated in the fall and winter of 1978-79, when the Government attempted to carry out its agrarian social and educational reforms. It aroused fear and anger all around. The new flag and the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty14 galvanized opposition among the rural groups, including the erstwhile ruling elite, the Pashtuns.15 By the end of the year 1978, isolated campaigns spread until they involved all sections of the population, including many in the cities.

It was the popular uprising in the large western city of Herat which began on the morning of 15 March 1979 that led to the most serious military crisis faced by the Khalqi government. Sparked off by the arrival of peasants armed with old rifles, knives and assorted crude weapons, a demonstration in the centre of Herat - probably sparked off more than anything else by the forced literacy campaign for women

13 Ibid., p.108.


15 No government in Afghanistan has survived without the support of the Pashtuns.
bitterly resented by the highly conservative Heratis. It rapidly turned into a general uprising of towns-men and an assault on the prison where so many political opponents of the regime were kept. The heaviest fighting took place after 17 March 1979, when several soldiers from the garrison at Herat joined in the insurrection, shooting officers who tried to stop them.

Herat city was brought under control by 20 March but localised resistance was spreading to the western provinces of Herat, Farah and Bajhdis. There were thousands of modern automatic weapons in the hands of the deserting soldiers, peasants and townspeople who had escaped from Herat - together with large quantities of ammunition from police and army armament depots. The

The resistance to the leftist regime mounted in intensity after the entry of Soviet troops and the installation of the regime of Babrak Karmal in December 1979. The groups leading the insurgency today are basically the same who attacked the Khalqi regimes of Nur Mohammed Taraki and Hafizullah Amin. The Soviet intervention has lent greater legitimacy to the opposition groups by giving them the role of fighters for the liberation of their homeland from foreign occupation. It is no longer an internal conflict but according to the Resistance a war of independence.

At present the chief Islamic groups leading the Resistance headquartered in Pakistan number six. One is Jabha-i-Millie Nijat-i-Afghanistan (National Liberation Front of Afghanistan)
headed by Sebghatullah Mujaddedi. It was founded in the spring
of 1979. Mujaddedi belongs to the family of Hazrat Sahib of
Shor Bazar in Kabul which developed a network of Islamic
devotional centres in major cities. He thus inherited a family
legacy which had the potential to provide him a base for a
broad national following. He is identified with a cross
section of the movements and ideas, reformist and nationalist,
which are capable of rallying modern Afghans against Marxism.
Mujaddedi's National Liberation Front occupies a moderate
place within the ideological range of the Resistance groups
headquartered in Pakistan. 16 Another organization that has
the largest number of Mujahideen (Freedom Fighters) under
its leadership is the National Islamic Front of Syed Ahmed
Gilani. 17 He established a Resistance headquarter in the
loosely administered tribal zone of Pakistan adjoining the

16 For details see, Newell and Newell, n.l,p.93.

17 He is an Islamic moderate, with a distinguished family
background of religious scholarship which retained
tremendous influence and respect among the Pashtun
tribes living along the Pakistani border. Gilani esca-
ped from Kabul, with some of his nomadic disciples in
the winter of 1978 after the regime started the programme
of liquidating the elite. Gilani was closely associated
from childhood with the Royal family, had been an unof-
official adviser to King Zahir Shah, and at the age of
46 was a prosperous businessman, running the Peugeot
agency in Afghanistan, as well as owning lands. In life-
style, dress, secular in outlook, in politics, he is
more cosmopolitan than the other leaders and to that
extent perhaps more credible as a secularist, national-
ist figure. In spite of his traditional conservative
following from the tribes, Gilani does have a balanced
approach to the vital future Afghan-Soviet relations.
He contends that coexistence with the Soviet Union is
an essential fact of life and that the Soviets had a
permanent interest in Afghanistan which had to be
recognized.
Paktia province of Afghanistan. Thus he was strategically placed to inspire and guide his tribal followers. He has political influence over a sector of the population of great military potential which is in contrast with Mujaddedi's limited personal contact with groups engaged in the fighting.

The group which lays greater stress on independent rather than joint action is the Hizb-e-Islami (Islamic Party) of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. A former engineering student, he was at Kabul University for two years, gave us studies to join the resistance against President Daoud's government. He participated in an abortive attempt to start a rebellion in the Panjshir valley and later fled to Pakistan where he founded Hizb-e-Islami.¹⁸ This group developed from a cadre of religious conservatives who fled Daoud's regime after 1973 and organized themselves into an armed strike force with the sole aim of seizing power and creating a fundamentalist political system intolerant of political rivals. The Hizb-e-Islami consistently holds itself aloof from other emigre organizations. Hikmatyar has attempted to cultivate political support among conservative Muslim groups in revolutionary Iran. Despite his

¹⁸ Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, the founder of Hizb-e-Islami was born in Wardak Province. His eloquence and organizational ability has attracted a large following both from rural and urban Pashtuns, several of whom have escaped to join Hikmatyar's group. He found help for the brand of Islamic fundamentalist fervour he preached, not because of its intrinsic qualities but because it served as a useful response to the Pakhtoonist idea, purveyed from Kabul, at that time. As several other political exiles before him, Hikmatyar had to choose to further his political aims and thus compromised his independence, by accepting limited weapons training and use of friendly territory to mount raids into Afghanistan.
organizations total opposition to Marxism, Hikmatyar has attempted to carve out an independent position so as to be acceptable to all parties, including the Soviets, should a political compromise leading to a neutralized Afghanistan become feasible. The Hizb-e-Islami has developed the most effective of the emigre press campaigns in its efforts to proclaim the feats of its Mujahideen in the conflict against Soviet and Afghan Government forces.

The Jamiat-e-Islami led by Burhanuddin Rabbani is another conservative, but more accommodative Resistance group. It aims at establishing a government based on a literal reading of Islamic law, but would permit an openly competitive political system in which modernists could participate. Rabbani is a fundamentalist theologian, formerly a Professor in the Faculty of Islamic Law at Kabul University. His personality and ability to get along with competing politicians has made him one of the most effective of the Resistance leaders operating from Pakistan. His organization has benefited from the support of Pakistan's Jamiat-e-Islami. Rabbani also has not been averse to cooperate with Mujaheddi's National Liberation Front.19

The Jamiat-e-Islami of Rabbani and the Hizb-e-Islami of Hikmatyar are ineffective in the interior of Afghanistan. This is due to the 'foreignness' of their ideology. As fundamentalists they believe that Islam is first and foremost a political system. They are referred to as Islamists in contradistinction to the majority of Muslims for whom Islam is a religious faith and a moral code. To the Afghan masses, the Islamists theorizing about an Islamic system of government, education, economy etc., makes hardly any more sense than the indoctrination with abstract Marxist terminology.

More successful than the organizations of Rabbani and Hikmatyar is the Hizb-e-Islami led by Maulana Younous Khalis, a Pashtun mullah who is less of a fundamentalist and more in tune with the popular faith of his tribesmen in the eastern provinces bordering Pakistan. Younous Khalis is the only one among the leaders of the Islamic parties who does not stay outside Afghanistan but personally directs the fighting in his territory, where he has even succeeded in setting up something resembling a make-shift administration.

Other emigre organizations include, the Islamic Revolutionary Movement under the leadership of Maulvi Mohammed

20 Ibid., pp. 68-71.
Nabi Mohammad and the Shoala Jawid, a Maoist splinter group that escaped after the 1978 coup. A number of spokesmen for the regional groups carrying on active resistance inside Afghanistan have their headquarters in Pakistan where they attempt to muster aid in redressing their particular minority grievances. While the Peshawar groups were predominantly Sunni Muslim, the Shias looked to their co-religionists in Iran for support.

It is not the ideology of strict Islamic practices which appeals to tribal society so much as arms deliveries and promises of ammunition for the future. Some tribal chiefs have pledged support to as many as four parties simultaneously but this support can be tenuous indeed as party militants have found to their cost when attempting to order around tribal levies on the battle fronts. Yet there is a general respect for their resistance to what they call the Soviet puppet regime in the towns also, as repeated strikes and demonstrations have proved. None of these or the several other

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22 A remarkable figure spanning the gulf between secular and religious, modern and traditional and able to attract a large and influential body of mullahs as well as college graduates of progressive views. Mohammed Nabi’s Harkat-e-Inqilabi-Islami, gradually built up its strength in the province South and West of Kabul, by the end of 1980, its success in organizing strong resistance there had made outside observers aware that it was probably the most significant of the southern Resistance groups. For details see Hyman, n.11,p.133.

23 A Hazara leader, Mohammed Agif Mohsani, led one Iran based group variously known as the Afghanistan Islamic Movement, Association of the Afghan Islamic Revolutionary Freedom Front. Another such group called itself Hoseyn Sade an Naar(Victory), see Afghanistan Report(Kabul, 1980), pp.1-3.

24 Hyman, n.11,p.133.
Mujahideen factions conformed to the pattern of typical late twentieth century 'National Liberation Front' programmes, is anything more than opposing foreign domination. The Afghan Resistance is more personal than ideological. It is a bundle of often competing messages that emphasize religious, ethnic, and other deeply ingrained ties that play upon the traditional desire to avoid the domination of a centralised government in Kabul and that preach hatred of Khalqi brutality, a rejection of Parchami subservience to foreigners and a xenophobic outlook focussed on Russians. It was in several ways a throw back to nineteenth century resistance encountered by European colonial powers in their attempts to impose change on parts of Asia and Africa.  

Besides the Islamic groups mentioned which spearheaded the resistance to the Communist regime in Afghanistan early in 1979 emerged the leftist political opposition to the Soviet backed regime. This was led by 3azman-e-Azadibakhsh-e Mardom-e-Afghanistan (SAMA - Afghan Peoples Liberation Organization). From its inception SAMA was both less one sidedly Tajik dominated and less Peking oriented. The first aspect was an indication of the new Afghan nationalism. The Soviet invasion made many of the remaining barriers between Pashtun and other nationalities crumble. Besides, when SAMA was

founded it came to fill a vacuum. Afghans of all nationalities were at that time in search of a nationalist movement other than the squabbling Islamists. One more factor was obviously the personality of the founder, Majid Kalkani, a Tajik brought up among Pashtuns in Kandahar. Fluent in Pashtu and Tajik, he was a national figure, acceptable to all. He was the founder member of Shoala-e-Jawid.

At the beginning SAMA was little more than a band of thieves. But when it undertook its first military operations, it had 200 fighters. At the time of the great popular uprising of Kabul in February 1980, SAMA had well over 8,000 members. The chief organizer of the upheaval in Kabul was Kalkani, who has rightly been credited with having introduced urban guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan. Ever since there has been a steady influx of deserters from the Afghan army so much so that soon the bulk of SAMA fighters consisted of former soldiers of the Kabul government.26

Immediately after the Soviet intervention of December 1979, SAMA established a broader union with other nationalist groups. The outcome was the foundation of the Jabha-e-Muttahid-e-Millie (United National Front) in January 1980

26 This is in fact one of the accusations of splinter groups to the left of JAMA. These can be found among Afghan students in Western Europe and the United States. Being 'Marxists' in the derogatory sense, this term has acquired on the western student scene, these mini groups of arm-chair revolutionaries call SAMA names by alleging that it is nothing but a bourgeois association of disgruntled former army officers.
under the chairmanship of Kalkani. The constituting components were Millat (Nation), remanants of Jam-e-Millat and other regionalists as well as groupings of progressive Muslims, patterned after Iran's Mujahideen-e-Khalq, whom the Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi once classified as Islamic Marxists. Other minor groups included local nationalist guerrilla fighters who did not earlier have much trust in JAMA.

The United Nationalist Front gradually shed its leftist image. This was due to tactical reasons since all socialist ideas became an anathema to the Afghan masses, who do not distinguish ideological niceties and curse anything reminding them of the Soviet installed regime. Besides, the Afghan leftists of almost all shades have started to re-identify with Islam as a national rallying point. Most of them never really disassociated themselves from the inherited faith, having always regarded Islam in its liberal version though as an inalienable ingredient of their national heritage. For the Afghans, Islam is the very starting point of their national identity both in an historical as well as a cultural sense.

Thus Islam is for Afghanistan what Catholicism is for Ireland or Poland. In this perspective the identification with Islam transcends the division of parties, regions, ideologies, sects and schools of thought. The bulk of the fighters who swelled the ranks of the Front in 1980 were deeply religious soldiers, sons of peasants for whom Islam is not a political ideology but a faith that buttresses their ardent nationalism.
The United National Front, it can be said, are unanimous in their desire for democracy. They may not be in a position to define this democracy in precise terms. They are, however, wary of the preachers of an Islamic system of Iranian or Pakistani inspiration.

The execution of the chairman of the United National Front, Kalkani on 8 June 1980, in Kabul supplied the Afghan Resistance with a national martyr, symbolising their struggle and providing an additional rallying point as well. He was the first truly national figure to emerge out of the liberation struggle. The capture of Kalkani on 27 February 1980, and his subsequent execution was a surprise to many. According to the announcement of the Government, he was executed along with ten most hated henchmen of Amin, just as if the regime wanted the public to view him in the same light. This was ineffective and there was large scale retaliation on the part of SAMA. Militarily the Soviets did not gain much by executing Kalkani. By the time of his death SAMA was joined by several defected army officers to extend its influence and field of action into areas like Hazarajat, Herat, Nuristan and Ghazni. In August 1980, the Soviets seemed to gain some


28 SAMA with its increased military action killed two Soviet Generals and eliminated twelve Parchamites.
ground against SAMA in the province of Paryab bordering the Soviet Union. The major gas fields of Shibiryahan are in this area. Further, it served to relieve pressure from the highway connecting Termez on the Soviet side of the border - the staging point used for the occupation of Afghanistan - with Mazar-i-Sharif. However, in September SAMA inflicted a heavy blow on the enemy near Jurubi at the highway connecting Kabul with Jalalabad. This was achieved with heavy casualties on the side of the occupant and was facilitated by the defection of Soviet Asian soldiers.29 "About a dozen of earlier Moslem defectors from the Red Army are fighting in the ranks of SAMA and the resistance is still carried on with the gusto characteristic of Afghan warfare."30

Far from breaking the spirit of the nationalists, more suitable Soviet weapons and a new military strategy did not lessen their determination to resist. In the summer of 1980, some of the liberated zones under SAMA's sway suffered starvation due to encirclement of the Soviet forces. However, the mood was of joyful confidence, at times elation.

The execution of Kalkani helped the Karmal Government in a political sense since the great handicap of Afghanistan's

struggle for freedom is the lack of a leadership with nationwide acceptance. The emergence of a leader of national calibre would have greatly enhanced the strength of the United National Front and speeded up the extension of its influence to all parts of the country.

The United National Front enjoys one major advantage over the Islamists as it suffers from a pernicious handicap. Its great advantage is that it is inland based having its headquarters neither in Iran nor Pakistan, nor Geneva or London, but Afghanistan. This enables its fighters to discredit the parties in exile as merchants who trade in the news about the successes of a Resistance they have no share in.

One of the factors in favour of the Front is "whereas the sympathizers of other parties flee the country in ever increasing numbers", the United National Front with its greater credibility has been able to induce Afghan academics to give up their University posts and a life of affluence to join the guerrillas.

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31 Afghanistan is not going to be the Soviet Union's Vietnam, it is argued, because there is no Afghan Ho Chi Minh. Majid Kalkani was on his way to becoming such a national figure when he died there was the first ever national mourning in the true sense of the term. Even the Islamists in Peshawar observed a three day fast as a religious respect to the slain hero.

32 With its stress for an independent Afghan version of leftist nationalism, the United National Front led by SAMA had the potential of drawing to its fold several sections of the progressive Islamic factions in Afghanistan.

33 International Herald Tribune, 8 September 1980.
The greatest handicap was the lack of supply of weapons and ammunition. As a result of several defections from the Afghan army, the arms position of the Front was augmented during the mid 1980's. Besides, SAMA did take possession of some of the Afghan army's weapons depots and also seized several ammunition transports from the Soviets. A proud motto of SAMA states "our weapons are manufactured for us exclusively in Russian factories". This is rather appealing to many revolutionaries and liberation movements in the Third World but is not realistic in the long term. An increase in the Soviet presence and the exchange of indisciplined, unmotivated and badly trained conscripts with elite troops armed with weapons suitable for Afghanistan are bound to get the better of SAMA's idealistic fighters who are not only being cut off from supplies but also refuse to accept assistance except if it comes from Afghans abroad.

Among the various local internal fronts is woven another more national organization that links several resistance groups. It is called the Jihadya Mobariasin Mujahid-i-Afghanistan which is also known as the National Front of Militant Combatants. It was this organization which staged

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34 Ibid.

35 The supply of arms from deserting Afghan soldiers decreased to a great extent after 1980 with increased Soviet supervision and tightening of the security apparatus.

the Bala Hisar Mutiny in Kabul Garrison on 6 August 1979. Several leftist organizations are operating within this front and in individual capacities within various regional fronts. Another internal Resistance group is the Sazma-e-Azadbakah Mardon-e-Afghanistan, an organization for the liberation of the people of Afghanistan, which is linked with a number of internal fronts. Still another is Girohe-Inquilibi Khalq-e-Afghanistan (Revolutionary Group of Afghanistan), which also remains extremely active in the anti-Soviet resistance particularly in the rural areas. Lastly, another Marxist organization, which never regarded itself as either pro-Peking or pro-Moscow called Millat (The Nation) remains an active element in the present Resistance. While a number of these anti-Soviet Marxist tendencies are active within the various internally based united fronts none can be stated as taking up openly a leading role. 37

Whereas the Western and anti-Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) forces eulogise the leaders of the various Resistance groups operating both within and outside Afghanistan, the DRA and the Soviets together brand them as the leaders of the counter-revolutionary groups who according to them are responsible for all the crimes being perpetuated against the innocent people of Afghanistan.

It has been pointed out that all these self styled revolutionary leaders maintain close contact with imperialist

37 Ibid.
circles and their singular aim is personal gain, swindling a major portion of the aid received by them for the care of the Afghan refugees. 38

Most of these leaders and their groups operate from the territory of Pakistan, and a few from Iran. The Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan has established branches in Iran. There are also independent Afghan counter-revolutionary groups in Iran, which are united in the United Front of the Islamic movement of Afghanistan. Most active among the members of this front are the Hibz-e-Allah and Nasr groups. The ring leaders of the front have established links with the Maoist groups and reactionary fanatic groups in Afghanistan.

The leaders of all these rebel groups maintain regular contact with the United States and other western missions. 39

"Further these groups and certain other volunteer revolutionary groups, receive abundant supplies of all sorts of...

38 Out of the $300,000 which Hikmatyar received from the US and Aid to Afghanistan Committee, only a meagre sum went to the refugees. He transferred more than $150,000 to his personal account in the American Express Bank in Basel, Switzerland. Further it is alleged that he is selling the medicines, food stuffs and even clothing intended for the refugees on the black market and depositing the money to his account. See Haqiqat Engelab Saver, The True Face of Afghan Counter Revolution (Kabul, 1982), p.32.

39 They periodically visit the capitals of the west and the authorities of the respective countries have given them special passes for unrestricted travel.
modern weapons, ammunition and military equipment from US imperialism, Chinese hegemonists and reactionary Muslim regimes.\textsuperscript{40} The financial aid pouring in from various quarters has gone up year by year since the glorious revolution of April 1978.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Pakistan's Role Against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan}

Since the establishment of the DRA, Pakistan has turned out to be a major bridge-head of armed intervention and sabotage against Afghanistan. Immediately after the victory of the April 1978 Revolution, most of the counter-revolutionary Afghans and their ring leaders fled to Pakistan and with the support of the US, China and certain reactionary Muslim regimes, began to organize armed groups for subversive activities and a few dozen smaller training centres and bases on Pakistani territory. The major bases are at Bajaur, Chitral, Mirram Shah, Peshawar and Quetta.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} The Undeclared War - Armed Intervention and Other Forms of Interference in the Internal Affairs of the DRA (Kabul, 1981), pp.18-19.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Especially since the beginning of 1980, the financing of counter-revolutionary gangs has considerably increased under the cover of assistance for Afghan refugees; in 1980, the European Economic Community allocated $18,800,000 to Pakistan, the US $500,000 and Japan 4,000,000. Besides large sums are being transferred by reactionary Arab regimes to finance the counter-revolutionary gangs. Saudi Arabia alone allocated $700 million. For details see, Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.19.
\end{itemize}
The largest training centre for armed bandits is in Peshawar. In this area are the residences and headquarters of the counter-revolutionary ring leaders. After training in Peshawar, the men are dispatched to assembly points at Bala Kala, Gandab, Jamrud, Warsak and other places around Peshawar. Crossing the Afghan border, they are deployed in the provinces of Laghman, Parwan, Nangarhar, Woleswali, Kama, Khogyani, Shinwar and others.43

In Landi Kotal there is a special base for training in subversive activities and sabotage. In Thakal Bala and Thakal Payan 2½ kilometres to the west of Peshawar there is a school for religious and political propaganda training. In the village of Tunchi there is a special centre for the training in guerrilla warfare methods. In the village of Jamrud 20 kilometres from Peshawar, there is a base for training subversive groups; there is a similar base in the town of Cherat, 50 kilometres south-east of Peshawar.44

On receiving training at another camp in the Bajaur Mohmand region the men are dispatched to assembly points and camps in Tarhy, Paghary, Gazdara etc. and on entering Afghanistan operate in the provinces Kunar, Laghman Baghlan and Samangan.

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
In Chitral, there is a large training camp. The training camps in Chitral are in the forts of Mehtara and Boroz. About 1,200 mercenaries are trained there at the same time. Men are also trained at Garm Chaasma. The men trained in these camps are infiltrated into Afghanistan and they operate in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, i.e. Badakshan, Kunduz and Takhar.45

In the Bannu (Kurram Agency) the most important training centre is at Mirram Shah wherein political and military training is conducted; on the completion of training at Mirram Shah, the men are sent to assembly points in Mirzapar, Nari, Masha, Savara, Hadjra, Disley, Mohammed Khel, Daura, Mir Ali, Razmak, Kata Khel and Parachinar. At Parachinar there is a base for training subversive and terrorist groups. There are also communication and transport units which are engaged in supplying ammunition and weapons to the rebel groups.

At Quetta, there is a large training centre with a radio station and a stockpile of weapons and ammunition. After training at the Quetta camp the men are sent to assembly points in the towns of Chaman and Pishin and the villages of Port Sandiman, Gol Kadz, Pandaban, Galal Seifullah, Muslim Begh, Toba and Pashtunabad. After assembly, they cross the border in the vicinity of Arghistan, Toba, Spinbouldak and operate in the Afghan provinces of Zabol, Hilmand and Kandhar.46

45 Ibid.
and Kandhar. 

There is also a military and special subversive activities centre in the town of Pishin. The military town of Chella Bagh is one of the strongholds of the rebels.

In all, the capacity of the centres and camps for training and equipping counter-revolutionaries on Pakistani soil is about 5,000 men. The training period lasts from one to three months and the training is supervised and conducted by instructors from US, China, Pakistan and Egypt besides some other countries.

The Pakistani authorities are directly involved in these hostile activities against Afghanistan. They not only support the counter-revolutionary subversive groups but actually organize and coordinate their activities. The authorities in Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore and Quette place office and apartment buildings at their disposal.

The activities of the counter-revolutionary bands are coordinated by joint military staff with the participation of Pakistani military experts. The Pakistani authorities and army command are directly involved and take an active part in forming counter-revolutionary Afghan bands and dispatching them into the territory of Afghanistan. In April 1980, two rebel groups were formed on the basis of the 9th Battalion of South Jaziratan and the 36th Battalion of Shoval frontier areas. The second group was dispatched to Afghanistan during the end of April 1980 in the Kurram frontier zone.

46 Ibid., p. 20.
The Pakistani frontier troops and their headquarters also help to secure the smuggling of all kinds of weapons and ammunition for the rebels across the Afghan border. 47

Besides training camps for counter-revolutionaries, a network of hospitals has been set up in Pakistan for the treatment of those fighting and wounded in Afghanistan. Thus the rebels engaged in the conflict in the provinces of Laghman and Kunduz receive treatment at the Pakistani military hospitals in Khar. Similar hospitals are functioning in Mirram Shah and Parachinar. 48

The subversive activities of the Pakistani authorities against Afghanistan are closely coordinated with the US and China. These matters are discussed at regular meetings of the US, Chinese and Pakistani leaders. 49

In Iran 14 centres and bases for training Afghan counterrevolutionary rebels have been established on Iranian territory. The largest bases are in Tehran, Kum and Zahedan. 50

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47 For instance, by July 1980, Pakistani army units completed the transportation across the border with the DRA of a big consignment of US made arms for the rebels operating in Kunduz province. At the same time two truck loads of weapons, including grenade-launchers, were delivered from Pakistan to the province of Nagarhar. In August 1980 the dispatch of arms across the border was carried out by the headquarters of the Tochi frontier region (11 camels with weapons and ammunition) and the Badjur frontier region (2,000 units of US weapons for the Hikmatyar band in Khanabad). In August weapons were flown into Afghanistan by Pakistani helicopters which landed in the Hazarann gorge in the province of Kunar. See Ibid., pp. 21-22.

48 Ibid., p. 22.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.
The training capacity of all these centres is about 1,200 men at a time. The training period is about three months and most of the trainees are the Afghan refugees living in Iran.

Despite several assurances of Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq of providing mere humanitarian aid to the Afghan refugees, it is with the connivance and support of his government that the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) has been turned into a gigantic base for the enemies of the Afghan revolution. It has been turned into a bridgehead aimed against the DRA. According to estimates there are 20 training camps and 50 military bases for the Afghan counter-revolutionaries in Pakistan.

The Resistance: The Initial Phase.

Resistance remained localized till the end of the year 1978. By the following spring attacks upon Government

51  Ibid.

52  Most of the resistance resulted from clashes between the Government and local communities. Usually these involved official acts seen as intrusions into social practices sanctified by customary interpretations of Islam. Yet, while locally expressed these spontaneous uprisings, share the common national emotions of fear of Islam being in danger and a dislike of the Government. The reforms initiated by the Government, neither evoked appreciation nor gratitude. On the contrary, they aroused widespread resentment. The efforts of the leadership to win over the masses was a failure perhaps because of its being identified with the Soviet Union. Any close association with an external power went against the Afghan tradition of patriotism and freedom. Ideological differences notwithstanding Islam and Communism being poles apart, the call for Jihad given by the tribal chiefs and clergy had a tremendous appeal for the masses of Afghanistan. See Nimala Joshi, "Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan", Foreign Affairs Reports (New Delhi), vol. 29, no. 7, July 1980, p. 135.
installations spread across the whole country. Kabul's authority in most regions became nominal often restricted to daylight. Effective control of the Government was limited to the towns and outposts manned by troops. No effective militia forces were mobilized to give it a presence in the rural areas. However, by the summer of 1979 security was uncertain even in the largest cities. Uprisings, mutinies or attacks had occurred at Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Pul-i-Khumri and Mazar-i-Sharif. There were street demonstrations in Kabul in June 1979, and a mutiny in August. The dependents of senior Government officials were evacuated to the Soviet Union in the early summer and during this period, Government operations were restricted to military bases in or near the capital. Resistance within the cities was suppressed at the cost of relying totally upon the logistic and fire power support of the Soviet army. Thus with this assistance the Government of Afghanistan was able to repulse

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53 Mutinies and desertions from the armed forces became a frequent occurrence, particularly in the cities of Herat and Jalalabad. As long as the armed forces remained quiescent, the threat posed by the insurgency did not seem insurmountable. But frequent desertions from the armed forces, backbone of the Government, to the rebel groups and their cause shook the foundations of the Government. Ibid.

attacks upon the cities. At this early stage of the conflict with the Soviet troops it became very clear that without substantial assistance the rebels could not win battles.

Initially the Resistance operated at two levels. The local uprisings and emigre groups operating from the trans-Indus region of Pakistan. The local groups inside Afghanistan provided all the manpower requirements, weapons and above all on site leadership.

The groups in Pakistan attempted to provide overall coordination to win world sympathy and support and also to develop a consensus regarding the goals of the Resistance to the Soviet supported DRA regime. The first indications of organized Afghan Resistance appeared in early June 1979, when nine Islamic and anti-Communist organizations formed a 'National Rescue Front' in Afghanistan. Besides, according

55 The Government was able to repulse the attack upon Jalalabad by a large tribal force in June 1979. For details see Washington Post, 16 July 1979.

56 In its early phase, religious leaders were most prominent in organizing the external facets of the resistance to the DRA regime.

to the testimony of a rebel deserter, "there was a regular plan to train the rebels for guerrilla warfare." 58 Refugee camps were set up in Pakistan which soon became the training ground for guerrilla warfare. Training was also imparted by the Chinese instructors across the Afghan border in China and Pakistan. After training these guerrillas were to be used for launching attacks against the DRA. 59

As the situation worsened within the country from September 1979 due to the policies of the over-ambitious ruler Amin the Soviets rushed military aid to the Government of Afghanistan by mid November 1979. Describing the then prevailing situation in Kabul, the Pravda stated:

in the last few months one terrible news after another hit us inhabitants. It seemed that the fiery ring of counter-revolution backed from abroad became tighter around the Capital Kabul after bands went into the city and blew up motor vehicles and killed people. 60

It was contended that by early December 1979, the insurgents controlled 23 of the Twenty Nine provinces of Afghanistan.

The first province, as pointed out earlier, to rise in revolt against the DRA and its Government in Kabul was the northern province of Nuristan. In fact the success of the Nuristanis in resisting Government authority encouraged

58 Pravda (Moscow), 23 March 1979.
59 Ibid.
60 Pravda, 16 November 1979.
the mood towards general uprising in all the peripheral provinces that had always maintained a sullen independence from Kabul. The tribes of Sarhadd (Border) opposite Pakistan's NWFP declared themselves against the regime in Kabul in the initial months of the year 1979. Besides, the chiefs of the largest tribes, Mohamand, Afridi and Yusufzai met in Jirga (Council) to coordinate their activities. 61 These Chiefs were later joined by the refugees from Kabul representing dissidents of all colours; 62 Royalists, Republicans, high-ranking army officers and technocrats anxious to overthrow the Khalqi led regime in Kabul.

The Tribal Jirga called for a direct assault on Kabul. Besides this, several regions of the country settled down into a state of nature. Thus, faced with such a situation and the rebellion of one fourth of the Afghan population, the best the Khalqi regime could do was to hold the fort-Kabul together with the other major urban centres i.e. Kandahar, Herat and Kunduz.

The major threat to the regime was its lack of substance. The Afghan army grew on paper but shrank on the ground.

61 The Dawn (Karachi), 2 May 1979.

62 Afghanistan's most distinguished religious leaders also fled the bloody purge of the country's influential clergy. Responding to Taraki's proclamation of a Jihad, they backed themselves up with the support of Sharhaddi Tribesmen.
Intra-Government feuds became the order of the day. The Soviets intervened towards the end of 1979 and filled the void that had developed \(^\text{63}\) by installing a regime acceptable to it.\(^\text{63}\)

**Babrek Karmal's Take Over as President of the DRA and the Resistance**

The new regime in Kabul, the Government headed by the Parchamite Babrek Karmal, was fiercely opposed by the people of Afghanistan. This opposition was spearheaded by several Islamic groups.\(^\text{64}\) By the end of 1980, the Soviets failed to persuade the Afghans to accept the military presence and to support the Karmal Government against what Moscow called the US and Chinese backed imperialist aggression threatening Afghan independence and the Socialist revolution of April 1978.

Under the worsening economic situation, public opposition to the Karmal regime increased; people of Kabul and other cities staged a series of strikes and protests while the Islamic Resistance Fighters engaged the Soviet troops in guerrilla warfare. Thousands of Afghan soldiers either

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64 For a detailed list of Islamic-Resistance groups operating against the Soviets in occupation of Afghanistan, see Canfield, n. 19, pp. 69-70.
defected or mutinied and the people of Kabul, joined by their counterparts in Kandahar and Herat began a week of unprecedented but successful general strikes and demonstrations in February 1980. This was of course suppressed by the Government and the Soviet forces. A major setback to the Karmal regime was the defection of the Government's emissary to the United Nations, Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai, who instead of defending the Soviet presence and aid described the civil unrest a reflection of the Afghan peoples total opposition to the Soviet presence. He declared that "an absolute majority of the people of Afghanistan had protested a situation in which the territory of Afghanistan was invaded and occupied by Soviet troops under the pretext of an invitation from the Afghan side for assistance and help". These protests were followed by further unrest in Kabul and other major cities which were penetrated by the Mujahideen from time to time. That High School girls protest in May 1980 was the most astounding. They were ruthlessly suppressed at the cost of hundreds of lives and mass arrests.

During this period, the Mujahideen forces were active in most of Afghanistan's twenty nine provinces which the Soviets divided into seven defence zones for military purposes.

The success of the Mujahideen forces was notably in the Southern, South-Eastern and North-Eastern provinces, exerting relentless pressure on the towns and cities surrounding Kabul. However, the Mujahideen also faced several problems, yet they were able to hold on to their positions and they continued to make life difficult for the Soviets and the Karmal regime. They appeared to have no manpower problem for they could continue to recruit from among the 1.2 million Afghan refugees living in the camps in Pakistan. By the end of the year 1980, all that the Soviets could claim was an uneasy control over Kabul and other major cities. The rest of the country still remained open to the Mujahideen who had been most successful in blocking communication lines leading to Kabul. Reports from various regions of the country pointed to large areas of the countryside i.e. as much as eighty percent being out of Government control. All the country's provincial capitals contained some sort of Government presence. But by and large the situation in most provincial centres was far from normal from the regime's point of view. Most of

67 The major one being chronic disunity, disorganization and the shortage of arms. Though they received some small arms from China and Egypt, their principal source continued to be the arms captured from the Government and Soviet troops. But they were in dire need of sophisticated weapons, especially mobile missiles, which they could use against the effective Soviet helicopter gunship. For details see *International Herald Tribune* 27-28 December 1980.

Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city, was off-limit to the Government despite a heavy Soviet presence at the airport. The municipal services ranging from schools to electricity were totally disrupted. The Mujahideen also moved into the suburbs of the important northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif and the first Resistance check point on the main road south from Mazar-i-Sharif was established only 5 kilometres from the town.

In the Northern part of the country most of the industrial town of Kunduz was out of Government control and the Governors of Baghlan and Kapisa provinces in the North-East reportedly could visit their seats of Government under heavy military escort only during the day. Outside the provincial capitals the regime left entire regions as the mountainous Hazarajat area in central Afghanistan and the Panjshir valley 100 kilometres North-east of Kabul to the Resistance, either by default or through military failure.

The Impact of the Resistance on the Capital-Kabul

At first life in Kabul remained unchanged from what it was before the Communist coup of April 1978 and the Soviet intervention twenty months later. 'It is not long before one discovered that all was not well'.

69 A traveller arriving at the city's airport could not but be struck by the Soviet base just across the runway from the terminal building and by the stream of arriving and departing helicopter gunships, the loading and unloading of various kinds of transport aircraft and the occasional sorties and para assisted landings of MIG-21 aircraft.
Kabul golf course could watch helicopters rocket and strafe the town of Paghman. They could see the columns of smoke and the sound of explosions nearby which was the result of air attacks against Resistance strongholds in and around Kabul.

A listing of the Resistance activities in Kabul during the latter part of 1981, was a reflection of life in that city. Bombs exploded harmlessly on the grounds of the Presidential Palace in the Ministry of Education and Interior at the Kabul University and the district headquarters of the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Besides these, the Inter Continental Hotel - a monument to a by-gone era was the object of a daytime rocket attack from a nearby residential neighbourhood. The Soviet Embassy was attacked with rockets and an apartment complex near the airport where several Soviet and PDPA functionaries lived, was ransacked several times. The Chief Soviet Geological adviser was kidnapped through the duplicity of his driver while on his way home from office and held hostage by the Resistance forces.

The quality of life in Kabul for rich and poor has clearly deteriorated during the seven years of the war. In

70 In these areas, assassinations and kidnappings of party members and military men was a regular occurrence. Besides this several of Kabul's districts and certain outlying areas of the town were transformed into a dangerous no-man's land as soon as darkness fell. In these areas, the Resistance fighters operated openly commandeering or destroying civilian vehicles, attacking and occasionally reducing police outposts and generally denying access to all but the very well armed and protected military patrols.
1985 the Soviets were more successful than in 1984 in providing food, electricity, and fuel to the capital's population, which has increased to over 2 million by the internal refugees fleeing Soviet bombing in the countryside.

Thus while an uneasy calm prevailed in the city the actual conflict with the Resistance forces takes place outside the city limits. Of the four major highways which connected the capital with the other parts of the country, only the one

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71 Soviet ability to better provision the capital implies greater success in keeping open the main highway from Kabul to the Soviet Union via the Salang Pass. This achievement was not without cost. The Soviets had to mount frequent air and ground operations all along the highway from Kabul to the Salang Pass to relieve the pressure of the Mujahideen ambushes on Soviet and regime convoys, which often travelled with armour and air support. See Leo O.Coldren, "Afghanistan in 1985: The Sixth Year of the Russo-Afghan War", *Asian Survey*, vol.26, No.2, February 1986, pp.235-6.
leading eastward through the Kabul gorge to Jalalabad and the Pakistani frontier was safe for the Government vehicles and the personnel travelling unescorted. To the South, the resistance was concentrated outside the town at the entrance to the Logar valley. Although the Government strengthened its position in the Logar late in 1981 the road link through the valley to the Southern province of Paktia was frequently cut and wood, the city's main source of heat in winter, had to be brought to the town in military convoys. On the main highway South-west to Ghazni and Kandahar the regime's supply columns were regularly harassed and Government and party officials avoided
this route for fear of being shot or abducted at check points established by the Mujahideen. Lastly, the road leading North over the Hindu-Kush mountains to the Soviet frontier was the scene of constant Resistance attacks on Soviet convoys and the towns on and near the highway i.e. to the North of Kabul was subject to devastating Soviet reprisals for aiding the Resistance forces. While this did not ruffle Kabul's surface tranquility, the populace was well aware that the city was ringed by war.

The Resistance, The Soviets and the DRA
Strategy and Tactics

As for the tactics adopted by the Soviets, the DRA and the Resistance forces, the Soviet forces having quickly secured most of the country's major population centres in early 1980, were not overly aggressive in trying to expand their control into the countryside. Large columns of troops and material some times numbering several thousands of men, and hundreds of armoured vehicles made periodic forays into Resistance controlled territory and the war's comparatively few pitched battles occurred when the Mujahideen either chose to oppose these columns or were forced to do so. The Mujahideen in the Panjshir valley under their charismatic commander Ahmed Shah Massoud successfully continued to resist the Soviet and the Afghan Government forays in the valley.\(^\text{72}\) In

July 1981, the Mujahideen in and around Paghman inflicted heavy casualties on a large Soviet-Afghan force which had been sent against them. For the most part, however, the Mujahideen refused combat with the advancing columns and these forces generally returned to their bases without incident.

Thus as most guerilla conflicts the day to day war in the Afghan countryside consisted of an endless series of minor incidents involving small contingents and limited casualties on both sides. The great majority of the battles, the news of which reached Kabul were assaults by the Resistance on military convoys, attacks on outlying army or police posts or quick air and ground raids by Government and the Soviet forces on suspected Resistance strongholds. Though sieges of outposts by the Mujahideen sometimes continue for several days the more typical clash lasted a few hours and ended when the Government forces were reinforced by air cover and ground forces from the nearest base. The guerrillas then pulled back to regroup and strike at an opportune time and place. Such minor engagements are the type of the ensuing conflict in Afghanistan. The guerrillas use the classic hit and run tactics aimed at harassment the invader and keeping him off balance. 73

73 For paralyzing traffic on roads, the Mujahideen set up fox holes in mountains for delivering fire on ground and air targets. Further they plant mines, set up road blocks and ambushes on roads, sometimes all three being employed.
The Resistance on their part counts heavily on negative tactics; they have also acquired ceaseless US mines which is difficult to locate even with detectors. In addition to ambushes and mining, the Mujahideen also carry out numerous acts of sabotage, blowing up bridges, placing obstructions on roads and digging pits large enough to engulf armoured vehicles. The most important form of sabotage activity at which the Mujahideen fell most adept is the ambush. Over the years, they have added variety even to the technique of ambush, rendering anti-ambush operations more difficult and hazardous. The technique used in one encounter was: the Hizb-e-Islami force divided itself into three as a Soviet force approached the small town of Baktia - one group watched the Soviets another laid mines and in the wake the third sprang the ambush. The Soviet troops withdrew at night having lost five tanks. While retreating, they were subjected to another attack organized by the watchers on the hills.

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76 The Mujahideen resort to these methods, because the Soviet forces are immeasurably stronger than them. Further they are neither equipped nor organized to fight pitched battles against tanks, aircraft and other highly sophisticated modern weapons. Guerrilla type resistance seems the only alternative open to them for which they lack training. However, using their own traditional tactics in mountain warfare, they are putting up a determined and apparently effective resistance. See Salman A. Ali, "Looking Back at Afghanistan", *Defence Journal*, vol.6, No.12, 1980, p.12.

75 The Economist, 23 May 1981.
Another method adopted by the Mujahideen to draw the troops to a particular area is to lay siege to a post or a small garrison and then to ambush reinforcements which are handicapped by the absence of alternate means of communications in the rugged mountains.

The favourite target of the Mujahideen's ambushes are the supply columns which usually move out of Kabul in various directions to supply not only their military garrisons but the civilians. Despite all the anti-ambush measures of armoured escorts and air cover, the Mujahideen manage to spring ambushes. They ambush tanks by blocking roads in difficult defiles by causing rock slides. Even the strategic 'Salang Tunnel' is not safe from ambush despite the best security measures by the Soviet army. 76

Besides these methods, the most frequently employed form of sabotage activity to undermine the Government's authority is to disrupt roads by mining them and destroying or damaging bridges. 77 The increased pressure on the Government's public utilities have resulted in the destruction or damage to power houses, disruption of electric supply, snapping of telephone lines, carrying away food grains from towns and cities.

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76 The decision of the Soviet authorities in 1981 to clear area upto 150 metres of all houses, orchards etc. on either side of the highway was an admission of their failure.

77 Causing damage to bridges is simple, as it can be achieved out of immediate contact with enemy troops.
looting of cash from the banks. These classic guerrilla tactics are aimed at eroding the authority of the Government.

Assassination and Arson

The Mujahideen continue to erode the authority of the Kabul regime by assassination and arson. The targets for such operations are so selected that their impact augments the Mujahideen's authority while alienating people from lending any support to the Government for fear of reprisals. These acts are aimed at producing the effects of the Government's incapacity of protecting its supporters thereby dwindling its support base gradually. Sometimes the Mujahideen have prevented Government officials from functioning thereby proving the ineffectiveness of the Government.

Air Ambush Tactics

To date the Mujahideen have not been able to master tactics against the Soviet MI-24 (Hind) Helicopter Gunship regarded by Western defence experts as the best in service today. However, they have been able over the years to shoot down a few. To achieve it, the Mujahideen divide themselves into two groups, one group with automatic weapons setting itself with strong protection with the task of drawing the

helicopter towards them. The other group positioning itself about 300 metres higher than the first, also with automatic weapons and rocket launchers has the task of destroying the helicopters. The above method of countering the helicopter gunships leaves several ifs and buts but this is the only technique which the Mujahideen can adopt given their limitations on the battle front. Over the years, however, the Mujahideen's tactics have undergone an evolution. The bravado of the initial days when they would attack strong points even in broad daylight is over. With the passage of time they have learnt their lessons and use classical guerrilla hit and run tactics by small groups against comparatively more vulnerable targets. They have also learnt the laws of survival on the Kunar river and elsewhere i.e., "not to be seen and if seen they would be dead. The Mujahideen know that if they do not live, the Soviets will."  

79 The tactics employed by the Mujahideen during the early phase of their operations against the Soviet forces highlight their lack of knowledge as to how deadly modern weapons are. They initially demonstrated more bravado than skill. The Mujahideen carrying their antiquated rifles organized themselves into large groups and went in search of the Soviet and Afghan forces and lay siege to a military stronghold or attack their smaller defence positions. Consequently, the Mujahideen suffered heavy casualties, not only from autofire of the defenders but also from the artillery tanks, and helicopter gunships. These tactics suited the Soviets, the most, because instead of their searching the Mujahideen and exposing themselves to danger, the Mujahideen were themselves coming to them.  

80 Times of India (New Delhi) 15 April 1981. All references to the Times of India in this chapter are to the New Delhi edition of that newspaper.
The Resistance, The Soviets and the DRA 1981-86

The year 1981 was costlier than 1980 for the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. As the Afghan people's civil and armed resistance grew, the Karmal Government could not rightly claim any notable degree of popular support and justify the assertion that the estimated 85,000 troops were in Afghanistan only to defend the country against imperialist aggression backed by the US, China, Pakistan and Egypt. By the end of 1981 the Resistance forces, besides controlling the countryside, increased their operations in several towns and major cities including Kabul. In fact the Soviets and the supporters of Karmal appeared desperate in their struggle to maintain their hold on Kabul and other cities vis-a-vis Kandahar. Thus, despite their heavy human and material sacrifice, the opposition forces were not in a position to achieve victory and a military stalemate followed.81

On the non-military front during 1981, the Mujahideen were successful in penetrating into the party ranks.82 By no


82 Since the supporters of the Government and those who were forced to work for it could not feel secure and free of guilt in the face of public opposition, a considerable number of them not only hid their identity but also worked secretly for the Mujahideen organization. At the same time those working voluntarily or under coercion for the Kabul Government did not have the necessary incentives to work effectively and loyally. While earning their salaries from the Government, as the only source of their livelihood, a good number worked secretly and cooperated with the Mujahideen to manifest their opposition to the Soviets and the Karmal regime and guard themselves against Mujahideen reprisals.
doing the Mujahideen successfully cultivated their own men in important civilian and military positions though these were overshadowed by the Soviet advisers. The defection of senior military Khalqi officers and thousands of conscript soldiers with their arms to the Mujahideen ranks also depleted the strength of the Afghan army from 60,000 to 30,000 men. This was a boost to the Mujahideen cause and a setback to the Soviets and the Kabul regime under Karmal. With the increasing unreliability of the Afghan forces becoming more pronounced day by day, the four Afghan Army Divisions garrisoned at Kabul sharing the responsibility of securing the city along with their Soviet counterparts were sent to the countryside. The responsibility of Kabul being solely in the hands of the Soviets, they took over control of all the check points in the city.  

During the year 1982, the Soviets increased their troop level from 100,000 to 110,000 (some estimates put it at 120,000) with the exchange of units from 30,000 to 40,000 men reserves across the border. The Mujahideen on their part had 90,000 men in the field scattered throughout the twenty nine provinces.

Soviet military operations during the year consisted mainly of aerial attacks by jets and helicopters followed by

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83 The Times (London), 3 April 1981.
ground sweeps. The two pronged tactics of rubbelization of
villages from the air followed by forced migration developed
by the Soviets in the summer of 1980 continued. The Soviets
continued to use the war to test the utility of their train-
ing, performance of their troops and the effectiveness of
their weapon systems. Shortcomings were found in all the
three lessons learned and corrections made. During the year
the morale of the Soviet troops suffered for the largely
draftee army was not prepared for the stiff Afghanistan Resis-
tance and the continued logistical breakdowns. Soviet casual-
ties were around 15,000 including dead, wounded and ill
especially with hepatitis. The actual dead were estimated
between 3,000 to 9,000. 85

The Mujahideen continued their patterns of ambush and
retreat tactics. They dominated the countryside, periodi-
cally blocked the main roads, attacked motor convoys, assaul-
ted isolated outposts and assassinated party members. Even
the Soviet troops stationed in Kabul and other urban centres
were not immune. The Soviets initiated number of offensives
against the Mujahideen, which after initial successes ended
in Soviet withdrawals. Penetration was always possible but
not pacification. The major battles were in the foothills
of Farah province in April, Ghorband valley North of Kabul
in May, Paghman, west of Kabul during June and October, Logar
valley south of Kabul in June, Laghman valley east of Kabul

85 Ibid., p.137.
in November 1982. The hardest hit were the main staging areas for the Mujahideen operations inside Kabul which increased in intensity and ferocity during the year. Groups of forty and fifty guerrillas penetrated Kabul on night raids and daylight raids became common towards the end of the year. During the year the Mujahideen continued to be handicapped with the shortage of weapons. Although some weapons were supplied to the freedom fighters by some countries, neither the quantity nor quality was adequate to make a serious impact on the Soviet and BRA forces. In these circumstances very few thought that the Mujahideen could successfully resist the Soviet armed forces. Notwithstanding this the war continued. External commitments limited the capability of the Soviets to raise the troop level to about 500,000 men to gain absolute control of the country. Its fifty plus divisions stationed along the Sino-Soviet border, the Warsaw pact divisions and the troops responsible for internal security were the major constraints.

86 Several guerrilla groups also claimed responsibility for the explosion on 30 October 1982 which rocked the Salang Tunnel - the main supply route of the Soviets - and killing 700 Soviets and 400 to 500 Afghans. Ibid, pp.136-37.

87 The countries involved in the supply of weapons to the Mujahideen are US, China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt admitted Egypt's role just before his assassination in October 1981. He stated that the US had purchased old Russian weapons from his country, to be shipped to the Mujahideen. Reports also indicated that Chinese weapons and specially Soviet Kalashnikov AK-47 Assault Rifles found their way into the hands of the Mujahideen. See Ibid., p.137.

88 Ibid., pp.140-1.
The year 1983, witnessed a continuation of the policy of the Soviets against the Afghans. The conflict in Afghanistan further widened the gulf between the Soviets/DRA regime and the people of Afghanistan. The entire population was opposing the Soviet presence and the Soviet strategy invariably began to be directed against the people as a whole. Routine bombing of civilian targets, wanton action against unarmed and poorly armed men, women and children became the order of the day. "You can destroy Afghanistan but cannot conquer it". The Soviets took this maxim to heart and since were unable to defeat the Resistance outright adopted the strategy of burning the harvests and destroying villages.

On the military front, the Soviets increased their ground forces by 20,000 and additional air assets were allocated to the region. With the Mujahideen given a strong disincentive for urban combat (due to the Soviet terror campaign) and having evolved to smaller, better trained and led hit and run units, the Soviets increased their dependence on the helicopter both for combat and supporting roles, search and destroy sweeps in which airmobile units force the Mujahideen to fight by blocking their routes of withdrawal.

90 Ibid.
and the use of strategic bombers to conduct saturation bombing of rural infiltration routes.\textsuperscript{92}

However, during the year the Mujahideen continued to dominate the rural areas while the Soviets and the DRA forces controlled the cities. The Mujahideen began to score moderate successes in urban areas also. Charles Dunbar an American diplomat who returned from Kabul to Washington in September estimated that "one third of the district capitals were in rebel hands. In Kandahar the second largest province of the country 14 of the 24 military posts in and about the city fell to rebel night raids''.\textsuperscript{93}

In Kabul, the Mujahideen intensified their operations by bombings, acts of sabotage, etc.\textsuperscript{94} The Mujahideen, however,

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} Fenton and Gallagher, n.89, p.19.
\textsuperscript{94} On 26 April 1983, a day before the anniversary celebration of the April Revolution, a bomb exploded inside the apartments where ruling party officials and their families lived. Eye witnesses reported that about sixty people were killed in the blast. Visitors also reported that heavy shooting could be heard around Kabul every night. Besides this incident, it was reported that several enclaves, including Khost and Gardez had their road links so harassed and garrisons so besieged that they had to be supplied through airlift. In 1983, this area was the scene of a great Mujahideen victory when 800 troops of the 38th Commando Brigade of the Kabul army were destroyed in ambush and 500 survivors came over to the Resistance. See Ibid., and Curren and Karber, n.91, p.704.
remained virtually defenseless during the year against air attacks. The increased use by the Soviet's of fighter jets and helicopters, especially the MIG-24 Attack Aircraft (code named Hind by The North Atlantic Treaty Organization -NATO) was not matched by comparable improvements in the arms which the Mujahideen obtained. 95

With the Soviet presence in Afghanistan entering the sixth year in 1984, the Soviet army had been fighting there longer than it did against the Axis powers during the Second World War but the military and political impasse continued. 96 The succession of Andropov by Chernenko in February 1984 brought no change in Soviet policies towards Afghanistan, indeed it brought a strong reaffirmation of Soviet objectives there. The Soviet military pressure against the Mujahideen was intensified during 1984 and the Soviet Union's limited armed presence rose to approximately more than 115,000 troops. These forces were augmented by an additional 30-35,000 troops stationed in the adjoining areas of Soviet Central Asia. 97

95 The Mujahideen continued to depend and fight the Soviets with their old British Lee Enfield Rifles and few Kalashnikova, but the most needed anti-aircraft weapons were not available to them. Fenton and Gallagher, n.89, p.19.


97 Ibid.
During the year Soviet military objectives continued to centre on the control over the major cities and towns as well as the roads linking them. But the methods used by the Soviet Union and the DRA underwent a change. The use of air-power against civilian targets was expanded, a move which greatly contributed to the depopulation of the strategic areas of the country. Further whereas in previous years the Soviet military command had conducted only one major offensive at a time in March and April 1984 offensives were mounted in several areas during the same period around the cities of Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif in Paktia province on the Pakistani frontier and in the Panjshir valley near Kabul. The concentration of combat activity in these areas was part of a Soviet drive to secure the major cities and interdict Mujahideen infiltration across the border from Pakistan.

While intense in its military application this strategy had only limited political success. During the year the popular base of the major Resistance groups widened. This was evident by the intensified ground and rocket attacks on Kabul during the autumn of 1984. On 24 September one of the largest Mujahideen raids on the capital since December 1979

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98 Ibid.

Soviet invasion culminated in a pitched battle near Bala Hissar military base before the guerrillas withdrew. Throughout the year there were periodic electrical blackouts and food shortages in the Capital as a result of Mujahideen attacks on power stations and supply convoys. Another persistent problem for the regime was political assassinations primarily of army officers and members of the Soviet directed secret police, the Khaq. The typical Soviet response to Mujahideen attacks in Kabul has been indiscriminate and heavy attacks by helicopter gunfire against the villages south of the Capital. Though the Afghan Resistance continued to be divided along ethnic and religious lines during the year there were reports of improved military coordination amongst its components.

More than five years after the Soviet intervention, its strategy in Afghanistan achieved little more than a continuing impasse. While the Karmal regime remained ostensibly in power it had effective control over only twenty percent of the population. Soviet casualties over the 1979-84 period was estimated at 20-25,000 with a third being killed. The human losses as well as the economic costs to the Soviet Union since its intervention was estimated at $12 billion.

100 Afghanistan Occupation and Resistance, n.96,p.72.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid., p.73.
103 Ibid.
Although the extent of fighting increased there was not much change in the Soviet situation in Afghanistan during the year 1985. During the year to a greater degree than previously, the Resistance dictated the tempo and place of major Soviet operations that were conducted without much pretence that the Soviets were only "supporting" the Karmal regime's military. 104

In the capital Kabul security did not continue to deteriorate in 1985 as it had in 1984. This was partially the result of greater investment in infrastructure designed to hamper Mujahideen infiltration. 105 There was an increased use of helicopters at night to pinpoint Resistance rocket and mortar positions. Frequent droppings of heat flares by aircraft taking off or landing at Kabul airport demonstrated Soviet fears that local Mujahideen possessed a greater number of surface to air missiles and gave credence to increased reports of the shooting down of aircraft all over the country. The Mujahideen to a greater extent than before planted bombs and used mortars and rockets against regime and Soviet targets deep inside the capital. Among the installations bombed were the Soviet-staffed Polytechnic University, Ministry of Commerce, and the Soviet military hospital. 106

104 Coldren, n.71, p.235.
105 Guns and Tanks were emplaced on roads entering Kabul with an additional series of bunkers. Anti-personnel mines were also sown on the eastern approaches to the capital city.
106 Coldren, n.71, p.237.
Commencing from April the Mujahideen began using rockets frequently inside Kabul. The Soviet Embassy compound was attacked on at least two occasions in July and it was subjected to a dozen assaults in September. The localities housing the government offices and residences, the foreign embassies and diplomat’s houses were also subjected to rocket attacks. This was to indicate to the residents of Kabul that the war was not distant from the centre of Soviet power.

The extent of Resistance pressure on the capital could be gauged from the numerous and extensive Soviet air and ground operations in adjacent areas; Paghman to the northwest, the Shomali region to the north, and the Logar valley to the south. Though Paghman is only a few kilometres from the capital, the Soviets have been unable to do more than temporarily suppress Resistance control of the area and its use as a Mujahideen base for attacks targeted on the capital’s west side.

The major objective of the Soviets in 1985 was the disruption of the Mujahideen’s supply lines. However, the year’s major Soviet campaigns were fought in areas where Resistance activity seriously threatened Soviet and regime interests. In each case, minimum Soviet goals were temporarily realized but without apparent lasting effect on the strength of the Mujahideen. 107

107 Ibid., p. 239.
The Soviet backed regime in Afghanistan has long maintained and the Resistance long besieged the garrison in Barikot in Kunar Province near the Pakistan border. During the early part of the year, the Mujahideen successfully attacked and turned back a major Soviet DRA regime armoured column attempting to enter Barikot. Resistance attacks increased and by April all regime installations in the area were under attack. The Soviet response began with heavy bombing of the Kunar valley and its side valleys in May followed by a ground operation involving an estimated 10,000 Soviet and DRA forces. 108

In Kandhar and Herat during 1985 fighting increased largely on the initiative of the Mujahideen. As in the past year, the Soviet response continued to be frequent ground sweeps and bombing of Mujahideen strongholds within the city and the villages near Kandahar. In Herat, Mujahideen attacks on Government installations in and around the town escalated in the month of June. A major Governmental outpost in the centre of the town was mined and destroyed. By July the Mujahideen was close to pushing the Governmental forces out of the town and were increasingly able to dictate the locale and the tempo of the battles. The Soviets responded by mounting a large-scale operation which included ground sweeps and bombing of the centre of Herat. 109

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., pp. 240-1.
Another scene of heavy fighting in 1985 was the Paktia province. The essential Resistance lines of supply in this region were the major targets of Soviet and DRA operations. In the late summer Mujahideen groups increased their assaults on the Khost garrison and its outposts several of which were overrun. The tribal militia units who were purported to be supporting the regime was also attacked. The Soviets responded with major air and ground operation. Fighting raged through the month of August and casualties on both the sides were high. Thus while the Soviets were not able to break the strength of the Mujahideen in Paktia, the Mujahideen failed to capture Khost. Though militarily inconclusive, the attack on Khost was the largest coordinated Resistance operation in Paktia which is rightly renowned as the home of Afghanistan’s most fractious, touchy and uncooperative tribesmen.\textsuperscript{110}

In Northern Afghanistan although the level of fighting decreased in Balkh province and its capital Mazand-i-Sharif, the Mujahideen still control the country side and were able to mount daring attacks inside the city. In the northeastern provinces of Kunduz and Badakshan the level of fighting was high.

1985 witnessed an escalation in the use by the Soviet and DRA forces of air, special forces, Spetsnaz commandoes,\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p.241.
mines and booby-traps, chemical weapons, carpet bombing by
TU-16 bombers, scorched earth and deforestation policy. The
Mujahideen bases and supply routes were regularly attacked
and interdicted, night fighting was resorted to with the
strength of the MI-24 helicopter gunships being increased
from 200 to 650. The overall operational Soviet troop
strength during the year ranged between 120,000 - 150,000.111

Although the Soviet operations in 1985 did not break
the back of the Mujahideen and suppress its activity in stra-
tegic areas, it no doubt resulted in significant depopulation
of large areas of the countryside. Reports by foreign medical
personnel and journalists who travelled in the country confirm
that villages have been abandoned around Herat and Kandahar
and in areas such as the Logar Valley, the Kunar Valley, and
the once verdant Shomali region. In a country where barely
fifteen percent of the land is arable, the depopulation of
Afghanistan's fertile valleys and plains is a development
with incalculable consequences for the people of Afghanistan
and their uncertain future.112

The Mujahideen seem to have become wiser in 1985, they
appeared to concentrate more on the war with the Soviets
than on factional fighting among groups. Further if the

111 See Strategems, "Six Years of the Fourth Afghan War", Strategic Studies (Islamabad), vol.9, No.2, Winter
112 Coldren, n.71, p.243.
Resistance within Afghanistan focused more on attacking the Soviets and less on intramural squabbling, so has there been a trend toward greater cooperation and coordination. 113

In the early years of the war, the Mujahideen in the countryside were led by traditional leaders whose position usually derived from age, membership in elite families, religious position, wealth, and effectiveness as an intermediary with provincial of Kabul authorities. Except for Islam the leaders allegiances were narrowly defined to include only a particular village or valley and its tribe or other ethnic kinship network. Several of these local leaders have been killed, fled the country, or do not have the stamina necessary to lead an active Mujahideen group. Whatever the reason, local leaders and Mujahideen commanders tend since 1985 to be younger and they have begun to define their own loyalties on a national basis. 114

In 1986, the Soviet Union and the DRA forces intensified their military operations against the Resistance. In spring the Soviets employed its elite commando units to cut off supply lines across the Pakistan border. 115

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113 Ibid., p. 244.
114 Ibid., p. 245.
of Karmal by Najibullah on 4 May 1986 as the General Secretary of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party toughened the DRA's stance against the Resistance. 117

During the year there was heavy fighting in Paktia province. In April, the DRA and Soviet forces captured and destroyed the largest Resistance base at Zhawar but then withdrew. The mile long cave network at Zhawar, less than 6 miles from the Pakistan border, had been well defended by anti aircraft weapons. These proved inadequate in the face of intensive Soviet air strikes and night raids. Both the Mujahideen and the DRA forces suffered heavy losses. The fall of Zhawar has been the largest single defeat so far for the Resistance. 118

In other parts of Afghanistan Mujahideen activity increased during the year. In the South the regime all but abandoned most of Kandahar, especially the bazaar. In the spring of 1986, a large Soviet convoy was sent from Kabul to

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116 Karmal was replaced since he was incapable of holding Afghanistan and crushing the Resistance. See The Guardian Weekly (London), 15 June 1986.

117 Maj.Gen.Najibullah an Ahmadzai Pashtun was the former head of the Afghan Security Service. On assumption of office as the General Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party, he called for a sharp escalation in the campaign against the rebels. He ordered a build up in the army along with an end to draft exemptions for college students and a crack down on draft resisters and deserters. He also appealed to students, workers and peasants to sign up for military duty in the war against the anti-government rebels. See Asian Recorder (New Delhi), vol.32, No.33, 13-19 August 1986,p.19027.

Kandahar. Soviet troops surrounded the town and bombarded the bazaar in an attempt to break Resistance control of the city centre. After an extended house to house combat the attack was broken. Most of the city is stated to be still under the Resistance control.119

In Nangarhar province, near the Khyber pass, the DRA launched a series of operations in January. At first the DRA troops gained ground but on being confronted by a resolute Resistance withdrew and sought Soviet assistance. During this period, near the Pakistani border, the Soviets armed and trained about 400 Afridi tribesmen to fight the Mujahideen. This ploy, however, failed with the Afridis turning against the Soviet forces.120

The Afghan capital, Kabul was more secure during the year, though its refugee population increased to 2 million.121 Though the conflict was not readily visible in the city it was audible with the noise of explosions the year round.

During the year the Resistance on its part due to improved training turned more professional and there was

119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., p.1030.
121 The Soviets devote extensive resources to maintaining security in Kabul - their minimum tactical goal in Afghanistan - particularly on symbolic occasions or during important regime meetings. During these internationally visible events, as many as 60,000 Soviet or Afghan military and police personnel are deployed in the capital to maintain order. Ibid., p.1031.
increased cooperation among the different groups. For air
defense the Resistance still relied on heavy machine guns
but was supplemented by Surface to Air Missiles which to an
extent blunted Soviet air power and compelled them to
initiate counter measures. Through skillful use of mines
the Mujahideen destroyed several armoured vehicles and convoy
traffic. The Mujahideen continued to receive arms from
external sources but were not provided with the much sought
US made Stinger and British Blowpipe missile.\textsuperscript{122} In February,
the Mujahideen suffered a major setback when Zabiullah, the
regional commander of the Jamiat-e-Islami Resistance group,
was killed by a mine. Resistance activities in the North
diminished after his death.\textsuperscript{123} However, the attacks on the
pipeline carrying natural gas to the Soviet Union persisted.

The Mujahideen in 1986 realised with the fall of Zhawar
that they are not strong enough to hold or deny territory to
the Soviets. Notwithstanding the anti-aircraft weapons they

\textsuperscript{122} The Stinger missile is a sophisticated anti-aircraft
weapon. It is effective against low altitude Jets or
Helicopters. Developed by US army, the system has a
passive infra-red seeker and a proportional navigat-
onal system. It uses a high explosive warhead, an
electronic control system and a dual thrust rocket
mortar. The weapon can be carried and fired by one
soldier. It has significant counter measures immunity.
The Blowpipe anti-aircraft missile, manufactured for
the British army is a lightweight hand-held weapon
capable of providing protection against low flying
aircraft. It consists of a missile in a launching
canister in an arming unit. Radio controlled, it has
a two stage rocket. After launch it is guided by
the soldier through a thumb control to keep the
missile on the line of sight to the target. See The

\textsuperscript{123} Karp, n.118, p.1042.
may acquire, the Soviets will always be able to destroy static bases. Thus, no matter how well intentioned, pressuring the Mujahideen to escalate their resistance to a higher or conventional level to hold land or to determine tactical details from afar can lead to their collapse.

"Guerrilla war is a long term vocation and the Afghan Mujahideen's foreign supporters need to realise this as the Mujahideen themselves". 124

In a dramatic development on 28 July 1986 the Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev stated that the Soviet Union proposed to withdraw 6,000 to 8,000 troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year. He, however, pointed out that "the withdrawal of the six regiments had to be matched by reciprocal curtailment of western assistance to the Afghan guerrilla forces". 125 This was the first announcement of troop withdrawal since the Soviets intervened in December 1979. 126

On the battle front the year 1987 began with the declaration - by the head of the DRA, Najibullah - of a Unilateral Cease Fire which was to be operative for six months, from 15 January. 127 As a sequel to the cease fire the Afghan

124 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 The unilateral cease fire was declared by the Afghan leader Najibullah on 1 January 1987. See Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 9 January 1987.
troops were recalled to their bases except those detailed to guard the borders and government installations. However, with the rejection of the cease-fire \(^{128}\) by the hard core of the Afghan Resistance, the seven party Resistance alliance headed by Nabi Mohammadi, \(^{129}\) an early end to the conflict seems to be a difficult proposition.

The Resistance: An Appraisal

After seven years the people of Afghanistan are not reconciled to the regime installed in December 1979 and continued to oppose the Soviet and the DRA troops, notwithstanding the human and material costs suffered. \(^{130}\) The Mujahideen forces, though divided, have increased their base all over the country with the determination to fight on despite the several odds. Initially the Mujahideen carried on their

\(^{128}\) Hindustan Times, 7 January 1979.


\(^{130}\) At the end of the seventh year since the Soviet entry into Afghanistan around a million Afghans were killed and about five million had left their homes to live as refugees in Pakistan, Iran and some other countries. Besides a large number of the Afghan intelligentsia were either in prison or exile. For details see, Karp, n.118, pp.1044-5.
fight against the deadly fire power of the Soviets largely with the arms they had inherited from their ancestors or captured from the Soviet and Afghan soldiers. However, since 1981 they started receiving modern arms from external sources especially through an international operation which involved the US, China, Pakistan and Egypt. By the end of 1985 the Mujahideen were in possession of heavy weapons as heavy machine guns, recoilles rifles, rocket launchers, mortars and an occasional SAM-7 anti-aircraft missile particularly in the eastern regions close to the border with Pakistan. These weapons being limited, the Mujahideen have over the years resisted the Soviets in their own indigenous manner.

It is difficult to overstate the primitiveness of the resistance being carried out by the Afghan tribesmen. Almost all the transportation is by foot, most Afghans are tremendously agile and can cover an impressive number of miles in mountainous terrain each day. The standard weapon among the tribesmen in Afghanistan continues to be the bolt action


133 Camel and Donkey Caravans are occasionally used to transport food and weapons, but often the tribesmen will trek several hundred kilometres on foot from the interior of Afghanistan to cross the Pakistani border for supplies.
The Soviet Kalashnikov assault rifle in its AK 47 or AKM versions is also highly prized though its automatic features are seldom used because of the extremely high cost of ammunition. Though the Kalashnikovs are captured, the Lee Enfields are made locally.

A question of particular importance concerns the rebels' source of arms and in particular the role of outside powers as Pakistan, Iran and China as conduits for weapons. The bulk of the Mujahindeen's arms come from captured Afghans stockpiles or from Afghan army defectors. It is true that captured arms are the single most important source of weaponry for the rebellion as a whole because most of the fighting has been taking place in the provinces of Badakshan, Kunduz, Herat or in Hazarajat, which is largely inaccessible from Pakistan, Iran or China. The Mujahideen fighting in these areas will have a difficult time obtaining arms as the rate of defections from the Afghan army tapers off. Those provincial garrisons or supply depots that could be overrun probably have been by now and there are a few reports of

134 The Enfield is a status weapon of sorts, sought by young men as a symbol of having reached adulthood.

135 Darra, a town in the territory of Adam Khel Afridis serves as a source of arms for many of the local tribes including those in Afghanistan. The extreme scarcity of these weapons is reflected in the extraordinary cost. The standard Enfield costs $1,000 the Kalashnikov is sold for $2,000, the grenade launcher costs a staggering $9,000. One grenade costs $700 and a single bullet for the 303 Lee Enfield costs $2.3. However, even at these prices there are buyers. Often the entire tribe pools resources to buy a single anti-tank weapon.
tribesmen, ambushing tanks and armoured personnel carriers.

The tactics of the Mujahideen have undergone an evolution over time. In the early phase of the civil war, the tribesmen would mount regular military operations such as planned daylight attacks on garrisons or armoured columns. But as the Afghan army and later the Soviets began to protect themselves and began to depend on air power for fire support, the Mujahideen reverted to classical guerrilla tactics - hit and run engagements - by a very small band of fighters against logistics or supply columns. The greater number of Soviet casualties have been incurred among truck drivers. The roads linking Termes and Dushanabe in the Soviet Union to Kabul have been frequently cut so that the Soviets have had to airlift food, ammunition, petroleum products, etc.

Casualty estimates on both sides are highly unreliable. The statistics published in the Western press cites Soviet and Afghan Government casualties at 500 per week - a fifth of the combatants alleged to have been killed in action. This number seems improbable. Given the Mujahideen's lack of fire power and the Soviet's relative invulnerability, as

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136 As an example, the vulnerability of Afghanistan's road network, the single Russian built highway between Mazar-i-Sharif near the Soviet border to Kabul runs through a 2.7 kilometre tunnel at the Salign Pass, at a height of 11,000 feet.
a result of their present tactics, the figures being given out by the Afghan rebel groups in Peshawar on which a number of journalists base their estimates are exaggerated. Sources in Pakistan have estimated a total of more than 45,000 casualties during 1985. Further, most of the photographs displayed of burnt or damaged Soviet equipment comes from the Afghan army, losses being incurred mostly before the Soviet intervention.

The principal centres of resistance in Afghanistan have all along been the mountain ranges North of Kabul especially the Panjshir, Badakshan, around the provincial capital of Fayadabad, the city of Kunduz with its industrial belt and the Turkistani region of Faryab in the North-west where during July 1980, even a stretch along the Amu Darya, the river constituting the border with the Soviet Union, was for a few days under nationalist control. Nowhere else have the Kabul Government and the Soviet forces been given such a hard time as in these regions where large territories have been liberated several times. Thus aside from the immediate northern vicinity of the capital, the strongest resistance was put up in the areas bordering the Soviet Union. Among several reasons two merit mention. Firstly, several inhabitants of this region belong to families that fled before the

137 For a detailed analysis of the casualty figures during 1985 see, Strategems, n.111, p.10.
Soviet advance from what is now the Soviet Union into Afghanistan. Some did in the nineteenth, others at the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The memories of Russian atrocities are fresh in their minds and they entertain no illusion as to the Kremlin's designs. For them there can be no question of believing the official propaganda of the Soviet troop withdrawal. They are convinced that this is another annexation and they are prepared to take up a last stance. 139

The second reason is the pre-dominance of national minorities in this region, nationalities that have long felt discriminated against the Pashtun dominated Central Government; Badakshan has a particular tradition of armed resistance to this overlordship. 140 Harrassment of successive Central Governments provided the training ground for the liberation struggle against the Soviets.

Since the major population of Afghanistan is a division of the two predominant tribes, the Pashtuns and the Tajiks, the Soviets seem to be pursuing a dual policy in regard to them. Moscow also pursues two different policies with regard to the two halves of Afghanistan. The policy initiated in August 1980, obviously in a Pashtun policy. It aims at

139 Ibid.

140 It found expression in regional militancy as Sitam-e-Milli (Movement against discrimination of Minority Nationalities), see Newsweek (New York), 28 February 1979.
subduing the tribes through incentives than arms. The huge sum of money set aside for this purpose aims at winning over tribal Chiefs and other influential personalities. However, among the Tajiks, this policy is far less applicable. Thus in the Tajik dominated Northern region, which has been more successfully cordoned off, the Soviets are bound to resort to a military solution the heavy fighting in the North substantiates this fact. Yet another reason for the more effective resistance in the North is the comparatively greater proletarization. Whatever little industry the country has is to be found in the region close to the Soviet border, particularly in Baghlan, Shibirghan, Gulb ash ar and Kunduz.

The Resistance in the Panjshir Valley

Of all the centres of Resistance in the North, the Panjshir valley was the strongest till the year 1985. In the Panjshir valley of Afghanistan, the insurgents have been aided by the personality of the leader of both the local tribes and the local Mujahideen. He is Ahmed Shah Massoud,

141 By so doing the Kremlin was re-enacting an age-old policy that proved fairly successful under successive empires, particularly the Mughal and the British. It was the colonial policy which was to a large extent successful under colonial era. However, it is to be seen whether it will have the same success among the Pashtuns after their nationalist sentiments have been stirred.

who has become in fact the "most effective and attractive leader of the Afghan guerrillas resisting the Soviets in their own country rather than wage a war". 143

Massoud who leads a powerful, independent guerrilla force in the Panjshir, North-west of Kabul since his appearance on the scene in 1981, has become closest to a genuine folk hero that the Afghan war has produced. Some call him the Che Guevara of Afghanistan. 144 He dropped out of Engineering school in Kabul after the Soviet intervention in 1979 and returned to his native Panjshir valley to organize the Resistance. At the very beginning the then 28 year old rebel leader rejected the usual Mujahideen, tribal tactics of mass attacks on convoys and garrisons, that had been so costly and mounted, instead a guerrilla strategy consisting of rapid small force, hit and run assaults against vulnerable enemy units. Despite apparently having little previous military experience himself, Massoud has an army that is universally regarded as the toughest, best organized and trained Resistance force in all of Afghanistan. Some of his top commanders run a secret rebel military academy turning out quality soldier officers.

143 Times of India, 17 May 1984.

A charismatic leader, Massoud has also acquired a reputation for political savvy rather than dogmatic religious fervour and for close ties with the civilian population. Indeed he is the only Mujahideen leader to have successfully built a genuine liberated zone which has an effective and popular civilian administration, schools, clinics, library, a clandestine radio station, reorganized agricultural production and even a civilian bus service, using captured Soviet trucks. Though a devout Muslim, he has steadfastly remained aloof from the religious and sectarian squabbling of the better known rebel parties. In addition Massoud's dispatches (military) are regarded to be reasonably accurate and authentic, in contrast to those of other rebel leaders who exaggerate their own strength and the enemy's weakness. 145

As the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan entered the eighth year, the Soviets and the DRA forces have been unable to take complete control of the Panjshir valley. Over the past years Massoud and his band of guerrillas have stood as a stumbling block against the Soviet efforts to end the Resistance activity. The Panjshir has become the symbol of the Afghan resistance to the Soviet presence in the country.

The struggle for Panjshir

Panjshir lies in the northern and north-eastern belt which contains the major mineral resources of Afghanistan.

145 Ibid.
Panjshir abounds in silver and lapis lazuli, the semi-precious stone which Panjshir along with Badakshan is renowned. Panjshir valley is fairly long 90-150 kilometres but only a few kilometres wide. It includes about fifteen smaller valleys and is difficult to hem in and surround. The imposing mountains ringing Panjshir are honey-combed with caves that serve as virtually impregnable guerrilla strongholds. The groggy terrain gives the guerrillas maximum protection to ensconce themselves on mountain tops along ridges and among steep boulder strewn slopes on both sides of the narrow valley.

Modern Panjshir derives its considerable strategic importance from its proximity to Kabul and the Bagram airfield which is the main fighter station of Afghan and Soviet airforce with facilities for large jets and bombers. Above all, the valley lies astride the main highway between Kabul and northern Afghanistan and beyond. Panjshir opens into the mouth of Salang Pass, where the Soviets in 1964 made a strategic tunnel which has made the northern part of the country accessible to the south in all seasons. Panjshir was by-passed but its strategic position could not be belittled. Its lofty heights still stand sentinel to the vital road and tunnel below which in a sense are Afghanistan's jugular vein.

Panjshir had been traditionally hostile to the Central Government in the past as well and it was not surprising that the valley was threatening the new regime in the early days of the Saur Revolution. If the Resistance in Nuristan fired the first salvo, followed by Hazarajat and Paktia, it was Panjshir which soon stole the limelight. 147 By the summer of 1979, Panjshir had become a problem area for the regime where sporadic attacks against the government were being frequently mounted. 148 Thus by the spring of 1980, it had become a thorn in the side of the DRA regime and the intervening Soviets. Being so close to Kabul, in April 1980, the first Afghan and Soviet armoured vehicles rumbled up the rocky Panjshir river bed to begin a series of offensives. The first Panjshir offensive mobilised two columns of tanks and 7,000 men. Resisting the attack were scattered groups of poorly armed Panjshiris, a motley force of farmers, herdsmen and villagers few of whom had any real combat training. More than half the population fled but before long the offensive had been halted and the attackers thrown back. 149

148 Ibid., p.171.
Panjshir had survived its first major test. The second major operation of the Soviets in Panjshir was in August 1980. As usual the Mujahideen got the wind of the operation and the guerrillas withdrew to the mountains. The attackers advanced as far as their armoured vehicles could ply, blowing up the Mujahideen's hold on their way. Re-equipped and better organized, they fought their way up to the canyon of the valley. However, this is all they could achieve when the guerrillas started harassing them from the hideouts the soldiers found the going hard. It was fighting an enemy in unfamiliar terrain since the price of holding the valley was too high, the army withdrew. Thus the second offensive was also a failure.

The year 1981 witnessed two major operations in Panjshir. Air raids continued for almost a week and helicopters used to transport infantry. The first offensive was carried out in January and the second in September 1981. But the terrain defied the assault forces. The Mujahideen kept them engaged in a chain sequence of fierce, harassing engagements. The Resistance had perfected a familiar tactic. Instead of taking the enemy on frontally and succeeding at a heavy cost they lured him deep inside the valley on search and destroy missions. It was only when the attackers were well inside that the Mujahideen went for them at times taking a heavy toll of men and material.

The September offensive, fourth in the series of attempts to capture Panjshir was halted after ten days. The Afghan-Soviet forces managed to advance about 25 kilometres on the ground from the mouth of the valley which the Mujahideen claimed was less than the previous successes. The twelve-day assault involving 15,000 Soviet and Afghan infantry and aided by 1,500 armoured vehicles and substantial air support was delayed from August to September 1981 when government forces ran into trouble on their way to Panjshir because of pestering operations by mobilised guerrillas from the surrounding regions. Even though the army managed to occupy two towns in the valley, it could not hold them even for a month. By September end Government forces started retreating. Despite heavy bombardments and severe casualties damage in Panjshir was limited. However, during this operation the Soviet soldiers for the first time were reported to have gone into active combat rather than sticking to their armoured vehicles as in the past.

1981 saw the emergence of Massoud. The failure of four concerted offensives made Panjshir a byword and its commander a hero. Massoud a young man with charisma, was resisting a professional army, one of a super power a few kilometres from Kabul.

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151 Asia Week (Hong Kong), 29 January 1982, also see The Guardian, 11 November 1981.

The rise of Massoud could be attributed to his success as an effective guerrilla leader as well as administrator of a valley controlled by his men. By bringing together isolated groups of insurgents he made sure that Panjshiris no longer fought costly and disorganized battles. The bravado of the initial days was curbed and instead the Panjshiris adopted classical guerrilla hit and run tactics by small groups against comparatively more vulnerable targets. The law of survival followed by the Panjshiri Mujahideen was simple - not to be seen. "From a position when Massoud was unable to dictate the pace of the war to the Soviet forces, the 1981 operation indicated his military acumen. His motto was plain and novel; to fight is not enough, to win tomorrow organize today." 153

Massoud has tried to organize the Resistance in Panjshir on scientific lines. Political institutions founded on respect for democracy and faith in Islam were set up in the valley to ensure organization and discipline. 154 In the course of time Massoud was able to develop an organized People's Resistance in Panjshir.

Massoud's unchallenged leadership and political control over a large valley with a population of 80,000 exposed the


154 Ibid.
limits of the DRA regime and its Soviet allies. Panjshir is uncomfortably close to the Afghan capital, a valley within ten minutes flight time from the Bagram airbase. The continued build up of Massoud's personality was embarrassing for the Kabul regime. By the Spring of 1982 the Afghan-Soviet forces were once again marching into Panjshir for their fifth major attack aimed to scuttle the ambitions of the Panjshiri leader.

The most important Afghan-Soviet objective in 1982 was to re-establish the regime's authority in Panjshir and to destroy Massoud's Resistance organization. Two major offensives called Panjshir V and VI were launched in 1982 and though battered, Panjshir emerged from the nightmare as the most assertive of the guerrilla fronts. The first guerrilla stronghold to have formed permanent fighting units, Panjshir survived the determined attacks to retain its semi-autonomous status.

Panjshir V, which began in mid-May and lasted about six weeks and involved a large Afghan-Soviet combined force ranging between 12,000 to 15,000. Although it succeeded in establishing base camps one-fourth of the way up the valley, the operation was very costly in terms of casualties and material and it failed to inflict noticeable damage on the Mujahideen. Massoud's men were effective against helicopter-borne troops landed on numerous hilltops. The army attempted to cut the valley by blocking entrance points without much
success.\textsuperscript{155} The government troops also tried to block the valley by constructing a wall at the entrance but this did not prevent the Panjshiri contact with the outside world.\textsuperscript{156}

Panjshir V was the biggest military engagement in Afghanistan since the Soviet intervention. It commenced with a week of advance bombardment during which leaflets were periodically dropped demanding surrender. Marshalling an impressive force supported by artillery, tanks, helicopter gunships, etc., troops were landed at four points along the valley and airlifted to mountain-tops. Tanks backed up the advancing troops along the single country road in the valley. They succeeded in setting up posts at five Panjshir towns. But then the tide turned and three military posts had to be abandoned; the two posts at Rokha and Onoba were encircled and harassed by the Mujahideen. By the end of the year 1982 the Panjshiri Mujahideen had re-established control over the middle and upper half of the valley.

Though surprised by the extensive use of helicopter-borne commandos, the Mujahideen claimed to have shot down 21 MIG aircrafts and also helicopters, besides destroying 40 tanks and 3 mobile bridges. The Afghan army reported to have lost 700 soldiers, the Resistance contended. The Afghan and the


\textsuperscript{156} The Guardian, 10 November 1981.
Soviet forces suffered more than 3,000 dead and wounded 35 helicopters and MiG's shot down and 60 armoured vehicles destroyed on the Salang pass.\textsuperscript{157} The offensive also resulted in a number of defections from the Soviet side to the Resistance.\textsuperscript{158}

Despite the evacuation of most of the 80,000 inhabitants of the Panjshir valley before the offensive to hold down losses, civilian death from blanket bombing were severe. Though the Resistance losses were fewer compared to those of the assault forces,\textsuperscript{159} Massoud conceded that casualties among his men were high.

As Panjshir V progressed, both sides claimed victories. The authorities maintained that they had established a local government in Panjshir. The Resistance was equally profuse in its victory claims. Official propaganda broadcasts were countered by Radio Free Kabul in its irregular programmes. It claimed that the bulk of the invading force had been driven out and a fraction which remained occupied positions that were vulnerable to sniper fire and night time commando raids.

The claims by the PDPA in late June that Panjshir was liberated was premature. By late August, due to rising

\textsuperscript{157} Christian Science Monitor (Boston), 11 August 1982.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{159} Diplomatic sources spoke of truck loads of bodies returning to Kabul from Panjshir, lending credence to rebel claims that they had killed or wounded 3,000 soldiers. For details see, Arab News (Jeddah), 1 July 1982; also The Denver Post, 7 July 1982.
pressure of the Mujahideen, the Soviet and the Afghan forces mounted another offensive Panjshir VI, with the forces conducting extensive operations against villages in the valley. Due to intensive bombing for the first time Panjshiri refugees started arriving at the refugee camps in Pakistan. The bombing also resulted in a large destruction of the standing crop. It was this which led the Resistance leaders to seek frantically for urgent relief and aid. The Sixth offensive was a setback for the Resistance and by the time it ended several Panjshiris were homeless and certain sources spoke of the pre-revolution civilian populace of the valley being halved to 40,000.

Although most of the assault forces retreated to the floor of the valley by mid September 1982, they did retake lost ground and retain several towns. But holding on to the newly garrisoned towns including Rokha was a costly affair. Most of these posts could be resupplied only by air, presenting the guerrillas positioned higher with tempting targets. As usual the Resistance forces withdrew to the side valleys and began harassing the government troops. When the winter descended the troops were further isolated. Although this was the case with the Resistance also, they were slightly at an advantage due to the familiarity of the terrain. Thus

160 Hollen, n.155, pp.54 and 60.
161 Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), 8 September 1982.
the Panjshiri guerrillas came back pushing and pestering the largely reduced government forces. 162

The Panjshir Cease-fire

The year 1982 brought untold destruction and miseries on Panjshir. Panjshir V and VI were bigger in scale and longer in duration than their forerunners. For six times without success the Afghan and the Soviet forces had gone into battle against the durable Panjshiris, achieving little in terms of lasting gains. Under increasing pressure to crush Massoud's partisans and establish an official presence in Panjshir, they considered options other than military to placate the valley. A significant shift occurred in the Soviet stance when the Panjshiris were offered a cease-fire. The reported failures to crush the Resistance was a setback to the Soviet effort to pacify Afghanistan.

The six month cease-fire in Panjshir began in March 1983 and ended in August—though it actually lasted for more than a year. This truce between Massoud's forces and Soviets without involving the PDPA gave the most curious and controversial twists to the war in Afghanistan and— it revealed the strengths and weaknesses of both the Soviets and the Resistance


The cease-fire allowed the hardpressed Panjshir guerrillas the much-needed breathing space but it also underscored the extent to which the militarily frustrated Soviets were turning to divide and rule tactics in an effort to reduce the already fragmented Resistance.

The great deal of confusion surrounded the deal as its provisions made public were neither detailed nor clear. Though the Soviets opined that the truce would preclude hostilities elsewhere, the ambiguous clauses of the truce enabled Panjshiris to operate freely beyond the valley on the plains of Parwan, north of Kabul, independently and in conjunction with other Resistance groups.

The cease-fire drew immediate condemnation from all the rival Resistance movements. It provided detractors further ammunition that portrayed Massoud as a closet leftist who had finally sold out to the Soviets.\textsuperscript{164} It is wrong to state that Massoud was the sole beneficiary of the truce. It benefitted both. The Soviets gained obvious advantages from the open ended truce. By reducing the Soviet military presence in Panjshir to a token level, the truce enabled the Soviets to free troops for duty elsewhere.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{164} The Muslim (Islamabad), 26 August 1983.
\textsuperscript{165} It was reported that after the Panjshir cease-fire, soldiers were transferred to a massive build-up of Soviet forces in Paktia on the Pakistani border, to plug a key Resistance infiltration route. A notable concentration of pacification operations on the plains of Parwan and Shomali situated between the southern end of Panjshir and Kabul was also noticed. Ibid.
Panjshiris the truce enabled them to rebuild their houses, clear irrigation ditches and sow crops. It also gave them respite and enabled the commanders to prepare afresh for future campaigns. Thus taking advantage of the truce Massoud worked to unite the disparate Resistance groups transcending the barriers of geography and race. During 1983, Massoud sent his instructors of guerrilla war to Badakshan, Kunduz Samangan and Takhar to help organize local Resistance groups on the lines of Panjshir's military structure. In September 1983, he played host to 130 Resistance commanders from several provinces to chalk out simultaneous joint actions in different areas and also to facilitate the receipt of arms directly from Western sources by-passing the squabbling political parties in exile.

The increased activities of the Panjshiris outside their valley caused apprehension in Kabul and this led to the VII Offensive in April 1984. The pre-operation bombing, according to the Resistance sources, was carried out by 60 Badger, TU-16 aircrafts. Some of which flew from bases inside the Soviet Union and continued bombing for three days. Though several of the guerrilla units were caught unawares the

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167 Ibid., p. 25.
168 Ibid.
bombing by high altitude aircraft resulted in widespread civilian casualties. The death toll would have been higher had not the bulk of the population evacuated before the attack. Representing a change in the general tactics of the Soviets in Afghanistan was the airlifting of 20,000 soldiers (a third being Soviets) along with the supplies by helicopters. However, Western diplomatic sources put the number of the assault forces at 15,000 Soviet soldiers and 2,000 Afghans, supported by 400 to 600 tanks and armoured vehicles. Like its forerunners, Panjshir VII was the biggest single military operation in Afghanistan since the Soviet intervention. This offensive coincided with the operations in the nearby Andarab Valley and Khost-e-Farang with a view to disrupting supply lines and plugging the points of egress from Panjshir. The bombardment, aerial mining and landing of forces in Andarab, Khost-e-Farang, Nuristan, Salang and Nahrin, was part of a concerted drive to effectively deny outside support to Panjshir and to block the return of Panjshiris operating beyond their valley. 169

The Soviet tactics underwent changes based on past experience. Four new tactics employed included high-altitude bombing, expansion of war zones, large scale commando actions, ...

and extensive underground activities. Another new tactic with which the Resistance had to cope with was the use of a large number of helicopter-borne troops against villages in flat areas, resulting in general demoralization of the people and strengthening of the belief that the guerrillas were responsible for bringing about such miseries on the defenceless civilians. 170

As in the past, the Resistance claimed to have advance information of the Panjshir offensive. In view of the information that the Soviets had devised a large-scale operation, the Resistance decided to avoid direct confrontation as in the past. 171

Panjshir VII saw flexible deployment of the Afghan and the Soviet commandos helicoptered onto targets and often extracted the same day. But the early set-piece assaults involving heavy and highly vulnerable armoured columns moving up Panjshir's lone road was not abandoned in entirety, more so due to the knowledge that the pre-warned guerrillas had withdrawn after declining to fight a far superior army. After combing operations, the assault forces advanced unchallenged to establish garrison posts at Rokha, Bakhra and Pashgur to guard against any recrudescence of rebel activities in the strategically sensitive valley. 172

170 Ibid., pp.7-8.
171 Ibid., pp.4-5.
172 Chakravarthy, n.162, p.31.
Without doubt, the Resistance suffered reverses in the spring offensive. Their withdrawal following the strategy adopted half a dozen times before was not a matter of choice but of compulsion. The Panjshiri leadership, however, drew comfort from the fact that the offensive had failed to crush the Resistance. Panjshir VII brought into limelight the forgotten cause of the Afghan Resistance. "The Resistance observed that as Panjshir VII was a war on a new scale, the people of Afghanistan were for the first time not only hearing about the offensive but saw and felt its effects on their daily lives. The prices of essential commodities increased, the fuel shortage in Kabul was obvious. 173 Although the offensive did not evoke a spontaneous uprising by the Afghans, concern for Panjshir was perceived by the Resistance as the first step towards common understanding and unity of action in future. 174

The highly publicised Panjshir VII is acknowledged as the last major offensive against the valley. The situation calmed down after the seventh assault. 175


174 Ibid.

175 However in September 1984 there was mention of a fresh operation i.e., Panjshir VIII. The eighth assault involved round the clock air strikes and commando landings near suspected Resistance positions. The Resistance on its part claimed that its men had killed and wounded 2,500 Afghan and Soviet troops during Panjshir VII and around 3,000 in Panjshir VIII, in addition to destroying 500 Trucks and Armoured vehicles and shooting down 10 Jets and 22 helicopters. See The Pakistan Times (Rawalpindi), 2 November 1984.
The effects and limitations of the seventh Soviet assault on the Panjshir Valley in spring 1984 became evident in 1985. By limiting Panjshir leader Massoud's base to the Upper Valley, the Soviets seemed to have found the problem of maintaining the vital ground link between Kabul and the Soviet mainland more manageable. Massoud was, however, able to strike against the highway. In late March a sixty-vehicle convoy was virtually wiped out and there were further successful attacks in midsummer and late autumn. On numerous occasions during the year the Soviets had to mount air strikes and ground sweeps all along the Shomali from Panjshir to Kabul. In October, Soviet forces cleared remaining structures and trees along the highway on both sides of the Salang Pass and mined stretches alongside the highway.176

Besides increased convoy security, Panjshir VII did not destroy Massoud's organization or its ability to cause major problems for the Soviets. In 1985 he dictated the tempo of fighting in the Valley and succeeded in the first Resistance capture of a significant regime garrison. Massoud's forces had kept pressure on Soviet and regime garrisons and supply lines in the Valley throughout the winter, increasing operations in the spring. Attacks were further escalated during the Soviet offensive in the Kunar Valley through which run supply routes important to the Panjshir. In mid-June Massoud's fighters took the Peshgor garrison capturing 700 regime soldiers and large quantities of weapons and ammunition.

176 Coldren, n.71, pp.239-40.
Besides the military acumen and experience of the Panjshri Mujahideen, the capture of Peshgor was made possible by low morale within the garrison, large scale desertions and probably, inside information on the garrison's defenses.177

Peshgor was reoccupied by regime forces but only after about 10,000 Soviet and regime troops were hastily thrown into the Valley. Soviet casualties and material losses in side valley clashes were high. Regime casualties and defections were also high. The elite 444 Commandos were virtually wiped out during and following air drops in the upper valley. After the campaign forces were withdrawn, Mujahideen once again began to attack outposts and cut supply lines there.178 There was no major operation and battle in the Panjshir valley during the year 1986.

It is more than seven years since the Soviets moved into Afghanistan, and the Resistance persists, determined it appears to resist to the end. Meanwhile, Panjshir remains a tempting prize. Right now the DRA and Soviet forces can claim to be in possession of large chunks of this strategic valley. Besides the Jamiat-e-Islami, there are several other claimants of the Panjshir. Notable among them are Hikmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami, Nabi Mohammadi's Harakat, Younous Khalil's Hizb, and the Marxist groups viz., SAMA, Shola-e-Jawed, Settem-e-Milli. There is also another strong claimant to the

177 Ibid., p. 240.
178 Ibid.
support of the Panjshiris; Dastagir Panjshiri of the PDPA. However, before all these constituents can hope for a foothold on the Panjshir, they will have to contend with two major claimants, the DRA and the Soviet troops and Massoud's guerrillas who between them now control the famed valley.

Lack of Unity in the Resistance

A significant factor working against the several resistance groups in Afghanistan is the lack of unity amongst them. The personal nature of various factions was a key element in their inability to unite in one coordinated movement to face the Soviets and appeal for external assistance. The old rivalries made cooperation between Khalq and Parcham so difficult and this was reflected in the Resistance also. The old tribal and ethnic conflicts that plagued Karmal's regime also had their effects on the Mujahideen. Competition for foreign support particularly from conservative Middle Eastern oil rich states was another complication for the Resistance179. Yet another was competition for localized support within Afghanistan. The combination of these led to armed clashes between guerrilla bands.

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Several attempts to form a united front have not been successful. The reasons for the lack of unity among Moscow's Afghan opponents are several. Besides personality conflicts there are disagreements over leadership, shape of future Afghanistan, the role that the former King Zahir Shah and the former high level Afghan officials should play and relations with other political groups and countries.

Both Hikmatyar and Gilani have claimed to enjoy the largest number of supporters. Hikmatyar's group is the best armed in terms of quantity and quality of weapons and he is unwilling to share these arms with others, unless he is allowed to dominate the alliance.

Ideologically, Gilani's group is the most liberal. The groups led by Mujaddedi, Nabi Mohammadi, Rabbani and Khalis are successively more conservative. Hikmatyar is religiously the most orthodox. The ideological difference among the partisans are most pronounced with regard to the shape of a future Afghan Government, the role of the former ruler Zahir, relations with other countries, and prospects for a negotiated settlement on the Afghan issue.

181 The Economist, 2 February 1980.
182 Hikmatyar's drive for leadership is opposed by Gilani Mujaddedi and Nabi Mohammadi. By contrast Rabbani and Khalis, who have participated in the fighting in Afghanistan are sympathetic to Hikmatyar and his way of thinking.
Hikmatyar wants to establish an Islamic Republic in the country similar to that in Iran. He opposes any role for the erstwhile Royal family in the conflict with the Soviets or in a future Afghan Government. He has accused Zahir, presently in exile in Italy and his family of being partially responsible for the current crisis in the country. He, at times, talks about a possible trial of the former ruler and some of his associates if an Islamic Republic is established in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{183} Rabbani and Khalis, to a lesser extent, are sympathetic to these views.

In contrast to this Gilani is known to have close contacts with Zahir and his family. He favours a political role for the former ruler in a future Afghan Government. Mujaddedi and Nabi Mohammad are not opposed to this idea in principle but have repeatedly argued that they are not fighting for the Royal family. The other groups have not specified the shape of a future Afghan Government, preferring to concentrate on seeing the Soviets out of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{184}

Differences among the various Resistance groups on relations with external powers and sections are substantial. Hikmatyar has close links with Pakistan's Jamiat-e-Islami and

\textsuperscript{183} Of all the opposition leaders, Hikmatyar is the one whose position has been most misunderstood e.g. Richard S. Newell has mistakenly called his group 'secular oriented'. For details see Richard S. Newell, "Revolution and Revolt in Afghanistan", \textit{World Today} (London) vol. 35, No. 11, November 1979, p. 441.

would want external support to come largely from the Islamic world. Rabbani and Khalis are sympathetic to him on this matter. Gilani on the other hand does not oppose assistance from and contact with non-Islamic powers. He has repeatedly called on Western powers to support the Afghan partisans in their conflict with the Soviet Union. He is also known to have friendly ties with Saudi Arabia. On this issue, as on many others, Mujaddedi and Nabi Mohammad sympathize with Gilani. These differing orientations breed suspicion among the partisan groups regarding the amount of financial aid each group receives from external sources.

With regard to the Soviets, Hikmatyar avers that there can only be a military solution to the Afghan crisis and that a peaceful resolution involving negotiations with the Soviets is unlikely and undesirable. Khalis and Rabbani have expressed similar views. Gilani and the other two leaders have opposed closing the door on a possible negotiated settlement.

While the Pakistan based groups receive considerable coverage in the international press, most of the fighting in Afghanistan has been conducted by localized ethnic, tribal and sectarian groups, poorly armed and with rather tenuous links with the groups in Pakistan and Iran.\footnote{185 According to Resistance sources, the latter do provide weapons to some of those fighting inside the country.}
that the new leaders might emerge from the ranks of those fighting inside the country like Massoud. These internal groups come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds representing the dominant Pashtun elements are tribes as the Waziris, Mohnamds, and the Magsals of eastern Afghanistan, besides the other tribes.

The successes of the non-Pashtun groups have introduced a new element into the Afghan political scene. Afghanistan's ethnic and tribal groups have traditionally been suspicious of their Central Government, especially when it seeks to centralize power in the country. The Pashtuns including those Persianized and those not have dominated Afghan policies largely because of greater military capability. However, the recent turmoil in the country has encouraged the emergence of several new centres of military power and this fact all Afghan Governments will have to take into account. 186

Politically, disunity has been costly to the Mujahideen. It has posed impediments to winning international recognition and aid for forming a broad-based Government in exile and to challenging in forums, as the UN, the legitimacy of the present Government and leadership in Kabul.

186 In this context, the Hazaras, Tajiks, and Nuristani are likely to push for federal political system that would afford the various regions a large degree of internal autonomy. Failure to do this will lead to conflict among several ethnic groups, making the country susceptible to external interference.
In military terms, lack of unity has had more ambiguous consequences. On the one hand, it has made coordinated military efforts among the various opposition groups difficult, on the other, the fragmented and sporadic nature of the opposition has made the Mujahideen forces less vulnerable to large-scale ground operations and quick defeat by the Soviets. While the Soviets control the Afghan state apparatus it is Moscow’s opponents who control much of Afghan society.

Militarily the Resistance has grown in effectiveness throughout the period of the occupation, compounding Moscow’s problems. The opposition has of late moved from its bastions in the countryside to challenge Soviet control of several cities. Other indicators of greater effectiveness have been the appearance in Mujahideen hands of an ability to build some rudimentary equipment within the country. They are at present better organized and more effective than before, and there is an observable tendency toward greater professionalization. Their years of military experience together with the improved supplies of sophisticated weapons from external sources tends to make the conflict a long drawn affair. 187

Attempts to unify the various Resistance groups based in Peshawar were made repeatedly. An imitation of the traditional Loya-Jirga (Grand Assembly) was held in Peshawar.

on 13 May 1980 in an attempt to rally all elements of the
Resistance. Every province and tribe was said to have been
represented. But the major groups were unwilling to submerge
themselves in a Council that was appointed. Talk of
setting up an exile government or establishing a government
in Mujahideen controlled territory within the country came
to little because of factiousness and also because of Pakistan's
cautions about hosting an exile regime. In Rome "former King
Zahir tended his garden, not seeking any influence in the new
situation but at the service of his people and his nation".
While nostalgia for his reign was reportedly strong among
many refugees, some of the exiled leaders opposed him, making
it difficult for the former ruler to emerge as a unifying
figure.

By the end of 1982, three elements were discernible
among the Mujahideen groups. One loosely coordinated the
Islamic fundamentalists with Hikmatyar as the strongest but
the most uncooperative leader. Another brought together
those known by contrast as liberals for their more modern.

188 Bradsher, n.25, p.220.
190 Hizb-e-Islami which wanted an Afghanistan ruled by
religious leaders said in early 1981 that 500,000 Afghans
had lost their lives and 3 million gone into exile as a
result of the communist forces, whose unleashing it blamed on Zahir Shah, and it talked of kidnapping him
from Rome and putting him on trial in an eventually
liberated Kabul, for having ruined the country. See
Correere Dalla Sera, 4 March 1981, p.3, in Foreign
Broadcast Information Service Daily Report (Washington)
South Asia, March 1981, Annex.10, pp.2-3. Also see
westernised attitudes. Some independent Afghans led by Abdul Rahman Pashwak, who was the President of the UN General Assembly during 1966—tried unsuccessfully throughout 1982 to negotiate a settlement of principles that could form the basis for a coalition of these two elements. A third element sought to bypass the Peshawar groups and unify the main Mujahideen commanders within Afghanistan though such an alliance will find it difficult to receive money and weapons from the groups in Peshawar. 191

The most recent effort at fashioning a United Front took place in May 1985, when Seven leading Resistance movements 192 formed a new coalition, the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen. The coalition planned to create a defence council and a rotating chairmanship to coordinate guerrilla activities inside Afghanistan 193 and also to conduct a more vigorous

191 See Bradsher, n.25, p.220.
192 Of the Seven Mujahideen groups four are fundamentalists and three moderates. The fundamentalists are represented by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami (Islamic Party); the Hizb-e-Islami faction of Younus Khalis; the Jamiat-e-Islami (Islamic Society) headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani and the Ittihadia (Islamic Unity) led by Abdul Rasool Sayyaf. The moderates are represented by Harakat-e-Iqlabi (Revolutionary Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Mahaz-e-Milli (National Front of Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan), Jebhe Nijat-e-Milli National Liberation Front) led by Nabi Mohammadi, S.A. Gilani and Sebhatullah Mujaddodi, respectively. See Karp, n.118, pp.1042-3.
193 The role of the Chairman rotates among the Seven groups and a fair degree of military coordination has been achieved in the military operations in several areas. Strategems, n.111, p.7.
campaign for recognition abroad.\textsuperscript{194}

Whether the deep political divisions can be bridged is a moot question. In the meantime, these very divisions make it difficult for the Soviet Union to cope with the Mujahideen and to infiltrate and undermine them. The divisions also contribute to another important development about which generalization is impossible viz., the emergence of local Mujahideen commanders inside Afghanistan. Little is known of their political outlook, yet their views must be considered in any endeavour to find a political solution in strife torn Afghanistan.

\textbf{Afghanistan and the Soviet Union's Views of the Western and other Assistance to the Resistance and its Activities}

The US and Chinese intervention albeit, the intervention against the DRA sponsored by the US and other countries commenced soon after the April Revolution. Although there is no evidence of the direct involvement of the Soviet Union in the

\textsuperscript{194} In this the major focus of the alliance thus far has been promoting the international political role of the Resistance; it has demanded Afghanistan's seat in the UN and other international representation. Hikmatyar led a delegation to New York during the UN's Fortieth anniversary activities in the fall of 1985. Gilani went to the Islamic Conference meeting in Rabat; he also observed the UN Commission on Human Rights session in Geneva last March. Throughout all these appearances abroad, alliance unity has been maintained, no small accomplishment for parties that in the past regularly fought each other. Karp, n.118, p.1043.
removal and elimination of the former President Daoud later events prove that the coming to power of the Communists and the formation of the DRA was with the Soviet blessing. Thus as early as in May 1978 Washington and Peking started to instigate armed provocation and subversion against the DRA. The first section of the Afghan populace to join this counter-revolutionary struggle were the feudal lords whose life of luxury was dependent upon the millions of the Afghan peasants and workers. These elements with the aid and assistance of the imperialist forces took up positions on Pakistani territory across the borders of Afghanistan and thus began to export counter-revolution.\textsuperscript{195}

The US stance against the Government of the DRA commenced as soon as the regime of Daoud was overthrown. Since that time the US began to draw a plan for removing the people's government in Kabul, establishing a pro-US regime and regaining its lost position. "To achieve these ends the US counted on the undermining of the revolutionary system from within by pro-monarchic and feudal landlord forces and an aggression from without which was to be conducted with the backing of the reactionary regimes in the area, especially

\textsuperscript{195} This landowning class formed the nucleus of the counter revolution; these elements had lost all their erstwhile feudal privileges after the April Revolution of 1978 and most of them had fled to Pakistan and Iran. For details see Haqiqat Enqelon Sawer, n.38, p.20.
Pakistan. Further, a wide range of subversive techniques used often against unpalatable regimes was resorted.

The interference by the US and its allies assumed a large scale in 1979. Having suffered a crushing defeat in Iran, the US turned its attention to neighbouring Afghanistan.

Among other techniques, these included the sending of CIA agents to Afghanistan, stepped up anti-DRA propaganda, and encouraging armed subversive intervention in Afghanistan's foreign policy establishments, secret services in some Western countries and the Israeli agency Mosad got busy forming groups of saboteurs and terrorists recruited from among the counter-revolutionary or criminal elements. See Ibid., pp. 21.

Four gangs of bandits created an atmosphere of terror in the country, violating all norms and standards of human and Islamic conduct, killing people brutally, burning granaries and schools. This was done to prevent the consolidation of the revolution and re-establish the old feudal order.

Apparently Washington could not reconcile itself to the new situation brought about by the national liberation struggle in countries of the Middle East. The US ruling elite saw the liberation of the Afghan people from the pro-imperialist feudal regime as a direct challenge to its expansionist ambitions. In fact after the Shah was overthrown in Iran, the White House, the Pentagon and the CIA, increasingly focussed their attention on Afghanistan, seeking to compensate for the loss of their strategic imperialists' positions in Iran. US leaders and their allies did everything in their power to try to reverse Afghan developments. US specialists recruited, financed and armed counter-revolutionary gangs to be sent into the DRA. The Washington officials discussed plans and schedules of anti-government riots with the rebel leaders. CIA experts in subversion, notorious for their past exploits in the Middle East countries, congregated in Pakistan. From Pakistan, they have been directing the offensive against the lawful government of Afghanistan. Their efforts are not random occurrences, but a planned campaign to strangle the Afghan revolution and destabilize the country and region. See The Undeclared War: Imperialism vs. Afghanistan (Moscow, 1981), pp. 55-56.
Thousands of rebels described by the western propaganda machinery as popular insurgents were armed and trained by the US, Chinese and Egyptian instructors. They commenced the invasion of Afghanistan and have since intensified it. "Imperialism together with its accomplices launched an undeclared war against Afghanistan". 200

The major accomplices of the US in its anti-Afghan activities are the Chinese. Since the April Revolution, Peking has been acting as an adversary of the DRA. Although the Sino-Afghan border is only 50 miles, the Chinese militarists and their secret services have turned each mile of this stretch into a base for aggressive armed raids against Afghanistan. "Not a day passes in the province Badakshan - outlying the Sino-Afghan border without groups of bandits being sent into Afghanistan from China". 201

China besides training and abetting infiltration is also supplying rifles, grenade launchers and anti-aircraft missiles which are used by the counter-revolutionary gangs. 202

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200 Haqiqat Enqelab Sawer, n.38, p.21.
201 These bandits directed by Chinese experts, commit barbarous and dastardly outrages, they set fire to peaceful villages, blow up hospitals and schools, kill the activists of the PDPA.
202 For transporting arms and ammunition from China, to Pakistan, the sea route from Tianjin to Karachi is used as also the newly built Karakoram highway, military supplies being brought by rail to Urumchi, and thence by road to the Sino-Pak border along the said highway. Supplies are also airlifted to Urumchi and thence transported by road along the Karakoram highway. In July 1980 alone, the Chinese had transported to Pakistan upto 600 tons of military supplies for onward transmission to the counter-revolutionary gangs operating within Afghanistan.
Early in 1979, the London *Daily Telegraph* reported that Chinese arms were infiltrating into Afghanistan and the tribes living alongside the Sino-Afghan border were being provided with the latest Chinese sub-machine guns and automatic rifles especially effective in guerrilla warfare. Chinese made weapons were used by the anti-government rioters in several Afghan cities. The Chinese were also training Afghan *emigre* counter-revolutionaries in guerrilla warfare and in handling Chinese weapons. The Chinese agents also foment anti-government activity by opposition groups and separatist elements among ethnic minorities and religious organizations.203 *Mao's heirs have not abandoned his schemes of subjecting emergent nations to Chinese influence. Peking's attitude to the revolutionary gains of the Afghan people has again shown that its leaders cling to the great Han Chauvinistic policy of brazen pressure on neighbouring countries*.204

The US and China have openly joined together in a clandestine effort to install in Afghanistan, a pro-western government. They are surrounding the DRA with a network of military bases and camps where saboteur units go through military courses to invade Afghanistan. Washington and Peking

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fully finance the counter-revolutionary groups - from the Muslim brothers to the Maoists massed in the Pakistani cities of Quetta and Peshawar. "The DRA-interior ministry reported that there are now at least fifty strong points and more than twenty special bases where these groups are trained by the US and Chinese trained Pakistani military instructors".

The Soviet Counter-Measures Against the Afghan Resistance: The Western View

The Soviet military doctrine emphasizes that modern combat is as a rule combined arms combat; it calls for the participation of large number of tanks, combat vehicles, artillery, airplanes, helicopters and other combat equipment. It is also characterized by decisiveness, high maneuverability, intensity, swiftness, by fast and dramatic changes in the situation and by the diversity of the means of combat employed.

Doctrinally, offensive is considered the main form of combat. The Soviets have subordinated the tactics and organization to the spirit of the offensive which lies in purposeful and constant combination of motion and fire which supplement one another and eventually intertwine. In Afghanistan's environment helicopter borne assaults are the most commonly employed means of fighting the insurgency.

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205 Ibid.

Coordinated operations of large formations are usually not possible in the mountain ranges. Normally, it is the regimental groups which operate on independent axis along roads, valleys and ridges. As the terrain restricts the manoeuvre of mechanized forces, the Soviet predilection for mass use of tanks is the greatest tactical casualty to fall to the mountain range. In the mountain, it is either the fast or helicopter borne infantry which dominates the fighting. In Afghanistan it is the latter.

The Soviet and DRA tactics involve clearing the ridges first and the valleys later. The tanks and the Armoured Personnel carriers are used to provide effective support to the assaulting echelons. Attack from the line of march is advocated, as mobility provides an element of safety from enemy fire. Tactical helicopter borne assaults are the most important means used by the Soviet and DRA forces in neutralising enemy defences in the mountains and of carrying troops over rugged or impassable terrain to the flank or rear of the defensive position.

In the initial stage of operations, the Soviet military strategy was heavily dominated by the political need to win the minds and hearts battle so as to sell Karmal's regime inside as well as outside the country. In pursuit of these political aims, the military strategy emphasized a low profile.

Of all the factors which affect military strategy, the most important are the political, which determine the nature and the goal of war and the scale of employment of the armed forces.
for the Soviet forces and the need to conduct operations through the Afghan forces by strengthening them with the Soviet troops. The ease with which the Soviet troops secured control of all major towns and highways raised their hopes of an early end to insurgency and they took only retaliatory military operations against the Mujahideen.

As the initial shock of the Soviet occupation waned so did the Soviet optimism. With the passage of time opposition to the Karmal regime and the intensity of the insurgency continued to increase. The Mujahideen were able to demonstrate their strength even in Kabul where the Soviets could quell the insurrections only in February-March 1980 only after a heavy loss of civilian life. The Afghan army was adding to the growing worries of the Soviets, with purges, massive desertions, defections by complete units and with recruitment reduced to a trickle. The Afghan army was no longer a reliable force of much significance and the Soviets were compelled to carry out the entire burden of fighting.

By the mid 1980's however, the Soviets recognized their failure to win the hearts and minds battle and with this recognition there occurred a change in their military strategy. Instead of hoping for a political solution, they shifted to use of force. The broad objectives of their military operations being
a) To establish control of the major cities and political centres and to secure the main roads and communications.

b) To flush out rebel concentrations in the border province through sweeps and to attack and close escape and infiltration links to Pakistan by the use of mines and cluster bombs.

c) To deny shelter and food to rebels by bombing villages and burning crops and to win over tribal leaders by bribes and intimidation.

Besides these measures, the Soviet strategy also included the denial of outside support to the Mujahideen isolating the provinces bordering Pakistan by the use of mines and cluster bombs, isolating the contiguous province of Turkestan so as to insulate the ethnically and religiously akin populations, flushing out the Mujahideen from their hideouts by bombing crops, orchads, villages denial of shelter and food to the Mujahideen and winning over tribal loyalties by bribes and intimidations. These operations were punitive rather than retaliatory. The search destroy sweeps are the most commonly employed and the basic tactic of the counter-insurgency warfare. In Afghanistan, the Soviets usually employed a motorized battalion group for carrying out search


209 The terms retaliatory, punitive and scorched earth operations imply actions that are essentially different in degree rather than kind. Retaliatory operations are localized in nature whereas punitive operations are more widespread, intensive and carry the message to deter further action.
and destroy sweeps in a valley. The mechanics have been by far uniform throughout the Soviet operations against the Afghans, i.e. marching into the Mujahideen held valley to flush them out. In narrow valleys, it is usually the helicopter gunship which subject the suspected area to fire and in its wake the mechanized troops run through the area. In most of these search and destroy operations helicopter gunships and MIG 21 Jets are extensively employed to attack villages. The Soviets also combined mechanized assaults on villages with these search and destroy sweeps for greater effect.

The Soviet troops also employ unorthodox tactics of battling up the Mujahideen in a gorge or a difficult defile. When the Soviet forces learnt of the Mujahideen's presence in such an area, they airlift troops and Armoured Personnel Carriers, Tanks by heavy lift helicopters and drop them at both ends of the defile, thus trapping the Mujahideen. This technique is also employed to block the escape route of the Mujahideen.

210 The rocket bombs, cannons and automatic guns have caused great loss to rebel tribes in eastern Afghanistan, mostly in Kunar valley, specially to women and children. These actions strengthened the resolve of the Resistance forces however.

211 The mechanized assaults with Tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers in the wake of aerial attacks were designed to raze villages to the ground, to create disturbed conditions in the area, and to deny shelter and protection to the Mujahideen.
Counter Ambush Tactics

Counter ambush is another technique employed by the Soviets to counter the rebellion. Under this measure firstly helicopter gunships carry out reconnaissance and based on its report the convoys start their advance. The advance being led by Tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers. In case of a road block or an ambush suspected/encountered by the advancing convoy, the helicopter gunships, tanks and all the available artillery concentrate their fire on the adjoining areas which can provide cover to the Mujahideen. Thus having cleared the area of any possible site for refuge, the troops attend to the ambush or the road block which is subjected to heavy rocket and machine gun fire from the helicopter gunships and by the tank’s long range weapons and artillery. After denuding the area of cover, the escaping Mujahideen are chased by the gunships and killed. To respond to the needs of the present conflict, the Soviet Union has borrowed heavily from the US experience in Vietnam. The influence of Vietnam is evident in the key role the Soviet Union has defined for the helicopter gunships air mobile operations and the judicious use of tactical air strikes. The Soviet Union is also altering command and control concepts and infantry training in order to respond to the particular situation which it is faced in Afghanistan. The Mi-24 Hind helicopter is the Soviet workhorse in Afghanistan. Exercises on mountain terrain confirm the growing importance of the role of attack helicopters. They are employed to support attacking sub-units for performing reconnaissance for spotting artillery
fire for the landing of tactical airborne forces for moving
weapons and equipment across impossible terrain and for
delivering supplies and evacuating the wounded.

The current Soviet emphasis on air mobile operations
also harks back to the US involvement in Indo-China. The
current offensive use of helicopter borne infantry in conjunc-
tion with ground forces to envelop enemy sub-units occupying
dominant heights is a new approach reflecting recent combat
experience in a low intensity conflict. The motorized rifle
battalion composed of the three companies of infantry a
mortar battery and communications platoon is the basic Soviet
manoeuvre unit for counter-insurgency operation in Afghanistan.
The battalion can be reinforced with artillery and occasionally
with tanks. Air strikes by fighter bombers also support
infantry units. The limited employment of tactical aircraft
can yield devastating results in the mountains by the secondary
effects created by explosions i.e. rock slides, fires or
collapse of the caves from which the Afghan guerrillas harass
Soviet convoys.

The Soviet military is also breaking with its long
accepted practice of centralization of battlefield command
and control. Further to counter guerrilla actions the

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212 The commander of Transcaucus Military District writes
about training warrant officers and sergeants for
independence in decision making. He emphasized small
unit actions in mountains as key to victory in contem-
porary battle. See Krasnaya Zvezda (Moscow), 15
February 1981.
Soviets place emphasis upon intensive training in mountain climbing technique for the line infantry. Many of the young draftees initially sent to Afghanistan had been in the military not more than a year. Their replacements are evidently receiving better training in scaling cliffs, crossing mountains and streams and cross country skiing, etc. Modified equipments assist ground forces in traversing the difficult Afghan terrain. The 82 mm  and 120 mm mortars can fire cables across ravines and secure the far end with a grappling hook. The AKM assault rifle can now do the same at lesser ranges. Two models of a rugged motorized cargo hoist have also been deployed.

To cope with the infiltration problem the Soviet combat engineer units are being dispatched to mine the myriad mountain paths leading into Afghanistan from Pakistan. They are basing anti-sniper tactics on a combination of technological and man-power intensive approaches. Wherever terrain permits flame thrower tanks attack guerrillas holed up in caves and artificial fortifications. When foot soldiers must flush out snipers special squads composed of marksmen lead the mission.

The combination of decentralized command and control of advanced training in mountain climbing techniques permits the Soviet forces to rely on the nimble actions of small sub-units of the various combat-arms in counter insurgency

213 Ibid.
operations. 214

In an effort to carry the fight to the enemy the Soviet Union has developed its own infiltration tactics based on platoon size operations for dealing with rebel strong points and ambushes. Thus as the great patriotic war experience indicates, it was skilled actions of small sub-units which often decided the outcome of combat in the mountains. Infiltrating into the depth of enemy defences they would explode it from within, thus ensuring them success. 215

The Role of the Helicopter Gunship (Hind)
In Counter Insurgency Operations

The helicopter gunships brought about a qualitative change in the conflict with the air-borne ships destroying several ground targets. 216 In Afghanistan it is the Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunship around which the entire Soviet counter-insurgency tactical concepts are built. The Mujahideen are specially vulnerable to Soviet air power and the Mi-24 is the weapon that the Afghans have not yet been able to fully counter.

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214 This is designed to neutralize the tactical advantages which have heretofore accrued to the small bands of rebel tribesmen who know the local terrain and require only minimal logistic support. For details see, Maj. Terry L. Hoyes, "Will Afghanistan become the Soviet Union's Vietnam", Military Review (Kansas), vol. 61, No. 10, October 1981, pp. 50-60.

215 For an elaborate analysis see Ibid.

The basic assault tactics employ a helicopter squadron composed of four MI-24 gunships and eight MI-8 helicopters. The squadron approaches the objective in three echelons. MI-24's constitute the first echelon and fly some distance ahead of the MI-8 which follow at a safe distance in one or two echelons depending on the width of the valley and the tactical requirement. The MI-24's role is to soften up enemy position under the cover fire of these helicopters if they are armed. Once the MI-24 helicopters have exhausted their ammunition, they are usually replaced by another flight. Thus by the time ground assault goes in hardly any resistance is offered.

Operations by MI-24 helicopter gunships though extensive do have their hazards. "The Afghan mountains are naked as the moon and in order to discover the guerrillas who are usually in brown outfit - helicopter's would have to fly by at about three to four hundred metres exposing it to ground fire." The Mujahideen have tried to exploit this vulnerability of the otherwise invulnerable MI-24. But it seems the successes have not been many. However, even a few successes with

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217 Ian Hammel writing in the Guardian described that six MI-24 helicopters circled overhead each firing their salvos of rockets at ground targets; when they left another six took their place. See, The Guardian, 7 December 1980.

218 At this altitude a well armed rebel with a bullet could hit the rotors or the pilot. See Ibid.
the weapons they have is distinct. The availability of rocket launchers, SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles to the Mujahideen since the end of 1985 has reduced the freedom of action enjoyed the Mi-24 helicopter gunships.219

In the Soviet military doctrine, the offensive constitutes the basic form of operation but in Afghanistan their choice of tactics has been affected by their concern for casualty.220 For this reason, their reliance has been on firepower from mechanized but secure platforms. The Soviet forces have attempted to fire at rather than fight the Mujahideen.

Since the intervention, the Soviets have followed two strategies. A military strategy of attrition which has attempted to terrorize the entire population. Hundreds of villages have been bombed and the Soviet military has employed chemical and biological warfare. Casualty estimates are close to a million dead and about 5 million Afghans have left their villages mostly to live in the refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran.

Over the years Moscow has tried to build a loyal Afghan armed force to turn the Soviet-Afghan conflict into an Afghan-Afghan war. While the Soviet force level has remained stable

219 Alexiev, n. 132, p. 36.
220 Dictated by their concern for keeping the casualties low, the Soviet leadership has resisted the temptation for the major induction of troops in the past and are unlikely to change this policy, unless there is an adverse change in the military situation or a new strategy emerges from the Kremlin.
over the years, the Afghan armed force has been depleted. However, the Soviets made a number of changes to improve their military capability. They have substituted seasoned troops for reservists and reorganized the command and control structure to permit a more flexible response to the insurgency. These changes became necessary as the Soviet force had to assume the major burden of military opposition against the Resistance. Moscow's initial intention appeared to have been to secure major cities, towns and lines of communications, while stiffening the spine of the Afghan forces who would be free to pacify the countryside.

Since the first campaign in troubled Badakshan during 1980, the Soviet forces have been continuously engaged in counter-insurgency operations. At some time or other, over the course of their occupation, they have operated in virtually every province of the country. Certain strategic regions have been subjected to repeated Soviet offensive operations. Among these are the eastern provinces where the Soviets have tried unsuccessfully to seal the border with Pakistan.

Over the past few years of their occupation, the Soviet troops have also retaliated brutally against villages suspected of harbouring nationalists. Homes have been levelled.

Despite younger and longer conscription, the Afghan army decreased from 80,000 in 1979 to 35,000 in 1985 with the loyalty and combat effectiveness of this depleted force questionable. See Strategens, n.iii, p.8.
crops destroyed and grain stocks burned. It is also alleged that the Soviets have used both irritants and incapacitating chemical agents against the insurgents. 222

Beginning in the spring of 1982 and expanding through the summer, the Soviet military forces launched an unprecedented series of offensives against major partisan strongholds, making good use of the highly mobile Soviet paratroops and the helicopter borne mountain assault teams for the first time. The Soviets also began adopting all kinds of other measures 223 to neutralize the support to the rebels, especially in the Parchinar area of Pakistan. 224

A close look at the elements in the Soviet strategy and tactics shows a certain amount of desperation in the efforts. This is understandable for the Soviet Union's immediate objective of creating a viable regime in Kabul has not completely succeeded. Instead, even the government


223 The use of agent provocateurs in refugee camps and tribal areas was one of these methods.

224 Parchinar, located just opposite the Afghan province of Paktia, where some of the heaviest Soviet attacks have been centered, has long been a virtual time bomb. For one reason, the local population is primarily Shiite Muslim, whereas the 300,000 or so Afghan refugees who have crowded the area are Sunnis. In addition, the two main tribes in the area, Taxti and Mengal sub-groups of Pathans are in fierce competition for scarce grazing land, inadequate water supplies and points of access to mountain passes. Sectarian rivalries between feuding rebel groups have been strong here. These tensions are further exacerbated by the fact that the area sits atop the largest Mujahideen supply route into Afghanistan, making conditions ripe for just the sort of trouble that could make the area impassable for the guerrillas.
appears riddled with Mujahideen sympathizers. This situation has been a bit frustrating to the Soviets and it has been manifested by their pacification effort everywhere. In their efforts to subdue Afghanistan over the years, the Soviets have used all types of techniques:

The Scorched Earth Tactic and the Use of Chemical Agents

These tactics aim at wilfully creating disturbed conditions to force the populace to the towns and cities and thereby separate them from the Mujahideen in the countryside. While these tactics cut across the logistic base of the Mujahideen, they also uproot those moving to towns and cities from their homes thus increasing their dependence on the government for provision and thus rendering them more amenable to control. Search and destroy operations are conducted on a wide scale in the countryside. During 1981-82 search and destroy operations were conducted on a wide scale in the Andarab valley, North of Kabul and in Logar province, South of Kabul, the Soviets used bombs, napalm and artillery fire to destroy the livestock, grain and buildings of villagers "suspected of abetting the rebels". After every such

225 Kline, n.144, p.133.
226 In the Tangi Canyon of Wardak province, the Soviet force with Tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers, entered the narrow canyon and blocked the escape routes. Search parties directed by Afghans who remained hidden in and around the Armoured Personnel Carriers with loud speakers, rounded rebel sympathizers. See Maj. John M. Hutcheson, Military Review, vol.62, No.4, April 1982, p.34.
attack, the Soviet forces it is alleged take away all the cattle to remove the incentive for the inhabitants to return. Thus the basic source of food supplies for the Resistance is eliminated. The effect this had on the Resistance is best expressed by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, the leader of the Afghan Liberation an organization representing five Resistance groups based in Peshawar, Pakistan. He said:

You must know that beside the military conflict, we are also fighting an economic war. We have inflicted heavy loss on them but they too have bombed our fields and burned our crops, forcing a famine in our country. Besides arms, we need food not only for the freedom fighters but also the common people, who are supporting them and giving them refuge. Unless we meet the food requirements of our people, the war cannot be continued in the countryside. (228)

The starving of the people in the areas of maximum resistance through the destruction of the region's agriculture is a calculated Soviet strategy of internal defence and may prove to be successful.

The other methods employed by the Soviets to counter the resistance in Afghanistan are (229):

a) Opening of new schools devoted to the ideological training of Afghan Youth.

b) The mass training of Afghan students inside the Soviet Union, and dissemination of weekly publications oriented toward the youth.

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228 Arab News, 26 June 1980.

229 See Khalizad, n.184, pp. 23-40.
c) Initiation of methods to project the incompatibility of Islam and Communism.

d) Perpetuation of inter-tribal rivalry, specially between the Eastern and Central tribes.

e) Use of Cubans for training in guerrilla warfare.

f) Rebuilding of the Afghan army, based on a nucleus of non-commissioned officers trained in the Soviet Union on the Soviet model. (230)

g) Use of limited range of psychological operation to include propaganda and use of ethnic agents and the exploitation of conflict between insurgent factions.

h) Use of force to the maximum extent ignoring world opinion.

The Soviets have used these and other tactics like scorched earth and use of chemical agents to deny the Mujahideen shelter and supplies within Afghanistan. Further, to isolate them from the outside world they have sealed the borders. The Soviet use of anti-personnel mines in sealing the passes has been extensive and indiscriminate resulting in injuries to hundreds of old men, women and children rather than the Mujahideen. The Government of Afghanistan has also attempted to seal the border with Pakistan by recruiting a highly paid militia.  

Indeed the battle for Afghanistan has been used as a test ground for new technology and for the acquisition of combat experience. "While the Soviet learning curve initially appeared steep, current ground force assaults and air tactics are both more sophisticated and professional". 232

New systems which have been battle tested include AK-74 assault rifle, the AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher, the BTR-70 Armoured Personnel Carrier, the BMP/BMD infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) with several new variants, including the replacement of the low pressure 73 mm gun with a high velocity 30 mm cannon, the T-72 tank, self propelled artillery, the automatic rapid fire Vasilek mortar, the widespread employment of the venerable ML-24 helicopter (Hind), the first combat use of the SU-25 Frogfoot, MIG 27, Glogger-G, and SU-24 Fencer in the ground attack role. 233 In addition a whole host of new munitions have reportedly been used, including improved artillery submunitions. 234

The military infrastructure is no less impressive. The Soviets have converted simple Afghan landing strips into over a half-dozen major airbases capable of handling high-performance aircraft and an equal number of additional fields are reported

232 Curren and Karber, n.91, p.707.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
under construction. One of the most impressive results associated with the intervention has been the build up of Soviet regional offensive air capability. In addition to aircraft types suitable for counterguerrilla operations, the Soviets have deployed in Afghanistan aircraft such as the MiG-25 Foxbat and the Il-38 May capable of extended range theater reconnaissance and naval surveillance of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Following the major reorganizations of Long-Range Aviation, Air Defense and Frontal Aviation, the resultant new strategic allocation has the range to cover virtually all of Pakistan's fighter bases. In addition, these assets have acquired substantial operational expertise in large-scale, multi-level strike coordination over Afghanistan.

The Soviet Strategy: Political

The Soviet military strategy primarily reflects the political strategy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It is even more true vis-a-vis insurgencies which are political wars, needing political solutions. The Soviet Union's foremost and possibly most formidable task was to sell

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235 Ibid.
236 Ibid
237 Ibid
238 Greig, n. 206, p. 61.
to the people, inside as well as outside Afghanistan. Thus to achieve a semblance of political legitimacy, Karmal under Soviet advice, initiated a number of measures, reversing some unpopular decisions to make himself acceptable to the people.

The most virulent opposition to the Marxist regime had come from the religious class. To make himself appear more Green than Red, Karmal started paying lip service to Islamic rituals. The Government controlled Radio and Television were directed to start programmes with recitations from the Koran. The Government also organized meetings and some of these were addressed by Karmal. Unlike previous Marxist regimes, important religious occasions like the Prophet Mohammed's birth were celebrated for the first time by the Afghan government. Even these measures are producing little effect as the Soviet Union appears to have started on the wrong foot. People began to suspect all that was being done to win them over as they were not convinced of the sincerity of the government's intentions.

A major irritant of Marxist philosophy which Karmal attempted to reverse for gaining political acceptability was land reforms introduced by the previous regime. The amendments effected by him in this regard were designed to benefit

239 Green is the Islamic colour and Red is symbolic of the Communists.

240 *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 9 October 1980.
clergymen, landlords, tribal sardars and the personnel of the armed forces. Ostensibly, these were aimed at placating the people but the conditions for deriving benefit from these lax rules were such that only supporters of the regime could benefit. This measure also failed to win any political support.

The Soviet attempts at political consolidation of Karmal have been multi-directional with a mix of short and long term measures. Karmal tried to create an impression that he was not a communist but a nationalist. The theme of the political activity is the Fatherland. The National Fatherland Front was inaugurated in June 1981 in an effort to unify the Parcham and Khalq factions of the PDPA and to extend the party's influence through more than fifty member organizations viz., the Women's Democratic Organization, the Democratic Youth Organization, the Young Pioneers Organization. The Trade Union of Afghanistan in a nationalist non-party context, remained one of the most active front organizations of the party. 242

In an effort to gain domestic political legitimacy the DRA regime associated itself with traditional Afghan institutions. The Loya Jirga held in April 1985 was reportedly attended by 1,796 delegates, a fourth being appointees. Karmal emphasized the need for tribal support in the defence of the

241 Strategems, n.111,p.3.
242 Ibid.
borders. This was followed by the Supreme Tribal Jirga in September 1985, attended by about 3,700 delegates, mostly Pashtuns. In June 1985, the electoral law on Local Organs of state Power and Administration was passed. However, elections could only be held in about 8 of the twenty nine provinces, mostly the ones bordering the Soviet Union in the North and in some of the Eastern provinces bordering Pakistan. This was less than twenty percent of the 10,000 villages and the urban areas of the country. In November 1985 Karmal presented his ten point thesis in an effort to enable the expansion of the so-called Social Pillars of the Revolution. The result was five changes were made in the Politburo, twenty one personnel were appointed to the council of ministers - in order to broaden the political base. Out of a total of twenty appointees, ten were party members, which in ethnic and linguistic terms included six Pashtuns, one Uzbek, one non muslim and two non Pashtuns. Of the eleven new non-party appointees, five were Pashtuns, two Tajiks, two Hazaras, one Nuristani and one Pashtun. With this it appeared that the Pashtun group of PDPA (mostly Khalq) has been trying to gain an upper hand in the ruling party. The political organization of the PDPA underwent a further change with the stepping down of Karmal as leader of the party and the taking over of Najibullah, on 4 May 1986.

243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
245 Asian Recorder, n.117, p.19027.
Although Kamal continued to hold the post of the President till he relinquished it on 21 November 1986, the real power began to be vested in the hands of the new party leader Najibullah.

In a major political move in January 1987 Najibullah made an offer of National reconciliation. In a speech to the congress of the National Fatherland Front, a pro-Government umbrella organization he also proclaimed an amnesty for Afghan army deserters both officers and soldiers as a follow up to his call for an end to the war between the Government forces and the Muslim guerrillas. He also announced the pardoning of army, police officers and soldiers who left the country while on active service together with the declaration of an amnesty for those detained for opposition to the Government and the ruling PDPA. In a reciprocal move the

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247 The move towards National reconciliation had started in December 1985 and January 1986 when a number of changes in the membership of the council of ministers and in the leadership of other government bodies were effected. On 26 December 1985 several persons who were not members of the Peoples Democratic Party, but who possessed strong tribal links figured among new appointments to senior posts. On 3 January 1986, the Soviet Communist Party newspaper Pravda commented that overcoming of differences and the achievement of National reconciliation cannot be accomplished unless some compromises are made, the social base of the government broadened and new political allies and friends won over to side of people's power. See Keesings Archives, vol.32, No.2, February 1986, p.34175.
248 The Sentinel (Guwahati), 16 January 1987.
249 Ibid.
Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze after his visit to Kabul 6-8 January 1987 — said in Moscow

We believe that a political settlement is not a distant perspective but a reality of today. We and the Government of Afghanistan are discussing the question of withdrawing Soviet forces. We already took the first step in this direction and withdrew six regiments. (250)

Reiterating the Kremlin stand on an Afghan withdrawal, Shevardnadze said:

the presence of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan was not the primary stumbling block to a settlement... it depends in the first place on an end to outside interference and a guarantee of its non-resumption. (251)

Voicing support for the DRA's unilateral cease fire he stressed that Soviet-Afghan relations would enter a new phase with greater stress on economic than military ties. 252

Economic Consequences

In the economic field, Kamal admitted that his regime had suffered a loss equal to $700 million in six years (1979-85), and that about 35 hospitals, 1,850 schools, 150 mosques and 115 basic health centres had been destroyed by the war, amounting to more than one third of the investment made during the twenty years prior to the PDPA take over. Yet he claimed

251 Ibid.
252 Ibid.
that industrial output had risen by twenty percent and the volume of production by forty-eight percent. However, it is significant to note that the only sector economy that has grown is the Soviet economy and also the Soviet defence and strategy oriented economy. 253

The 2,674 metre rail bridge over the Amu Darya at Hairatan, linking Termez logistic base, the extension of railway and trunk roads, new runways, barracks, depots, a 22-kilowatt power grid line from the Soviet border to Kabul are all gradually enmeshing the Afghan economy into the Soviet Union's. The cost of these projects is being recovered by exploiting the mineral resources of high quality iron, copper, chrome, lead, zinc, bauxite and other strategic raw materials like uranium. All gas is piped to the Soviet Union at lower costs than the international prices and all the gas metres have been installed on the Soviet side of the border. 254 Soviet media claims that 170 major projects have been either completed or are under way. Of these 65 have been financed by the Soviet Union. Some eighty percent of Afghanistan's aid comes from the Soviet Union. In the field of trade eighty percent of the DRA's trade is with the COMECON countries with all the gas, fruits and cement being monopolised by the Soviet Union.

253 Strategies, n.111, p.4.
254 Ibid.
However, the volume of trade with Pakistan has increased from two to three percent since 1984. Pakistan continues to give transit facilities by rail and road from Karachi port to Kabul and Kandahar in spite of large scale smuggling back into Pakistan through the tribal belt of these very goods together with cheap Soviet-made cloth and electric goods viz., refrigerators, irons, kettles, airconditioners, etc., at less than one third price of similar western and Japanese items. 255

The Land and Water reforms indicate a moderate approach with the military, religious and tribal leaders being now exempt from it. Less than half of the arable land is being cultivated i.e. about 4 million hectares or about seven percent of the country. Notwithstanding this, due to the conflict and war like situation, the agricultural system has been on the verge of collapse; prices of food stuffs in most areas have increased by over 250 percent. 256 During the year 1982 famine conditions prevailed in the country. Since the intervention, many sowing and harvesting seasons have been missed due to Soviet scorched earth and migratory policies. 257 "Food is being used as a political weapon by the regime to coerce the population from supporting the Jehad (Holy War), and to starve the potential bases and source of food for the Mujahideen." 258

255 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
256 Ibid., p. 5.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.
The instability created by the events in Afghanistan in 1979 has led to a massive population exodus from the rural areas to the towns. According to the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, it appears that the problems of displaced persons within the country is closely linked to inability resulting from systematic bombing of several villages. For that reason, most of the displaced persons are in the town who have moved to the towns. According to this report this group can be estimated at more than 1.5 million. The phenomenon occurs particularly in the towns as Kabul and Kandahar in the South, Mazar-i-Sharif in the North, Jalalabad in the East and Herat, Ghazni, and Kiz in the South-East.

The internal population movement can be attributed to the following reasons:

a) The bombing of villages - reportedly the immediate and most obvious cause which destroys houses, crops, livestock and inflicts civilian casualties.

b) Fighting or military operations in the region which create prolonged insecurity and cause villages to be evacuated.

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For a comprehensive view of the flow of internal refugees to the various regions of Afghanistan, see Appendix 1.

See UN Doc., n. 259, p. 21.
c) Dissension among rival groups in the Resistance.

d) The fear of reprisals or punitive action on the part of groups belonging to the Resistance, directed against 'pacified' villages or sometimes against villages taken over by the rival group.

e) Destitution and the threat of famine which compel entire families to seek refuge in the large towns.

f) The shortage of financial resources; difficulties in transport and the fact that the head of the household - often being killed during an air raid or in action - is no longer there to look after the family during and after the exodus, all of which are also reasons that have sometimes compelled the entire family to migrate to the towns rather than seeking refuge abroad.

g) Tactics used by the authorities to maintain control over the population and thereby eliminate all the support bases enjoyed by the Resistance forces, among the population.

Thus the exodus of a large number of people from the rural areas to the cities besides compounding the problems of the civic authorities, is also posing a serious problem to the DRA Government in Kabul. This is a major domestic consequence of the Soviet intervention.

Certain Other Domestic Consequences of the Intervention

On the cultural front, the Youth especially orphans are the main focus of cultural brain washing. Loyal communist cadres are being created out of the new generation as the hard cores of a socialist society. The Soviets are drawing upon their experience of similar policies in the Central Asian Republics. About 20,000 young students are reported to be schooling in Soviet Central Asia. In 1985
another 1000 children were sent there for their entire ten year schooling period. Plans are reported to be afoot for sending another 14,000. Another 10,000 Afghan students are reportedly studying in the eastern bloc countries. The Afghan ministry of education has been patterned on the Central Asian education ministry models. Texts including Marxism/Leninism and Russian Language are compulsory reading. New text books, including a 'New History of Afghanistan' have been introduced. Nearly 400 Afghan teachers have also been trained in the Soviet Union.

Thus it is perhaps possible that the Soviets intend to stay long in Afghanistan. Despite all the odds, the Soviet Union has the will and the means to subdue Afghanistan. However, the subjugation of a country with an alienated population of about 20 million is a long and costly process.

262 Strategies, n.111, p.5

263 Ibid