CHAPTER III

THE CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN:
UNITED STATES POLICY RESPONSES (1978-80)
The United States policy towards South and Southwest Asia had undergone significant changes since the late 1970s. These changes had occurred in the background of the developments in Iran and Afghanistan. The political crisis in Afghanistan culminating in the Soviet intervention in December 1979 had generated considerable speculation whether the country would soon turn into an arena of power struggle between the United States and Soviet Union, adding a new dimension to the Sino-Soviet conflicts, on the one hand, and regional tensions, on the other. As the train of events unfolded, it became obvious that the involvements of regional and extra-regional powers would be forthcoming. The Soviet Union, the United States, China and Pakistan got involved in the Afghan crisis in a variety of ways and continued to influence the course of developments in subsequent years.

The Afghan crisis, however, set in motion a wave of reactions worldwide. The United States, China, Pakistan and many other Western powers took hostile positions in regard to the Soviet motives in Afghanistan, while the Soviet Union and other socialist countries saw “an imperialist hand” in the crisis “to thwart the gains of socialist programmes” in the country. Even as perceptions differed on the underlying causes of the crisis, the regional as well as extra-regional powers began to take advantage of the internal situation in Afghanistan which later became a major international crisis warranting UN mediation. The present chapter seeks to place the Afghan crisis in its politico-historical context in order to analyse the nature and
involvements of outside powers, including the Soviet Union, United States, China and Pakistan. At first, the chapter briefly outlines the events that ended up with the Soviet intervention in December 1979. It also offers an overview of the Soviet-Afghan relations till the late 1970s. The chapter then focuses on how the United States perceived the whole situation in Afghanistan during 1978-80 and the specific policy responses of Washington under the Carter administration.

The Afghan Crisis

For centuries, Afghanistan has been a land of many political experiments influenced, by both internal and external factors. In the cold war days, Kabul's political destiny was dictated by a crossroads of ideologies, ranging from national liberation movements to socialist and Islamic revolts for control over the country. The complex mosaic of tribes, religions and colonial remnants have made the country a strategic, but misperceived subject in the foreign policy of big powers. To understand the Afghan crisis in perspective, particularly after the Soviet intervention in 1979, one must comprehend the political developments in Afghanistan and its relationship with the Soviet Union. The Afghan crisis must also be seen in the light of the rapidly changing geopolitical environment. To analyse the causes for, and the consequences of the Soviet action, one has to look at the factors that helped shape the unfolding events which included the developments within

Afghanistan, particularly the cross-undercurrents within the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the evolving relationship between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, and the deteriorating relationship with the United States.

After being a neutral state in the Second World War, Afghanistan set out to realize and maintain a policy of non-alignment, independence and development. It stayed non-aligned for long in spite of regime changes in Kabul. However, Afghanistan's domestic and foreign policy began to show signs of transformation since the early 1970s. This was particularly so since Mohammed Daoud, a former prime minister, accomplished a coup in July 1973. Daoud was apparently aided in this effort by Soviet-trained army officers and members of the PDPA, a Marxist-Leninist party founded in 1965 after King Zahir Shah introduced political reforms.

---


3 Nur Mohammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal, Hafizullah Amin and Najibullah were its prominent members. The ideology of PDPA, according to its Constitution, was "the practical experience of Marxism-Leninism". Many of the PDPA members were pro-Soviet and had been either educated or received military training in Moscow. The party consisted of two factions: the Khalq (masses) headed by Nur Mohammed Taraki, and the Parcham (banner) headed by Babrak Karmal. Many factors such as personal ambitions, social, class and ethnic differences led to a split within the PDPA in 1967. The Parcham faction was more westernized and composed mainly of the upper middle class, especially of Tajiks, whereas the Khalq faction had wider support mainly from the Pashtuns. After the formation of the PDPA and its split, both factions were allowed to recruit by the King and later by Daoud. Consequently, both factions recruited their cadres from among teachers, police, civil servants, students and even military officers. See Raja Anwar, The Tragedy of Afghanistan (London: Verso, 1988), pp.40-47; also see Anthony Arnold, Two Party Communism (California: University of Stanford, 1983).
Soon after the coup in 1973, Moscow recognized the new republic which had appointed Daoud President. Thereafter, Daoud began reducing leftists in the cabinet and created his own party, the National Revolutionary Party in 1975. Under his rule, Afghanistan sought to reduce its reliance on the Soviet Union and increased contacts with other countries, including the United States. When the Shah of Iran gave a large sum of financial aid to Afghanistan, this was perceived by Moscow as an attempt to weaken the Soviet-Afghan relationship. Soviet aid was consequently increased, but Daoud's leftist opponents in the PDPA were also strengthened by the Soviet Union.

In April 1978, a PDPA member and critic of the president was killed; his funeral turned into an anti-government rally which several days later led Daoud to arrest PDPA members, including Taraki and Hafizullah Amin of the Khalq faction. Since Amin had great influence on the military, the PDPA was able to mobilise support for its future plans. The coup, named Saur [April] revolution led by the PDPA, resulted in the overthrow of the Daoud regime. Subsequently, Daoud was executed. Though the exact role of the Soviet Union in the Saur revolution was not palpable, Moscow was able to increase its commitment to the PDPA regime after the establishment of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. However, the new government could not consolidate the gains of the revolution. There were many factors which led the Saur

---


5 Selig Harrison wrote that it was the Shah of Iran, not Brezhnev, who "triggered off the chain of events culminating in the overthrow of the Mohammed Daoud Regime," *The Washington Post*, 13 March 1979.

revolution turning sour – internal struggle within the PDPA; radical social and economic reforms introduced by the PDPA in a primitive and predominantly tribal society; and the proximity of the PDPA to the Soviets.\textsuperscript{7}

The socialist rule and reforms created strong opposition from the traditional and Islamic population. Several religious rebel leaders formed the Sunni Islamic Afghan rebel alliance, later known as the “Peshawar Seven”, and called for a holy war against the PDPA. Shiite anti-government groups also destabilized the country and were supported by Iran’s new ruler Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.\textsuperscript{8}

The differences between the two factions emerged soon after the formation of the government in Afghanistan in 1978. Taraki was elected as President of the Revolutionary Council, Prime Minister of Afghanistan, and Secretary General of the PDPA. Karmal and Amin were elected as Deputy Prime Ministers. Fractional problems within the PDPA resulted in the Khalq faction becoming powerful. The major leaders of the Parcham faction were sent abroad. Karmal was sent as Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Najibullah to Iran. Amin was made Party Secretary, a position earlier held by Karmal, and controlled the Da Afghanistan da Gato Satalo Adara (Organisation for the Protection of the Security of Afghanistan), the new political force in Afghanistan.


The social and economic reforms introduced by the PDPA led to serious internal crises. These reforms focused on 'democratic land reforms', 'abolition of old feudal and pre-feudal relations', 'ensuring the equality of rights of women', and increasing 'the state sector of the national economy'.

The failure of the PDPA to undertake reforms gradually, taking into account the cultural and religious sentiments of the population, and the significance attached by the PDPA to socialism resulted in a backlash, especially from the rural population, which remained predominantly tribal, backward and governed by local customs. Instead of recognising the nature of the problem, the PDPA used force to resolve it. A number of violent uncoordinated attacks started against the government. The public sentiments against the reforms were later used by various mujahideen groups to achieve their political objectives.

Relations between the PDPA and the Soviets had also generated deep suspicion among the people and alienated the rulers from the local population. The governments of Afghanistan were not able to sustain a democratic system in the country while maintaining close relations with the Soviets. It was reported that Soviet arms were used for controlling the population and Soviet officials were consulted during serious crises or


10 For details see Beverley Male, *Revolutionary Afghanistan: A Reappraisal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982; also see Anwar, n.3, pp.141-150.

11 The Soviet Union and Afghanistan signed a treaty of cooperation and friendship on 5 December 1978, see *Soviet Review* (New Delhi), Vol. 15, No.58, 21 December 1978, pp.31-34; also see *Kabul Times*, 9 December 1978.
revolts to curb them. These anti-Soviet feelings were later fanned by the mujahideen, when they declared jihad against the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{12}

In March 1979, western Afghanistan was the scene of an uprising in which hundreds of people were killed.\textsuperscript{13} Taraki accused Pakistan and Iran of interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Soviets charged that China too was supporting “rabid reactionaries” in order to undermine the Kabul government.\textsuperscript{14} In the emerging situation, both Taraki and Amin wanted the Soviets to get involved; Taraki favoured a closer relationship with the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet Union was not prepared to send in troops, it now favoured Taraki over Amin. It was also reported that the Soviet leaders had worked out a scheme to unite the two factions of the party by sending Amin abroad as an ambassador and preparing the ground for the formation of a new government to be composed of the Taraki and Karmal faction.

Meanwhile, when armed anti-government activities were gaining momentum after May 1979, the PDPA government began to use force against these uprisings. During this period, the internal problem within the PDPA reached its zenith. The support to Taraki by the Soviet Union alienated Amin, who later managed to replace Taraki and eventually killed him. The Afghan press reported it differently saying that Taraki was relieved of his position due to

\textsuperscript{12} For details see M. Nazif Shahrani, “Marxist Revolution and Islamic Resistance”, in Shahrani and Canfield (eds.), n.9, pp.12-17.


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Kabul Times}, 17 June 1979; The Western media also reported the presence of Chinese and Egyptian military personnel in the rebel training camps in Pakistan. See \textit{Guardian Weekly}, 6 May 1979; and \textit{International Herald Tribune}, 16 June 1980.
“poor health”. Subsequently, Amin tried to become independent of the Soviet Union because Moscow, especially Brezhnev, had supported Taraki. During this time Amin had made some positive gestures to the West. In an interview he said: “we want that in a realistic manner, the United States should study the situation in this region and provide us with more assistance.” In December Amin, declared: “No Soviet military bases will be allowed in Afghanistan because we don’t need them.” A few days after this statement Western sources reported that thousands of Soviet troops had moved over to the Afghan border. The developments in Afghanistan took a turn for the worse on 27 December 1979 when Babrak Karmal, the leader of the Parcham faction, replaced Amin following a massive Soviet military intervention. This triggered a wave of protests and reactions worldwide, which soon became a major international crisis reminding of the cold war situation. The developments in Afghanistan generated fears and speculations in the West whether the Soviet Union, through its intervention, would have a ‘Grand Design’ to reach the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. These concerns obviously ignored the potentials and actual requirements of the Soviet navy during this time. However, Moscow’s interest in Afghanistan

15 Kabul Times, 15 September 1979; However, the Western media said that the coup was a pre-emptive strike without the knowledge of the Soviets. See International Herald Tribune, 6-7 October 1979.

16 Kabul Times, 28 October 1979.

17 Ibid., 17 December 1979.


20 The Soviet navy apparently did not require physical control of warm water ports. Moreover, the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean was already a reality since the late 1960s.
should be analysed in a wider historical perspective, taking into account the geopolitical and ideological imperatives of the Soviet state.

**The Soviet-Afghan Relations**

The Soviet Union's relations with Afghanistan had a long historical setting. It was the first country to declare an all-round support for the national independence of Afghanistan from Britain in 1919. Lenin chose Afghanistan to be one of the first countries to project his unique contribution to Marxist strategic thinking on world politics; the natural ally relationship between the Bolshevik revolution and the semi-colonial countries of the East. Afghanistan and Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship in 1921, which became the basis of the relationship between these two countries later. Subsequently, the two countries had concluded a number of treaties, including the Treaty of Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression of June 1931. The Treaty was significant because it provided a guarantee for both the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, which shared a common border stretching for almost 2,500 kilometres.

---


22 Welcoming the conclusion of the 1921 Treaty, Lenin sent the following message to Kabul: "The old imperialist Russia has disappeared forever, and now a new, Soviet Russia ... stretches out the hand of friendship and fraternity to all peoples of the East and the Afghan people in the first place."


24 Some scholars argued that it was intended to get the Afghan Government's commitment not to allow its territory to be used for anti-Soviet purposes. For example see Arundhati Roy, *The Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan* (Delhi: Associated, 1987), p.7.
Soviet-Afghan relations got strengthened after the Second World War. In the background of the cold war between the US and USSR, Moscow had realised the importance of the Third World in the changing international scenario. According to Shirin Tahir-Kheli, one of the main objectives of Soviet Union in Afghanistan was to keep it out of the Western orbit. However, when the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, had joined the western-sponsored military alliances like Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which were intended to contain communism, Kabul, in pursuance of its interests, did not endorse these alliances. At this time, Moscow had officially recognised Afghanistan's policy of neutrality and non-participation in military alliances. The Soviet objective had been to prevent other powers from increasing their influence in the region, and Afghanistan always had played a significant role in helping the Soviet Union to perpetuate its influence in the region. Accordingly, Soviet economic and military advisers had begun to enjoy influence in Afghanistan since 1950s.

In fact, the Soviet Union had competed with the United States in extending large amounts of economic and military aid to Afghanistan, thus ultimately emerging as the principal supplier of aid to that country. In 1950, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union had signed a trade agreement under


26 This view was confirmed by Soviet President N.V. Podgorny's statement at the conclusion of his visit to Afghanistan in June 1967 that the Soviet Union had "high evaluation of Afghanistan's foreign policy, which is based on principles of positive neutrality, non-participation in blocs and military blocs" Pravda, 4 June 1967, in Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIX, No.13, 1967.

which the latter agreed to supply oil products and cotton cloth, among other commodities, while the former would export wool, cotton etc. The agreement marked the beginning of the intensification of Soviet economic activities in Afghanistan. By early 1952, trade between the two countries had doubled. The Soviet Union also granted a credit to Afghanistan for capital goods and technical assistance.\(^\text{28}\) During the mid-fifties, Moscow again offered a long term loan to Afghanistan. This was the biggest ever Soviet loan to Afghanistan by which Moscow would export equipment and materials for co-operative ventures in agriculture, irrigation and other sectors. Afghanistan was to repay these obligations by exporting goods within thirty years.\(^\text{29}\) Between 1954 and 1975, the Soviet assistance to Afghanistan amounted to $1.263 billion, making Afghanistan one of the largest recipients of Soviet aid.\(^\text{30}\) Soviet Union thus became Kabul’s largest trading partner.\(^\text{31}\) Over the years, Soviet-Afghan trade had almost doubled, particularly after the 1973 coup in Afghanistan, which was generally interpreted as favouring Moscow.

Evidently, the massive economic assistance by the Soviet Union to Afghanistan had made the latter dependent on the former. This would have


strengthened Moscow's strategic gains in Afghanistan. Military aid was also a distinct feature of Soviet-Afghan relationship. Way back in 1956, an arms deal worth $25 million was concluded between the two countries by which Moscow had agreed to modernize the Afghan armed forces and build and expand its air fields. The Soviet Union continued to be the major arms supplier of Afghanistan. In the beginning of the 1950s, as a sequel to the cold war, and Iran and Pakistan having joined the US sponsored Baghdad Pact, the Soviet Union gave military aid to Afghanistan to counter the US strategies in the region. Till the end of 1977, the total Soviet military aid deliveries to Afghanistan had exceeded $6000 million. The Soviet military aid was not confined to the supply of weapons alone. There were also Soviet military instructors present in Afghanistan to train the local army. According to Shirin Tahir-Kheli,

Soviet instructors replaced the Turkish and German officers who were the traditional instructors of the Afghan army. Both at the military academy in Kabul and in the field, Soviet instructors became closely involved with the development of the Afghan military, helping with the assembly and maintenance of military equipment and advising staff and military officers. Furthermore, Soviet instructors have trained a substantial number of Afghan pilots and crewmen to operate the modern jets delivered by the USSR. The closeness of this relationship has developed strong pro-Soviet elements within the officer corps in the Afghan military, and it is this group which executed the coup d'état against King Zahir Shah in 1973 and played a key role in the 1978 coup against president


33 Mohammad Amin Wakman, n.27, p.56.
Daoud which brought the communists to power in Afghanistan.34

However, notwithstanding Afghanistan’s overwhelming dependence on Soviet Union, economically and militarily, Kabul maintained a non-aligned foreign policy and had secured friendly relations with both the Soviet and the Western blocs without undertaking alliance commitments to either. Yet, its increasing dependence on Moscow for economic and military aid ultimately led to a situation congenial for deeper influence of the Soviets in Afghanistan’s political sphere. Moscow justified the sending of 85,000 to 1,10000 troops to Afghanistan in December 1979-January 1980 by its obligations under the 1978 Treaty as well as by Article 51 of the UN Charter. The Soviet leader Brezhnev argued that the intervention was a defensive action to ensure the security of the southern borders of the Soviet State. He said:

(Moscow) saw a real threat that Afghanistan would lose its independence and be turned into an imperialist military bridgehead on our southern border.... The time came when we could no longer fail to respond to the request of the government of friendly Afghanistan. To have acted otherwise would have meant leaving Afghanistan a prey to imperialism, allowing the aggressive forces to repeat in that country what they had succeeded in doing, for instance, in Chile....To have acted otherwise would have meant to watch passively the establishment on our southern border a seat of serious danger to the security of the Soviet state.35

34 Shirin Tahir-Kheli, n.25, p.220.

Moscow was apparently apprehensive about an imminent US move into Iran. Cyrus Vance, the US Secretary of State, wrote in his memoirs:

There were background news stories coming out of Washington to the effect that there was a possibility of some form of US military action against Iran.... US military presence in the area would make a collapse of the Kabul regime more dangerous for the Soviets and thus enhance the possibility of Soviet intervention.  

Vance's chief adviser on Soviet affairs, Marshall Shulman was reported to have said that Moscow interfered in Afghanistan due to its fear of a militant Islamic anti-Soviet movement on its southern borders, with the possibility of Chinese or American influence, and not because of its desire to gain access to the Indian Ocean and control over the Middle East. Howsoever contentious the interpretations of the Soviet action may be, the events that unfolded since December 1979 indicated deterioration in US-Soviet relations, having its impact on regional and global politics.

**United States Foreign Policy under the Carter Administration**

The US policy responses to the developments in Afghanistan during 1978-80 should be analysed against the background of the overall foreign policy objectives of the Carter administration. At the beginning, President Jimmy Carter and his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, sought to bring in a new face to American politics, as well as a new ideology to his foreign policy actions.  

---


This was the time when the United States was suffering from the costs of the war in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal.\textsuperscript{39} Carter's worldview was set forth in his address at the University of Notre Dame, a few months after his assumption of office. The basic theme of the address was that the American foreign policy must reflect the democratic polity it represented. Carter emphasized democracy, human rights, and détente with the Soviet Union: a détente that would produce "reciprocal stability, parity, and security." He said: "we are now free of that inordinate fear of Communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in our fear."\textsuperscript{40} Carter proposed a recasting of the diplomatic agenda in light of powerful forces at work transforming global politics: "In less than a generation we have seen the world change dramatically .... We can no longer separate the traditional issues of war and peace from the new global questions of justice equity and human rights."\textsuperscript{41}

However, the US foreign policy at this time was seen as a compromise between Carter's own views and those of his advisers, Andrew Young, US Ambassador to the UN; Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor; and Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State. Young advocated a pacifist policy in which human rights prevailed, Brzezinski advocated a hard-line policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and Vance advocated arms reduction and a non-bi-polar case-by-case policy regarding the relations between the United States and other


countries.\textsuperscript{42} This compromise of views, however, caused a lack of clarity in perception around the world and a “suspicion of American intentions.”\textsuperscript{43}

Brzezinski’s part in the new policy was committed “to make the Soviet Union contribute more to détente” but the Soviet Union saw this as “a further attempt to put pressure on them.”\textsuperscript{44} It was a further breakdown of détente, an understanding which began with the Soviet-US trade agreements of 1972 and which had remained strong until the Soviet abrogation of these agreements in 1975 over a political scuffle regarding Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union\textsuperscript{45} as well as Soviet activities in Angola. Carter might have added to this development by allowing the State Department to criticize Soviet ally Czechoslovakia of breaching human rights standards, and by proclaiming Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov a “champion of human rights.”\textsuperscript{46}

At the beginning, Carter’s another major foreign policy concern was global interdependence and North-South cooperation rather than East-West conflict. Conceptually, the US foreign policy at this time was envisaged to be radically different from Carter’s predecessors: he believed that maintaining a free society as an example for the rest of the world was a more important role for the United States than policing the world as a superpower. He also


\textsuperscript{45} Philip Hanson, "Foreign Economic Relations", in Brown/Kaser (eds.), n.44, p.76.

\textsuperscript{46} Morris, n.38, p.273.
acted on the assumption that low politics and domestic issues had become as important, if not more, than high politics and foreign policy. Carter's ideology, when elected, suggested that placing importance on socio-economic issues was more important than foreign policy: it set the tone for United States' model democratic society, and strayed away from the violence and power politics of Nixon and Kissinger. Both Carter and Vance had an attitude about foreign policy, as well as a way of carrying it out that differed immensely from their predecessors.47

Apparently, Carter was suggesting that United States should have a role in global politics not as a power, but as a society. In fact, Carter had come to the Presidency committing himself to removing US combat troops from Korea, seeking substantial cuts in US and Soviet strategic weapons, reducing US arms sales abroad, and elevating the human rights performance of its client states to a prime criterion in deciding on future levels of support. In February 1978, Secretary of Defense Brown explained that military assistance could be used "to promote human rights by altering the size or functions of our military representation, the level of training grants, and the quantity and types of arms transfers."48

In their speeches during 1977-78, President Carter and his senior colleagues had emphasized the differences between their policies and those of the Ford and Nixon administrations. Washington, in Carter's view, was now "free of

47 Jimmy Carter, n.41; Carter, n.40; Vance, n.39; also see J. Muravchik, The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy (Lanham,MD: Hamilton Press, 1986); and Morris, n.38.

that inordinate fear of Communism." 49 Various studies of US military strategy and force posture ordered early in the Carter presidency, and the resultant presidential decisions, indicated these shifts from earlier administrations. The study entitled Comprehensive Net Assessment and Military Force Posture Review saw the United States and the Soviet Union in rough strategic balance, and US-Soviet relations characterized by both competition and cooperation. 50 President Carter seemed to have endorsed these assumptions, and he authorized major United States initiatives in arms control while also directing that force modernization at the general-purpose forces level continue. In short, the Carter administration saw global security trends as more positive and favourable than the 'adverse trends' pointed to in the Ford administration’s final assessments. 51

However, when the deteriorating Third World conditions had reached alarming proportions by mid-1978, Carter found it necessary to modify his position though many of the officials had not changed their views. The events that came in quick succession during his presidency caused Carter to make amends of his ideals, and the country to be thrown into a crisis. A general feeling of resentment towards the United States and the industrialized west was spreading through the Third World, precipitated by a

49 See Jimmy Carter, n.40.

50 In June 1978, Carter argued that détente remained important and that the US wanted to increase its collaboration with the Soviet Union. However, after surveying Moscow’s activities, the President stated: "The Soviet Union can choose either confrontation or cooperation. The United States is adequately prepared to meet either choice." See President Jimmy Carter, "Address to US Naval Academy, Commencement Exercises, 7 June 1978," Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 12 June 1978, pp. 1052-57.

perception of economic neocolonialism. As a protest to Washington's support of Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict, OPEC (composed of Arab nations) quadrupled its oil prices; the west was suddenly at its mercy, because the large corporations and "evil Western puppet governments" were powerless to stop them. This action served as a protest of neocolonialism for the rest of the Third World; although they suffered as well from the oil prices, they sided with OPEC in emotional sentiment. The Soviet Union, still concerned with East-West conflict, tried to take advantage of the hostility of the Third World directed at the United States. More importantly, three events occurred in the last half of his presidency that caused Carter to change his views of world politics drastically. First, the developments in Iran, particularly the hostage crisis that came after the overthrow of the Shah's regime.52 Second, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan when the Moscow-supported regime was threatened due to Muslim resistance to anti-religious reforms. And third, a revolution occurred in Nicaragua to overthrow the regime of Somoza - Carter initially supported it; however it rapidly dissolved into a Marxist regime.53


These developments fundamentally altered Carter's ideological notions of foreign policy and transformed his 'world-order politics' into a more realistic approach by the end of his term; his hopes for a deterrence-based peace and democracy in the Third World were shattered by the responses of the Soviet Union and anti-American sentiment in the Third World. Carter's initial actions supported his moral principles - he recognized and supported interdependence in the Third World, and condemned the right-wing dictatorships previously supported by the United States. He focused less on the East-West conflict and the tensions associated with it, and concentrated on the societal and economic problems facing the world. His actions throughout his presidency sought to sustain his principles; he attempted to make peace in the Middle East by negotiating the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, by the end of his term, Carter's attitudes toward foreign policy had changed. Although he set out with good intentions, Carter had been compelled to completely reverse his moral foreign policy by the end of his term, which became obvious when he began to deal with the hostage situation in Iran and the developments in Afghanistan.54

Carter Administration's Afghan Policy

The US policy responses to the developments in Afghanistan during 1978-80 were determined by a variety of factors such as the Carter administration's general foreign policy orientation, its perceptions of the global and regional

---

54 In February 1979, with Iran and Afghanistan in political chaos, Vietnam on the march across Indochina, and Cuban troops roaming about Africa, President Carter proposed a real increase in the US defense budget, still lobbied for the SALT II Treaty, but pointedly held open the possibility of modernizing the US strategic triad. See President Jimmy Carter, "Address at Georgia Institute of Technology," 20 February 1979, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 26 February 1979, p. 200.
situations and, above all, the state of relations with the Soviet Union. The change of government in Kabul in 1978 set the stage for regional and international developments. In fact, the Saur revolution of 1978 was not anticipated in Washington. According to Louis Dupree, a member of the US Field Staff, the change of government came by “a series of accidents” and “makeshift arrangements” by “spur-of-the-moment action rather than ... elaborate planning.”

Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State, wrote that the administration had “no evidence of the Soviet complicity in the coup.” The American Ambassador, Eliot, believed that with a large number of Soviet advisors in Kabul, it was likely that Moscow had some knowledge about the revolution, though it might not have any role in its planning and execution.

However, a cross-section of scholars and policy-makers argued that Moscow would have been behind the coup. For instance, Francis Fukuyama wrote that the “takeover was encouraged – if not planned in a tactical sense – by Moscow.” Leon Poullada, a former US official, observed that “the coup was meticulously planned by Soviet experts.” Nonetheless, Washington did not appreciate the claims of the Taraki government that the revolution was indigenous, Kabul would follow non-alignment and that the country would not join any military alliance. The Carter administration saw the Saur revolution as an adverse development given the fact that Moscow had


56 Vance, n.39, p. 384.

57 Hammond, n.4, p.54.


considerable leverages in Afghanistan even before 1978. Yet, Poullada argued that the US diplomatic response to the coup "had been mushy as usual." He writes: "No attempt was made to break relations with the Communist usurpers nor to express official disapproval of such a shift in political power in a strategic country."61

In February 1979, Carter referred to the developments in Afghanistan as against the US interests.62 It was during this time that the power struggle in Kabul intensified. Washington, however, did not seek to involve in the crisis. As the organised opposition to the Kabul regime got underway, the US began to take some interest in the Afghan affairs. A major set back came at this time when the US Ambassador to Kabul, Adolph Dubs, was captured by a group of extremists in an attempt to get the release of their supporters. The Kabul government's rescue operations fizzled out and, in the process, Dubs was killed.63 The US lodged its protest against the very handling of the crisis by the Kabul regime. Jack C. Milos, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, later told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that the attitude of the Kabul government at the time of Dubs' killing was a "most flagrant example of insensitivity to the US concerns."64

---

60 An American analyst was quoted as saying that the "great game is over and the Russians have won it." See New York Times, 24 June 1978.

61 Poullada, n.59, p.247.


63 Beverley Male, n.10, p.149; also see Anwar, n.3, pp.154-56.

Signs of a sharp deterioration in the relations between Afghanistan and the US were perceptible in the following months. The perception of the US government hardened, particularly in regard to the expanding political and military role of Moscow. For instance, in a statement before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on 26 September 1979, Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, cautioned that "direct interference in Afghanistan by any country, including the Soviet Union, would threaten the integrity of that nation and the peace in the area and would be a matter of deep concern to the United States."65 It may be noted that while Saunders had cautioned about the "direct interference in Afghanistan", the activities of the rebel forces were becoming intense, and the US, Pakistan and China had been providing 'indirect' support to them. In an interview with a French magazine in 1998, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Adviser, disclosed how the US provoked the Soviet Union into interfering in Afghanistan. The following are the relevant portions from that interview:

Question:

The former director of the CIA, Robert Gates, stated in his memoirs, From the Shadows, that American intelligence services began to aid the Mujahideen in Afghanistan six months before the Soviet intervention. In this period, you were the national security adviser to President Carter.

Brzezinski:

Yes. According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the mujahideen began during 1980, that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan, 24 Dec 1979... But the reality, closely guarded until now, is completely otherwise: Indeed, it was on July

---

3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention....

Question:

When the Soviets justified their intervention by asserting that they intended to fight against secret involvement of the United States in Afghanistan, people didn't believe them. However, there was a basis of truth. You don't regret anything today?

Brzezinski:

Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter, in substance: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war. Indeed, for almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war unsupportable by the government, a conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the break up of the Soviet empire.66

It may be noted that as early as June 1979, the Afghan government had cautioned about the "intervention of imperialism"67 and there were speculations even in Moscow whether Amin had subsequently 'colluded' with CIA.68 Thus, the Soviet explanations of its decision to intervene in


Afghanistan had its background in the repeated apprehensions in Kabul and Moscow about the interference of 'external' forces in Afghanistan.

Towards the close of 1979, Moscow found it difficult to deal with Amin who was reportedly sidelining, if not eliminating, his rivals including the Parcham faction of the PDPA led by Karmal. The latter had the backing of Moscow. In the last week of December 1979, there were reports about the Soviet troop mobilisation across the Afghan border and the US deplored such acts of interferences. On 27 December 1979, it was announced in Kabul that Babrak Karmal took control over the government and Amin was killed. By this time, around 80,000 Soviet troops had entered Afghanistan and supported the Babrak Karmal regime. The Soviet actions evidently provoked President Carter who said that it had "made a more dramatic change in my own opinion of what the Soviets' ultimate goals are than anything they have done in the previous time I have been in office." Carter had earlier warned that unless the forces were withdrawn, it would have serious consequences for Soviet-American relations. Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in a statement on 30 December 1979 said that Moscow's intervention was "a qualitative new step involving direct invasion of a country outside the Warsaw Pact through the use of Soviet

69 A US spokesman said that the Soviets were crossing a new threshold in their military deployment into Afghanistan. New York Times, 27 December 1979; The Times, 27 December 1979.


armed forces.” He called it an “attempt to impose the Soviet will on an independent country.” Speaking on the possible course of action Washington would initiate, Brzezinski indicated that the US might capitalise the Soviet action by mobilising the Islamic countries against Moscow. He also made it clear that if “Pakistan becomes vulnerable” to any aggression, the US would stand by it in accordance with the 1959 agreement and “appropriate action, including the use of force” would be taken against aggression. Brzezinski further stated that the US would review its ongoing obligations to Islamabad with a view to expediting certain types of military assistance. However, the dilemma for the administration at this time was that the American Congress had previously decided to cut off all aid to Pakistan in accordance with the Symington Amendment due to the latter’s nuclear programme.

Meanwhile, Washington refused to consider the Soviet explanations of its intervention in Afghanistan and indicated that it would seriously affect US-USSR relations. President Carter announced the punitive measures the United States would take against the Soviet Union. The most dramatic US response to the intervention was the shelving of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) then pending in the Senate for ratification. Carter also recalled the US Ambassador to Moscow, Thomas J. Watson Jr, on 2 January 1980. On the same day, US officials announced that Carter would press for UN action condemning the Soviet action. Specific American responses to the Soviet action came when Carter announced the measures to be taken. They included:


74 Brzezinski said that the problem could be taken care of by “cash sales.” See Official Text (New Delhi: American Centre, 1 January 1980).
1. Blocking grain sales to the Soviet Union beyond the 8 million metric tons already contracted. This means withholding an additional 17 million metric tons which the Soviets have already ordered;

2. Stopping the sale of high technology and strategic items to the Soviet Union, including computers and oil drilling equipment;

3. Curbing Soviet fishing privileges in US water. The catch allowed Soviet fishing fleets in 1980 would be reduced from 350,000 tons to 75,000 tons, resulting in an estimated Soviet economic loss of $55 million to $60 million;


5. Postponing new cultural and economic exchanges between the two countries, now under consideration and;

6. Boycotting the 1980 summer Olympics in Moscow.\textsuperscript{75}

The sanctions announced by Carter were intended to serve certain purposes.\textsuperscript{76} According to Cyrus Vance, the purposes of the US sanctions were; 1) to make clear to the Soviet Union that they would continue to pay a heavy price as long as their troops remained in Afghanistan and; 2) to make sure that the Soviets understood that aggression would be faced up to wherever it occurred.\textsuperscript{77} Thus, the sanctions were obviously linked to the


withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, though, later, some US officials
denied such a link.78 Richard Cronin, however, observed that “these
measures received only partial support from US allies and other friendly
countries.” 79

Meanwhile, the United States initiated steps to mobilize world public opinion
against the Soviet Union. In the wake of the developments since 27
December 1979, a resolution was introduced in the UN Security Council
deploiring the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. However, the Soviet Union
vetoed the resolution about which the White House reaction was that
Moscow “cannot wipe out the imprint its aggression has left on world public
opinion.”80 Later the UN General Assembly adopted a similar resolution
reaffirming the “inalienable right” of the Afghan people to determine their
own future and to choose their own form of government free from outside
interference and asking for immediate termination of foreign armed
intervention in Afghanistan.81 The US also managed to get a resolution
adopted by the UN Human Rights Commission on 14 February 1980 which
expressed concern over the Soviet action and its likely impact on the rights
of the people of Afghanistan. It also called for an immediate and
unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.82


79 According to Cronin, the grain embargo had generated a lot of opposition from
the agricultural lobbies and, consequently, Carter’s successor Reagan had to
revoke the limitation on grain sales. See Cronin, n. 75.

80 The New York Times, 8 January 1980; also see UN Doc. S/PV. 2190, 7 January
1980.

81 See UN Doc. A/ES/PV.7/14 January 1980; also see New York Times, 15
January 1980.

In his State of the Union Address on 23 January 1980, President Jimmy Carter announced a new United States policy that came to be called the Carter Doctrine.\textsuperscript{83} This Doctrine was obviously formulated against the background of the developments in Iran and Afghanistan. Carter said that the hostage crisis in Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan "present a serious challenge to the United States of America and ...to all the nations of the world." He said that three basic developments had helped to shape US challenges: the steady growth and increased projection of Soviet military power beyond its own borders; the overwhelming dependence of the Western democracies on oil supplies from the Middle East; and the process of social and religious and economic and political change in the many nations of the developing world, exemplified by the revolution in Iran. Carter said:

We continue to convince and persuade the Iranian leaders that the real danger to their nation lies in the north, in the Soviet Union and from the Soviet troops now in Afghanistan, and that the unwarranted Iranian quarrel with the United States hampers their response to this far greater danger to them....We face a broader and more fundamental challenge in this region because of the recent military action of the Soviet Union....Now, as during the last three and a half decades, the relationship between our country, the United States of America, and the

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Table Title} & \textbf{Table Content} \\
\hline
\textbf{Row 1} & \textbf{Column 1} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Soviet Union is the most critical factor in determining whether the world will live at peace or be engulfed in global conflict.84

He said that the Soviet action in Afghanistan “could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War.” President Carter pointed out that “no action of a world power has ever been so quickly and so overwhelmingly condemned.” But he said that “verbal condemnation is not enough. The Soviet Union must pay a concrete price for their aggression.” According to him,

While this invasion continues, we and the other nations of the world cannot conduct business as usual with the Soviet Union. That’s why the United States has imposed stiff economic penalties on the Soviet Union. I will not issue any permits for Soviet ships to fish in the coastal waters of the United States. I’ve cut Soviet access to high-technology equipment and to agricultural products. I’ve limited other commerce with the Soviet Union, and I’ve asked our allies and friends to join with us in restraining their own trade with the Soviets and not to replace our own embargoed items. And I have notified the Olympic Committee that with Soviet invading forces in Afghanistan, neither the American people nor I will support sending an Olympic team to Moscow.85

During his speech, Carter also underlined the “great strategic importance of the region” which was now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan:

It contains more than two-thirds of the world’s exportable oil. The Soviet effort to dominate Afghanistan has brought Soviet military forces to within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Straits of


85 Ibid.
Hormuz, a waterway through which most of the world’s oil must flow. The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position, therefore, that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil....Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.86

Pointing to the fact that the country had already increased its commitment for defense, Carter said that the US would “sustain this increase of effort throughout the Five Year Defense Program.”87 President Carter also offered military and economic aid to Pakistan, the neighboring country of Afghanistan, to help it defend its independence and national security “against the seriously increased threat it now faces from the north.”88 In his State of the Union Address Carter said:

We have reconfirmed our 1959 agreement to help Pakistan preserve its independence and its integrity. The United States will take action consistent with our own laws to assist Pakistan in resisting any outside aggression. And I am asking the Congress specifically to reaffirm this agreement. I’m also working, along with the leaders of other nations, to provide additional military and economic aid for Pakistan. That request will come to you in just a few days.89

_____

86 Ibid.


88 General Zia of Pakistan sought to use the Soviet action to legitimate his military regime and to secure maximum aid from the west. See Dawn, 14 January 1980.

89 See Carter’s State of the Union Address, n.84.
Thus, a major objective of the Carter doctrine was to put Moscow on notice that the region, encompassing the Gulf and Southwest Asia, would be of vital importance to the United States, and in a departure from the Nixon Doctrine, to make clear to the Soviet Union that Washington would assume ultimate responsibility for regional defence. Notwithstanding its merits and shortcomings, the Carter Doctrine defined very clearly the American stake in the entire region.90 The reassessment of the US regional security strategy that began during this time acquired more definite shape in subsequent months as an effort to forge a "strategic consensus" among states in a belt from Egypt to Pakistan to forestall further Soviet advances.91

The United States sought to influence the developments in Afghanistan by providing both direct and indirect support to the Afghan resistance forces and refugees, and offering all assistance to the government of Pakistan under General Zia. In both cases, the options would appear to require working through the Zia regime, since Pakistan was found to be the safe place for the Afghan fighting forces to which Washington had access. It was reported that the resistance forces were operating from within both the Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. From the beginning of the Afghan crisis, the Carter administration had kept maintaining its contact with the Zia regime. To further consolidate this, a

90 For details see Bruce R. Kuniholm, "The Carter Doctrine, the Reagan corollary, and prospects for United States policy in Southwest Asia", International Journal (Toronto), Vol.41, No.2, Spring 1986, p.-343-44;The author says that during the remainder of the Carter administration, defence capabilities in the regional states were improved; access to facilities was acquired in Oman, Kenya, Somalia, and Egypt; United States force capabilities were enhanced; the RDF, criticized as neither rapid, nor deployable, let alone a force, began to acquire substance; and allies on the NATO were pressed to specify shared responsibilities.

91 See Cronin, n.75.
mission headed by Brzezinski was sent to Islamabad. The statement issued by the team in Islamabad said that the Soviet action posed "a threat to the peace and security of Pakistan, the region and the world." Warren Christopher, Under Secretary of State, pointed out after the visit that "much of what has been done in the United Nations and the Islamic Conference to bear pressure on the Soviet Union has depended on Pakistan leadership."\(^92\)

The United States, thus, decided to bolster up Pakistan's military capability to withstand pressures from the north. President Carter offered $400 million in aid over a 2-year period, equally divided between military and economic aid. In March 1980, General Zia rejected the proposal as 'peanuts.'\(^93\) Pakistan considered the amount of military aid inadequate to provide the weaponry needed by the Pakistani armed forces. Given this inadequacy, Islamabad concluded that acceptance of the offer would incur too many risks and losses, especially antagonism from its Islamic neighbours over the resultant identification with the US and increased Soviet-Indian hostility.\(^94\)

Reports at this time had indicated that the Carter administration had already started out a covert programme of support to the Afghan resistance forces. Carl Bernstein noted a major US-organised effort to supply arms to the Afghan resistance via China and Pakistan. According to him, this effort had been organised within a month after the December 1979 Soviet action and had been funded to the extend of "considerably more" than $30 million.\(^92\)


\(^{94}\) For details see Cronin, n, 75; Pakistan also tried to convince the west about the burden on the country saying that the number of refugees from Afghanistan had reached 500,00.
by the United States. In all, Bernstein said that the covert aid programme involved five countries - the United States, China Pakistan Egypt and Saudi Arabia - and a cost of more than $100 million.95

Bernstein further claimed that the aid programme had provided the fighting forces with training (by Egyptians), modern heat-seeking anti-aircraft missiles (including Soviet SAM-7s), and anti-tank rockets. He also said that Pakistan had imposed a number of conditions on the amount and manner of delivery of the aid, out of concern about incurring Soviet retaliation.96 There were other sources which confirmed that the US covert military aid programme was under way since January 1980. The Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and, subsequently, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made indications that the US made arrangements for the supply of weapons to Pakistan for the mujahideen forces.97 Later, Carter admitted that "in a highly secretive move we also assessed the feasibility of arranging for Soviet-made weapons (which would appear to have come from the Afghan military forces) to be delivered to the freedom fighters in Afghanistan and of giving them what encouragement we could to resist subjugation by the Soviet invaders." Carter also said that he "was

95 The New Republic, 18 July 1981; Carter had sent Secretary of Defence Harold Brown to China to discuss joint action. Subsequently China strongly supported Pakistan in resisting Soviet pressures and supplied arms to the Afghan resistance.

96 Ibid.

determined to lead the rest of the world in making (the Afghan war) as costly as possible.\textsuperscript{98}

The US also effectively capitalised the human rights violation as one of the major points to internationalize the Afghan issue\textsuperscript{99} and to get legitimacy to enter into the affairs of the Afghanistan. The use of chemical weapons by Soviet Union in Afghanistan had been given emphasis here. For example, way back in March 1980, the US representatives in the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) had taken up this question. Jerome J. Shestack, the US official told the UNHRC:

The Commission is aware of refugee accounts and circumstantial evidence that Soviet or cooperating Afghan forces may have used lethal chemical agents in their efforts to suppress continued Afghan nationalist resistance. Some of these accounts describe such effects as including blindness, paralysis and death. There is additional, clear cut evidence that Soviet troops have brought chemical decontamination equipment to Afghanistan and that Soviet or cooperating Afghan air strikes have taken place in areas of that country where lethal; chemical agents reportedly have been used...

It is in the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan and Indochina that the world presently does not yet possess conclusive physical evidence of the use of lethal, chemical agents. At the same time the accumulation of this increasingly persuasive evidence must cause all civilized nations profound concern. If these reports are true, a line has been crossed in the nature of modern warfare, into a realm


\textsuperscript{99} Statements of Jerome J. Shestack, US Representation to the UN Human Rights Commission before the 36\textsuperscript{th} UN HRC meeting in Geneva on 10 March 1980 and Mathew Nimetz, Under Secretary for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, before the sub-committee on Asia and Pacific and international Security and scientific Affairs of the House of Foreign Affairs Committee on 28 April 1980.
previously considered “out of bounds” under treaty and international law. We can only condemn any use of such lethal weapons as outrageous and inhumane and call for its immediate cessation.  

Shestack pointed out that the US would favour establishment of an investigation committee. However, if Shestack argued for the right to investigate, Mathew Nimetz narrated the US perception of the use of lethal weapons:

First, such use of lethal or incapacitating chemical weapons would contradict the civilized practices of all nations. Second, it would violate the basic and long-established rule of international law prohibiting the first use in war of lethal or incapacitating chemical weapons. Third, these reports indicate the possibility that in some cases chemical weapons may have been used against defenseless civilian populations in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia. This would be even more inhumane and in itself a violation of the basic international law prohibiting attacks or acts of violence directed against civilians who take no part in hostilities. Finally, these reports must be viewed seriously by the US and our allies in terms of what they indicate about Soviet capabilities, doctrine and intentions in chemical warfare.

He emphasized at the same time that the US was not in a position either to confirm or disprove conclusively reports of the use of chemical weapons in remote areas where the US government had no presence. But this was not a trial. The Americans were not prosecutors who must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. However, “the issue is sufficiently serious and the reports

100 US, Department of State Bulletin, July 1980, p. 35-36

101 Ibid.
of sufficient significance and credibility to warrant a thorough, impartial international investigation..."\textsuperscript{103}

Even as the situation in Afghanistan continued, the defence ministers of the NATO took a firm stand against the Soviet action. In a communiqué on 14 May 1980, they said that for the first time in the post war era, the Soviet Union had used “military force to impose its will on a non-aligned country of the Third World and in a way which affected the overall strategic situation.” On the same day, TASS reported an Afghan proposal for the withdrawal of troops from its territory, if the US, Pakistan and Iran would guarantee a halt to infiltration and arming of insurgents. US Secretary of State Muskie expressed scepticism about the Afghan proposal saying that it was a “cosmetic and not a meaningful proposal.”\textsuperscript{104} In August 1980, the US State Department reported that the number of Afghan refugees who had registered in Pakistan passed the one million mark.\textsuperscript{105} The US delegation to the conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Madrid in November charged that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan violated all 10 principles guiding relations between states contained in the East-West agreements. During the same month, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the second resolution calling for withdrawal of “foreign troops” from Afghanistan. Although not mentioning Soviet Union by

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 36.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} \textit{Chronology of Afghanistan Events: A Retrospective} (New Delhi: American Centre, December 1980), p.17.
  \item \textsuperscript{105} The UN Commission on Human Rights reported that there were by November, 1,267,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan. A US spokesman said that reports from Peshawar hospitals cited that most Afghan refugee patients were injured by anti-personnel mines which the Soviets airdropped along the border. See ibid., pp.20-22.
\end{itemize}
name, the resolution reaffirmed the right of the Afghan people to determine their own form of government free from outside interference, called on all parties to achieve a political settlement, urged more humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people and asked the UN Secretary General to appoint a special representative to try to resolve the problem.\textsuperscript{106}

On the first anniversary of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1980, President Carter noted that the United States offered to join "in the effort to find a political solution involving a Soviet withdrawal." Carter said that the Afghan people and their struggle had not been forgotten and would not be forgotten by the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{107} The US policy towards Afghanistan in succeeding months was bound to sustain the strategic/security parameters set by the Carter administration during 1979-80. Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, sought to rationalise the American strategic compulsions against the background of the ground situation in Afghanistan.

Upon closer analysis, it is evident that the United States' interest in Afghanistan began significantly in the 1970s, particularly after the Saur revolution in 1978. Till then, Washington seemed to have given a low priority to Afghan affairs. However, the US involvement in Afghanistan after 1978 was contingent upon a number of factors including the developments in Iran and the Soviet perceptions of the emerging situation in Afghanistan. Statements of former officials of the Carter administration, particularly of Brzezinski, indicate that Washington had decided to assist the rebel forces in

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p.23.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p.24.
Afghanistan much before the Soviet intervention in December 1979. If such versions are correct, the arguments tendered by Moscow and Kabul for the Soviet military intervention may sustain their apprehensions about the “external involvements” in the affairs of Afghanistan. Howsoever contentious these explanations may be, the fact was that the Soviet intervention triggered off a new set of contradictions in Southwest Asia with the United States, Pakistan, and other regional powers involving deeply in the internal dynamics of Afghanistan. It also resulted in an escalation of superpower rivalry in the early 1980s. During 1976-80, the Carter administration made a sudden shift in its foreign policy posture – from a moral position to a realist mode of engaging with the world. However, this change over was induced by a host of factors, including the setbacks in Iran and the crisis in Afghanistan. The United States’ response to the Afghan crisis came almost immediately after the Soviet intervention. Yet, the domestic support to some of the punitive actions taken against Moscow was not unanimous due to the negative effects they would have on the American agriculture and industry. Later, Washington had second-thoughts on this. The Carter administration’s moral standing on democracy and nuclear proliferation also suffered setbacks due to its open support to the military-authoritarian regime in Islamabad, in the background of the Afghan crisis, and its waving of US laws prohibiting assistance to countries having nuclear weapons’ programme. However, the pattern set by the Carter administration regarding its Afghan policy was followed by the Republican President Ronald Reagan with greater vigour and involvement in the 1980s.