CHAPTER IV

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(1981-87)
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The decade 1980s was marked by profound changes in global politics. While the first half of the decade saw the reincarnation of the cold war environs, following the escalation of the civil war in Afghanistan, the second half witnessed unforeseen changes in superpower relations in the wake of the developments in Soviet Union and East Europe. The decade also saw the ascendancy of the New Right in the United States and Britain with the monetarist policies of President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher looming large across the world. It was within this broad spectrum of changes that the United States had to formulate its foreign policy. A significant aspect of American foreign policy during this period was that President Reagan, a republican that he was, retained considerable influence and power for two consecutive terms, having its impact on the very nature of US foreign policy. Though the Reagan Doctrine, the much-debated foreign policy agenda of the US in the 1980s, generated speculations whether it would spell disaster for the superpower relations, changes that swept through East Europe and Soviet Union tended to lessen its overall effect.

However, the United States policy towards the Third World appeared to follow the pattern set by the previous governments. The intervention of the US across a large number of countries, particularly to offset the Soviet-inspired movements and other radical forces, tended to create more problems that it actually resolved. The case of Afghanistan is illustrative of this. Washington’s support to the mujahideen forces in Afghanistan, which
were fighting against the Soviet-Afghan forces, escalated the civil war and had thrown open all contradictions in Afghan society - the full intensity of that had come to the fore in the 1990s. Similarly, the American decision to arm Pakistan against the Soviet-Afghan forces had a spill over effect not only in Southwest Asia but elsewhere in Central Asia and South Asia. This chapter examines the US perceptions and policies towards Afghanistan during the Presidency of Reagan and tries to analyse various problems that Washington had to encounter in the region following its decision to support the anti-government forces in Afghanistan.

**United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s**

When Ronald Reagan assumed office in 1981, few predicted that it would be a decade of unprecedented progress in superpower relations. All hopes of détente had already disappeared during 1979-80 and the Presidential election of 1980 brought to the White House a conservative Republican, Ronald Reagan, who was more determined to compete vigorously with the Soviet Union than any president had been since the 1960s.\(^1\) Reagan was sharply critical of the arms control process that, according to him, always favoured the Soviets and exhausted the will of the Western allies and a détente that deceived “gullible Americans into acquiescing in unilateral Soviet gains.” Reagan echoed Dulles when he denounced the Soviet Union as

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"an evil empire," and he called for the United States to "stand tall" in the world again.²

Reagan initiated drastic changes at home with a view to stimulating the stagnant US economy, expanding the military budget (a process begun in Carter's last year), and stressed the development of sophisticated military technology beyond the means of the Soviet Union. In his first address to the nation in January 1981, he said:

We are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people....

In the days ahead I will propose removing the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity. Steps will be taken aimed at restoring the balance between the various levels of government. Progress may be slow, measured in inches and feet, not miles, but we will progress. It is time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden. And these will be our first priorities, and on these principles there will be no compromise...

Our forbearance should never be misunderstood. Our reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain

sufficient strength to prevail if need be, knowing that if we do so we have the best chance of never having to use that strength.\(^3\)

Reagan believed, and sought to convince the world, that history was on "the side of freedom, not communism," and, together with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, he tried to dispel the 'malaise' that had afflicted the United States during the late 1970s. Reagan, however, had to work within the limitations imposed by growing federal deficits, Soviet parity in nuclear arms, and Congressional limits on executive action. Therefore, his policies appeared to follow the 'cautious containment' of the Eisenhower era rather than the aggressive interventionism of the 1960s.\(^4\) An important strategy adopted by the Reagan administration for combating Soviet power and influence was to extend aid to irregular forces engaged in resisting pro-Soviet governments in the Third World. It was through the "freedom fighters," as characterised by Reagan, in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua that the United States sought to contain or even overthrow totalitarian regimes without getting itself involved in new Vietnams.\(^5\) As the United States diplomacy recovered its self-confidence and initiative, Soviet foreign policy began to undergo changes because of the advanced age of Brezhnev and the frequent changes in leadership after his death in November 1982. Early in the decade, a recurrence of serious unrest in Eastern Europe, particularly in

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\(^3\) For his inaugural address on 20 January 1981 see http://www.ronaldreagan.com


Poland, also kept the attention of the Kremlin close to home. When unrest mounted in Poland, NATO countries warned against a Soviet military intervention, holding in reserve the threat of declaring Warsaw in default on its debts. Reagan held the Soviet Union responsible for martial law; his attempts to extend the sanctions to an embargo on high-technology exports to the Soviet Union, however, angered western Europeans, who feared losing access to Eastern European markets and who were in the process of completing a huge pipeline from Siberia that would make western Europe dependent on the Soviet Union for 25 per cent of its natural gas.6

At the time of the assumption of office, Reagan believed that the United States had become fragile militarily and had lost the respect it once commanded in world affairs. With a view to bringing back the country to a position of strength as well as to reestablishing military pre-eminence in global affairs, he called for massive increases in the defense budget to expand and modernize the military and urged a more aggressive approach to combating communism and related forms of leftist regimes. In his State of the Union address in January 1882, Reagan said:

Our foreign policy is a policy of strength, fairness, and balance. By restoring America's military credibility, by pursuing peace at the negotiating table wherever both sides are willing to sit down in good faith, and by regaining the respect of America’s allies and adversaries alike, we have strengthened our country’s position as a force for peace and progress in the world....When action is called for, we are taking it. Our sanctions against the military dictatorship that has attempted to crush human rights in Poland - and against the Soviet regime behind that military dictatorship - clearly demonstrated to the world that

6 See Raymond Garthoff, n.4.
America will not conduct "business as usual" with the forces of oppression....If the events in Poland continue to deteriorate, further means will follow...

Let me also note that private American groups have taken the lead in making January 30 a day of solidarity with the people of Poland - so, too, the European Parliament has called for March 21 to be an international day of support for Afghanistan. I urge all peace-loving peoples to join together on those days, to raise their voices, to speak and pray for freedom.

Meanwhile, we are working for reduction of arms and military activities. As I announced in my address to the nation last November 18, we have proposed to the Soviet Union a far-reaching agenda for mutual reduction of military forces and have already initiated negotiations with them in Geneva on intermediate-range nuclear forces....In those talks it is essential that we negotiate from a position of strength. There must be real incentive for the Soviets to take these talks seriously. This requires that we rebuild our defenses.

In the last decade, while we sought the moderation of Soviet power through a process of restraint and accomodation, the Soviets engaged in an unrelenting buildup of their military forces....The protection of our national security has required that we undertake a substantial program to enhance our military forces.7

Reagan's militant anti-communism, combined with his penchant for harsh anti-Soviet rhetoric, was one of many factors that contributed to a worsening of relations with the Soviet Union in the first years of his presidency. At his first press conference as president, Reagan questioned the legitimacy of the Soviet government; two years later, in a speech, he denounced the Soviet

7 For the full text of the State of the Union Speech by President Ronald Regan see http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/r40/speeches/speechrr00htm
Union as "an evil empire" and "the focus of evil in the modern world." In a speech on 8 June 1982 Reagan said:

We see totalitarian forces in the world who seek subversion and conflict around the globe to further their barbarous assault on the human spirit. What, then, is our course? Must civilization perish in a hail of fiery atoms? Must freedom wither in a quiet, deadening accommodation with totalitarian evil?...The march of freedom and democracy which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies which stifle the freedom and muzzle the self-expression of the people. And that's why we must continue our efforts to strengthen NATO even as we move forward with our zero-option initiative in the negotiations on intermediate-range forces and our proposal for a one-third reduction in strategic ballistic missile warheads.8

The Soviet Union was also responsible for the strained relations, particularly in December 1981, when the communist government of Poland, under intense pressure from Moscow, imposed martial law on the country to suppress the independent labour movement Solidarity; and in September 1983, when the Soviets shot down a Korean airliner en route from Alaska to Seoul.9 Reagan's massive military spending programme, the largest in American peacetime history, was undoubtedly another factor, though some observers argued that the build-up, through the strain it imposed on the Soviet economy, was actually responsible for a host of positive developments in Reagan's second term, including a more accommodating Soviet position in arms negotiations, a weakening of the influence of hard-liners in the Soviet

8 See [http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/rr40/speeches/speech00htm](http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/rr40/speeches/speech00htm)

leadership, making possible the *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) policies of moderate Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev after 1985.\(^\text{10}\)

A significant component of Reagan's military build-up was his 1983 proposal for a space-based missile defense system that would use lasers and other as yet undeveloped killing technologies to destroy incoming Soviet nuclear missiles well before they could reach their targets in the United States.\(^\text{11}\) The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, as it was called, was denounced by the Soviets, including Gorbachev, as a dangerous escalation of the arms race, a position also taken by many critics at home. Although Reagan never abandoned his support for SDI, it was eventually changed into as a much smaller and more conventional defensive system than the one he originally proposed.

US-Soviet relations improved considerably during Reagan's second term, not because Reagan softened his anti-communist rhetoric and adopted a more encouraging tone toward the changes then taking place in the Soviet Union. At a dramatic summit meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, in October 1986, Gorbachev proposed a 50 per cent reduction in the nuclear arsenals of each side, and for a time it seemed as though a historic agreement would be


reached. Although the summit ended in failure owing to differences over SDI, it was followed up in December 1987 by a treaty eliminating intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) on European soil. The INF Treaty was the first arms-control pact to require an actual reduction in nuclear arsenals rather than merely restricting their proliferation.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Reagan Doctrine}

A marked change in American policy towards communism began during the Reagan years. Unlike the cold war doctrine of containing Soviet expansionism, the new strategy envisaged by the United States sought to ensure American moral and material support for insurgent movements attempting to oust Soviet-backed regimes in various Third World countries. Early indications of this Reagan Doctrine came in the President's February 1985 State of the Union Address when he affirmed, “We must stand by all our democratic allies. We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives - on every continent from Afghanistan to Nicaragua - to defy Soviet aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth. Support for freedom fighters is self-defense.”\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents}, 11 February 1985, p.6; The Reagan Doctrine bears a resemblance to proposals for a “roll back” of communism Advanced by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and embraced by many Conservatives in the early and mid-1950s. One crucial difference is that the roll-back concept applied almost exclusively to Eastern Europe, whereas the Reagan Doctrine is explicitly designed to exploit developments in the Third World. The intellectual roots of the Reagan Doctrine can perhaps be found in the writings of Laurence W. Beilenson, who had repeatedly advocated adopting Leninist subversion tactics and using them against vulnerable portions of the Soviet empire. See Laurence W. Beilenson, \textit{Power through Subversion} (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1972); and “Aid to Freedom Fighters,” in Robert W. Poole, Jr. (ed.) \textit{Defending a Free Society}, (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1984), pp.295-316.
Unlike the doctrine of 'containment' propounded during the Truman administration, President Ronald Reagan's foreign policy was based on John Foster Dulles' 'roll-back' strategy from the 1950s in which the United States would actively push back the influence of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{14} Reagan's policy differed, however, in the sense that he relied primarily on the overt support of those fighting Soviet dominance. This strategy, as envisaged by the NSC National Security Decision Directive 75 of 1983, stated that a central priority of the US in its policy toward the Soviet Union would be "to contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism," particularly in the developing world. It noted: "The U.S. must rebuild the credibility of its commitment to resist Soviet encroachment on U.S. interests and those of its Allies and friends, and to support effectively those Third World states that are willing to resist Soviet pressures or oppose Soviet initiatives."\textsuperscript{15}

Reagan's declarations on this theme increased dramatically thereafter. In a speech on 16 February 1985, President Reagan reiterated his assumption that a 'kinship' exists between this country and anti-communist liberation movements:

Time and again we have aided those around the world struggling for freedom, democracy, independence and liberation from tyranny. In the 19th century we supported Simon Bolivar, the great liberator. We


supported the Polish patriots, the French resistance and others seeking freedom. It's not in the American tradition to turn away.\textsuperscript{16}

The implication was obvious: the United States had an obligation to aid the latest generation of "freedom fighters." Secretary of State George Shultz elaborated on this policy assumption in a speech in February 1985. There, and in a subsequent article, Shultz asserted that a wave of democratic revolution was sweeping the world. He contended that for years the Soviet Union and its proxies had acted without restraint to back insurgencies designed to spread communist dictatorships. Wars of national liberation "became the pretext for subverting any non-communist country in the name of so-called 'socialist internationalism.'" At the same time, the Brezhnev Doctrine proclaimed that any victory of communism was irreversible. According to Shultz, the Soviets were saying to the world: "What's mine is mine. What's yours is up for grabs."\textsuperscript{17}

Although, for a time, Moscow's strategy seemed to be working, Shultz stated, such Soviet postures had provoked a wave of democratic movements in the 1980s. In Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Mozambique, Angola, and elsewhere, forces had arisen to challenge Marxist regimes. This change was of historic importance, according to Shultz:

Where once the Soviets may have thought all discontent was ripe for turning into communist insurgencies, today we see a new and different kind of struggle: people around the world risking their lives against


\textsuperscript{17} George Shultz, "America and the Struggle for Freedom," in US, Department of State Bulletin, April 1985, p.17.
communist despotism. We see brave men and women fighting to challenge the Brezhnev doctrine. So long as communist dictatorships feel free to aid and abet insurgencies in the name of 'socialist internationalism, why must the democracies, the target of this threat, be inhibited from defending their own interests and the cause of democracy itself?"18

Initially, the Reagan administration's rhetoric was considerably more general than its actual policies. Even Shultz conceded that the "nature and extent" of US support "necessarily varies from case to case." In practice, this meant that Washington was willing to provide material assistance to Afghan resistance fighters facing Soviet forces and to Nicaraguan contras seeking to oust the Sandinista government.20 The Reagan administration seemed considerably less responsive to the aid requests of insurgent movements in Cambodia, Angola, and Mozambique. In the latter two cases, embracing the Rebel cause conflicted with other foreign policy objectives, most notably the promotion of regional political stability.

18 Ibid.; also see George Shultz, "New Realities and New Ways of Thinking," Foreign Affairs, Spring 1985, p. 713.

19 George Shultz, n.17, p.18.

The Reagan Doctrine had generated considerable enthusiasm among the conservative elements in the United States. The conservatives said that there was a strategy, at last, that transcended the "sterile, defensive containment" doctrine and offered the possibility of helping to liberate nations already suffering under communist domination. Existing conservative organizations and a proliferation of new ones had rushed to promote the cause of Third World "freedom fighters." Some had raised funds or provided direct material assistance such as medical supplies, clothing, and sometimes military hardware to specific rebel movements.

The conservatives who openly supported the Reagan Doctrine, however, expressed indignation that the administration's actions had not always matched its rhetoric. Ironically, Shultz, who initially articulated aspects of the Doctrine, became the principal target of Rightist antagonism for not implementing its objectives with sufficient zeal. Throughout 1985 and early 1986, conservative pressure mounted on the

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22 See Newsweek, 17 September 1984, p. 55; Newsweek, 23 December 1985, p. 27.

administration to translate its rhetorical support for anti-communist rebellions into sustained and consistent action.

While the US government decided to encourage and endorse anti-communist insurgent movements, there were scepticisms in the country. The strength of the case for US supports of rebel movements varied markedly from country to country, but evidences suggested three important, general conclusions. First, in only some instances did the circumstances warrant an official US endorsement of the insurgency and (perhaps) diplomatic recognition. Second, in no case was the situation sufficiently compelling to justify aid programmes, especially military assistance, on the part of the American government. Third, private individuals and organizations wishing to support foreign movements compatible with their own ideologies should be able to do so without governmental restrictions or harassment.

However, a few in the United States believed that the new Third World insurgencies were manifestations of a general anti-Soviet uprising. They held that the rebel movements were essentially similar in their objectives and that the nations involved were just "battlefields" or "fronts" in the war against Soviet hegemony. But the reality was somewhat different, if not more complex. An examination of the conflicts in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, and Nicaragua would bring out a varied array of circumstances that precipitated the fighting. There was also a considerable difference in the nature and magnitude of direct Soviet

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interference. The case of Afghanistan could be more revealing. A cursory glance at the Afghan situation in the 1980s is, therefore, imperative before undertaking a detailed investigation of the Reagan administration's Afghan policy.

The Afghan Crisis and the Civil War

As Babrak Karmal consolidated his position in Kabul after the turbulent days after the Soviet intervention, his government began to face innumerable problems. Sustaining a government with the support of a foreign power evidently prevented popular acceptance of the legitimacy of his government. Soviet miscalculation of what was required to stifle Afghan resistance further aggravated the situation. The Afghan army was expected to carry the burden of suppressing opposition, which was to be done with Soviet support. But as the war dragged on for years, the Karmal government was further weakened. Meanwhile, in an attempt to broaden support to the Kabul regime, the PDPA created organizations, and launched political initiatives with a view to inducing popular participation. The most ambitious was the National Fatherland Front (NFF) founded in June 1981. This umbrella organization created local units in cities, towns and tribal

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areas which were to recruit supporters of the regime. Village and tribal people were offered inducements to participate in well publicized rallies and programmes. The party also gave affiliated organizations that enrolled women, youth and city workers high profile exposure in national radio, television, and government publications.\textsuperscript{27} The early efforts at mobilizing popular support were later followed up by national meetings and assemblies, eventually using a variation of the model of the traditional \textit{Loya Jirgah} to attract the cooperation of rural secular leaders and religious authorities. A large scale \textit{Loya Jirgah} was held in 1985 to ratify Afghanistan's new constitution. These attempts to win collaboration were closely coordinated with efforts to sway over Pashtun tribal politics. Such efforts sought to split or disrupt tribes who affiliated with the resistance. A concerted effort was also made to win over the principal minorities. For the first time, their languages and literatures were prominently broadcast and published by government media. Minority writers and poets were championed, and attention was given to their folk art, music, dance and lore.\textsuperscript{28}

Even as such initiatives were under way, friction among various factions of the ruling party members also heightened, particularly since Karmal removed Assadullah Sarwari, a member of the People's Party, from his position as first Deputy Prime Minister and replaced him with Sultan Ali Keshtmand. \textit{Purcham} dominance was broadened again in June 1981 when Karmal, retaining his other offices, resigned as Prime Minister and was succeeded by Keshtmand. The PDPA was never able to rid itself of internal


\textsuperscript{28} For further details see Bhabani Sen Gupta, \textit{Afghanistan: Politics, Economics and Society} (New Delhi: Select Book Service Syndicate, 1988), pp.120-130;
rivalries. Burdened by obvious evidence that the Soviets oversaw its policies, actively dominated the crucial sectors of its government, and literally ran the war, the PDPA could not assert itself as a political force until after the Soviets left. In the civil war period that followed, it gained significant respect, but its internal disputes worsened. The Soviets imposed a public truce upon Parcham and Khalq, but the rivalry continued with hostility and disagreement frequently rising to the surface. Generally, Parcham enjoyed political dominance, while Khalq could not be denied the leverage over the army held by its senior officers. It was an arrangement necessary for survival. Social, linguistic, and regional origins and differing degrees of Marxist radicalism had spurred factionalism from the beginning. When Soviet forces came in, there was a fifteen-year history of disagreement, dislike, rivalry, violence and murder. Each new episode added further alienation. Events also tended to subdivide the protagonists.29

Parcham faction suffered further split when the Soviets insisted on replacing Karmal with Najibullah as head of the PDPA in 1986. The divisions within PDPA had already prevented implementation of policies and compromised its internal security. However, in May 1986 Mohammad Najibullah, former head of the secret police, replaced Karmal as Secretary General of the PDPA, and in November 1986 Karmal was relieved of all his government and party posts. Friction among the Parcham and Khalq continued. A national reconciliation campaign approved by the Politburo in September 1986, which included a unilateral six-month cease-fire to begin on 15 January 1987, met with little response inside Afghanistan and was rejected by resistance

leaders in Pakistan. In November 1987 a new constitution changed the name of the country back to the Republic of Afghanistan and allowed other political parties to participate in the government. Najibullah was elected to the newly strengthened post of President. Despite renewals of the official cease-fire, Afghan resistance to the Soviet presence continued, and the effects of the war were felt in neighbouring countries: Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran numbered in the millions. Morale in the Afghan military was also low.

**Afghan Resistance**

As soon as Babrak Karmal took charge in Kabul, opposition to the Soviet-backed regime spread quickly, urban demonstrations and violence increased, and resistance mounted in all regions. By early 1980s, several regional groups, collectively known as *mujahideen* had united inside Afghanistan, or across the border in Peshawar, to resist the Soviet forces and the Soviet-backed Afghan army. Resistance to the Kabul regime and Soviet forces came from different segments of the Afghan population, but overwhelmingly from the rural communities. Cultural, historical and religious factors combined to make the reaction chaotic, yet persistent. However, the narrow confines of mountainous valleys, isolated terrains, and tribal lineages kept them separate from each other.

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30 Najibullah, however, suffered, to a lesser degree, the same disadvantage that Karmal had when he was appointed as General Secretary of the PDPA. Despite Soviet interference and his own frustration and discouragement over the failure to generate substantial popular support, Karmal still had retained enough loyalty within the party to remain in office. This fact was shown by the fierceness of the resistance to Najibullah’s appointment within the *Parcham* faction. This split persisted, forcing Najibullah to straddle his politics between whatever *Parcham* support he could maintain.
The mujahideens comprised of a loose confederation of rebel organizations. Notwithstanding rampant factionalism within, especially between Islamic fundamentalist\(^{31}\) and more moderate groups, and a shortage of military hardware, the mujahideens mounted a fierce resistance. Among the major mujahideen groups, three of them were 'Islamist',\(^{32}\) which had been in exile since the Saur Revolution - Gulbuddin Hikmatyar's *Hizb-e Islami*, Rabbani's *Jam'at-e Islami* and another *Hizb-e Islami*, a breakaway faction led by Maulawi Mohammed Yunas Khalis - and three were more traditional, "moderate" parties - Mujadidi's *Jabha-ye Nejat-e Melli*, Maulawi Mohammed Nabi Mohammedi's *Harakat-e Inqilab-e Islami* and Pir Sayed Ahmed Gailani's *Mahaz-e Melli Islami*. These parties were organized into a coalition called the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan (*Ittehad-e Islami bi'rai Azad-e Afghanistan*) under the leadership of Abd-ur-Rabb-ur-Rasul Sayyaf, who had strong connections to the Wahhabi sect of Islam and the Islamic Brotherhood, and hence was well-connected to the Saudis.\(^{33}\) The coalition later broke up and Sayyaf formed his own small, well-financed party also called the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan. Like the original *Ittehad-e Islami*, all subsequent attempts at unity faltered due to the division between the Islamists and the traditionalists, the general contempt for Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, Gen. Zia's personal favourite, and resentment among

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\(^{31}\) War against forces identified with atheism inevitably aroused a passionate commitment to *jihad*, the Islamic obligation to overcome evil. The need for unity in this most segmented society moved the political climate toward religious leadership.

\(^{32}\) The term 'Islamist' is almost as imprecise as the frequently used term 'Fundamentalist.'

party officials and field commanders of meddling by Zia’s generals and Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which controlled the distribution of US and other foreign assistance. In any event, the war was fought by field commanders within Afghanistan who had for the most part only nominal party ties.\textsuperscript{34}

Although the Soviets controlled Afghanistan’s cities and the principal roads linking them, a majority of the countryside remained in rebel hands.\textsuperscript{35} The fighting had been devastating, with an estimated 50,000-100,000 \textit{mujahideen} fighters and almost one million Afghan civilians having perished under relentless aerial bombardment and fighting. Another 2-3 million, victims of the civil war, became refugees.\textsuperscript{36}

The military and political situation in Afghanistan, however, came to a stalemate in subsequent years. Despite covert US military assistance


estimated at $250 million per year channelled through neighbouring Pakistan, the mujahideen lacked the power and fighting capabilities to expel the Soviet forces.\(^{37}\) Besides, the Afghan resistance continued to face factionalism and strife. There were no less than seven such groups in Afghanistan, each with a political apparatus and a fighting force, as well as an assortment of minor splinter groups. In May 1985, the principal resistance groups formed an official alliance to coordinate political and military activities, but intense rivalries persisted.\(^{38}\) Part of the rivalry reflected the manoeuvring of ambitious politicians for power and a desire to control the distribution of the limited amount of military equipment and aid funds channelled through neighbouring Pakistan. But some deeper philosophical and ideological differences also existed. The mujahideen were fragmented politically into a handful of different groups, and their military efforts remained uncoordinated throughout the war.\(^{39}\) The quality of their arms and combat organization gradually improved, however, owing to experience and to arms shipments sent by the United States and other countries via Pakistan. The US policy options and strategies in Afghanistan must be examined against the backdrop these developments.


\(^{39}\) Robert L. Canfield, "Islamic Sources of Resistance," Orbis, Spring 1985, pp. 57-71; and Wheeler, n.36, p. 28.
The US Policy Responses under the Reagan Administration

During 1980-81 when President Carter was at the end of his term, there was a marked change in the US perception of Afghanistan, and Washington began to chart out programmes and policies towards Afghanistan keeping in view the emerging regional and global politics. Earlier, Carter seemed to have distanced from indulging in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. In fact, the Soviet action in Afghanistan resulted in the shelving of the US-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) and most of the routine commercial and governmental transactions. The US also decided to establish a permanent US military force near the Persian Gulf, besides resuming military assistance to Pakistan despite the country’s continuing refusal to foreswear development of nuclear weapons. Also the US government pressurized to ease Congressional limits on overseas covert operations of the CIA. Most of these initiatives were under way even before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. And they seemed to reflect a basic shift towards greater reliance on US military force outside Europe and a greater willingness to form alliances of convenience with unsavory foreign governments.

It is true that the US governments were seeking Congressional support for easing of legislative restrictions on covert overseas operations by the CIA. Under the so-called Hughes-Ryan Amendment, attached to a foreign aid bill in 1974, all covert operations required prior presidential approval and must be reported to various Congressional committees such as the Senate and

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House Committee on Appropriations, Armed Services and Intelligence, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Critics of the Amendment insisted that the reporting requirement had made covert operations virtually impossible because of the assumption that information disseminated so widely on Capitol Hill inevitably would be leaked. The current procedure definitely would not yield the expected result due to the failure in keeping the strategy; hence the alternative demand to give sufficient power to the President himself for declaring covert CIA operation, barring the Congress support. The actual proposal intended for it had three components viz., the administration sought to replace the Hughes-Ryan requirement with legislation still being hammered out that would establish a formal charter defining and limiting the CIA’s role. It would require presidential approval only for covert operations judged to carry high political risks. And covert operations would be reported only to the two Congressional Intelligence Committees which worked under conditions of extraordinary secrecy. Evidences suggest that the ‘covert policy’ persisted till 1984 when Paul E. Tsongas introduced a resolution in the US Congress urging an open and direct policy towards Afghanistan.41

From the very beginning, the Reagan administration kept up a high-keyed rhetoric in its commitment to the Afghan issue. The United States considered the Afghan issue as a major barrier to the development of a more constructive East-West relationship and avowed not to allow the Afghan question to become a fait accompli.42 Reagan insisted that the US must

pursue a hardline on the Afghan question. However, Reagan was sceptical about the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed by the Carter administration against Moscow. During the presidential election campaign, Regan and George Bush had severely criticised the grain embargo, arguing that it would affect the US more than Soviet Union and that the grain export made a significant contribution to the US balance of payment. Reagan contended that only one segment of the American society should not be asked to bear the burden when the US itself could not persuade other friendly countries to impose a ban of grain exports to the Soviet Union. Hence, Reagan lifted the 15-month grain embargo on 24 April 1981 and most of other sanctions also lapsed later.43 However, the US House Sub Committee sharply criticised the Reagan administration's decision to end grain embargo.44

Meanwhile, differences developed between American Congress and the administration on the question of aid to Pakistan. The Democratic-controlled House committee said it wanted to wait to see what the administration intended to do about nuclear proliferation and how much aid it wanted to give Pakistan. The Republican-controlled Senate committee took a more trusting approach and approved both the modification the administration

43 Reagan warned that his administration was not lessening its determination to stop Soviet 'acts of aggression' wherever they take place. See The New York Times, 25 April 1981; also see US, Department of State Bulletin, April 1981, p.10; and Congress and the Nation, Vol.V, 1981, p.82; TASS said that the grain embargo hurt the US more than USSR.

44 Japan also criticised the US for failing to consult before ending embargo on grain shipments to the USSR. See The New York Times, 29 April 1981.
requested and a late request for $100 million economic aid for Pakistan.\textsuperscript{45} Already the US State Department, citing "serious threat" posed by Soviet troops in Afghanistan, offered Pakistan $3 billion in economic and military aid.\textsuperscript{46} During this time, President Reagan hinted that Moscow's response to international proposals on Afghanistan would be used as test of future East-West relations.\textsuperscript{47}

Evidently, the Reagan administration wanted to make Pakistan a key element - a frontline state - in its efforts to build a strategic consensus of states threatened by Soviet Union. In September 1981, the US Under Secretary of State James Buckley signed an agreement in Islamabad committing the US to a six-year $3.2 billion package of aid evenly balanced between economic assistance and military sales credits. The agreement had been reached in principle three months earlier, but it was completed only after the two sides came to terms on Pakistan's insistence that the United States supply on an expedited basis, 40 F-16 fighter bombers.\textsuperscript{48} In December

\textsuperscript{45} The Regan administration said that it wanted to offer $2.5 billion over five years to help Pakistan cope with refugees from "Soviet-occupied' Afghanistan and counter the Soviet military presence. The request for $100 was the first part of the five year military and economic aid package to Pakistan. See \textit{Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report}, Vol.39, 27 June 1981,pp.1038-1142.


1981 US Congress completed action on legislation authorising the first increment of $100 million in economic assistance for Pakistan – for fiscal year 1982. The same legislation which explicitly linked United States assistance to the threat from Soviet forces in Afghanistan waived the application of the Symington Amendment in Pakistan's case until 30 September 1987, i.e., the next six fiscal years.  

As the situation in Afghanistan continued to worsen, the US State Department claimed that it had "preliminary evidences" to support charges that toxic chemical weapons were used in Afghanistan, in violation of international agreements banning their use. Though the Soviet Union repeatedly denied this, the Reagan administration raked up the issue of use of chemical weapons in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the American support to the fighting mujahideen intensified. In a statement on 27 December 1981, President Reagan said that the battle for Afghan independence would continue. He said:

... the gallant efforts of the people of Afghanistan to regain their independence have come at great cost. Almost 3 million Afghan refugees, a fifth of the pre-invasion population of Afghanistan, have fled their homes and have taken refuge across the border, largely in Pakistan. Those who have remained at home have become the unfortunate victims not only of the dislocations of war but also of

Richard Cronin said that the Congressional approval was eased by two factors: 1) President Zia’s shrewd offer of a no-war pact to India at the time Pakistan signed the aid agreement, thus easing Congressional concerns about involving the United States in a new India-Pakistan conflict; and 2) the success of the administration in persuading key members of Congress that Pakistan was less likely to acquire nuclear weapons if the US assisted in strengthening its conventional defenses. Ibid., p. 28.

indiscriminate Soviet attacks on civilians. So, while we express our admirations for those who fight for the freedom we all cherish, we must also express our deep sympathy for those innocent victims of Soviet imperialism who, because of the love of freedom of their countrymen, have been forced to flee for their lives.

The US government and the American people join in the broad international condemnation of the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. Just as in Poland we see the use of intimidation and indirect use of power to subjugate a neighbouring people, in Afghanistan we see direct aggression in violation of the UN Charter and other principles governing the conduct among nations.51

Reagan, then, moved on to declare what he intended to do in the near future in Afghanistan:

While extending our admiration and sympathy to the people of Afghanistan, we also call upon the Soviet Union to avail itself of proposals set forth by the community of nations for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan so that an independent and non-aligned nation can be reestablished with a government responsive to the desires of the people, so that the millions of Afghans who have sought refuge in other countries can return with honour to their homes. 52

In his State of the Union Address in January 1982, Reagan warned the Soviet Union that United States would not conduct "business as usual" with the forces of oppression. He said that while the US sought "the moderation of Soviet power through a process of restraint and accommodation, the Soviets


52 Ibid.
engaged in an unrelenting buildup of their military force." The protection of national security required that the US "undertake a substantial program to enhance our military forces." 53

In March 1982, Washington charged that the Soviet forces had killed around 3000 people in Afghanistan with poison gas and other chemical weapons in violation of international treaties USSR signed.54 Later, the State Department submitted a report detailing government's 'evidence' for its accusation that USSR and its allies had used toxic weapons in countries including Afghanistan.55 In a speech in June 1982, President Reagan, referring specifically to the Soviet Union, said that the totalitarian forces in the world continued to perpetrate "subversion and conflict around the globe to further their barbarous assault on the human spirit." 56

During the middle of 1982, the US officials reported that Washington and Moscow had concluded an unpublicised round of talks in the Soviet capital on the possibility of a political solution in Afghanistan, but, there were no signs of any breakthrough leading to the withdrawal of Soviet forces.57 In November, the US Ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, urged the USSR to negotiate its withdrawal from Afghanistan or "stand accused" of

53 State of the Union. http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/rr40/speeches/speechr00htm


55 The report submitted to the American Congress and the UN said that since 1975 more than 10,000 people were killed in nearly 400 chemical warfare attacks in three countries. See New York Times, 23 March 1982.

56 See http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/rr40/speeches/speech00htm

having no serious interest in settlement. Meanwhile, the State Department brought out an updated report on chemical and biological weapons employed by the Soviet Union in countries like Afghanistan. The document claimed that it had detailed evidences compiled on this subject during 1982. On the third anniversary of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, President Reagan said that the “occupation was not a success” and urged the new leadership in Moscow to work towards peaceful settlement of the problem. The position of the US government was further made clear by Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Under Secretary for Political Affairs: “We seek the total withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in the context of a negotiated settlement, which will also provide for the self-determination of the Afghan people, the independent and non-aligned status of Afghanistan, and return of the refugees with safety and honor.”

In early 1983, a report of the US estimated that the Soviet Union had increased its troop strength to about 105,000 and greatly intensified their military operations in 1982 but generally failed to discourage the resistance forces or to drive them from their strongholds. It further noted that Soviet military operations throughout 1982 were more massive and more elaborate than in 1981. Pointing to the fighting in 1982, the report said that the Soviets seemed determined to eliminate the Panjsher as a symbol of the resistance. The report also mentioned that in the fiscal year 1982, the US

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contributed over $105 million in support of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. This figure included about $70 million worth of food aid given through the World Food Programme (WFP), a UN agency, and about $27 million donated through the UNHCR. The US donation was estimated to be one-third of the total UNHCR budget and about 60 per cent of the international food contribution.62

On 20 May 1983 the Department of State brought out a statement criticising Soviet Union's attack on the civilians of Afghanistan:

Numerous reliable reports continue to reach us from refugee and other sources of extremely heavy, brutal and prolonged Soviet and Soviet mandated bombing of civilian areas within Afghanistan in recent weeks, especially of areas around Herat, the country's third largest city, and north and west of Kabul.

These reports leave no room of doubt that casualties among the civilian population have been extremely heavy. It is not possible to measure precisely the extent of those casualties, but they certainly number many hundreds and are probably in the thousands.

Such a massive and ruthless assault on people who are, for the most part, without any means of depending themselves is intolerable by any standard of civilized behaviour. It would appear that the Soviet Union believe that the world is either unaware of or no longer cares about what it is doing in Afghanistan and that in its desperation to subdue the spirit of the vast majority of Afghans who yearn for their nation's freedom, the Soviet Union is willing to employ any means, no matter how brutal.

62 See the paper prepared by Eliza Van Hollen of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. It was a sequel to three reports on Soviet intervention in Afghanistan published already. Ibid., pp.53-62; also see Department of State Bulletin published in March 1981, October 1981, and March 1982; also see Year Book of the UN 1982 (New York: Department of Public Information, 1983), pp.354-55.
The United States cannot stand silently by and witness this slaughter. The Soviet Union is aware of our strong concern. We call on it once more to desist from its heartless assault on a courageous and independent people and to seek urgently a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan which preserves human life and responds to the principles outlined in four successive resolutions by the UN general Assembly.63

Even as UN efforts were under way, the United States stepped up quantity and quality of covert military support for insurgents. Officials said that Reagan made decision with the purpose of forcing Moscow to pay higher price for its efforts to assert control over Afghanistan.64 In May 1983, the US said that its senior diplomat of US Embassy in Afghanistan, Peter Graham, was ordered to leave the country by the Kabul regime.65 In retaliation, the US government ordered Afghan diplomat, Masjadi Hewadmal out of the US.66

In July, Secretary of State George Shultz visited Pakistan-Afghanistan border and assured the Afghan refugees that the US would be with them.67 Diplomatic tensions between Washington and Kabul mounted further towards the middle of September 1983 when two American diplomats, Hugh J. Turner and Rob Q. Blackburn, were expelled by the Kabul regime on charges of spying. The State Department called this as "outrageous." 68

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63 US, Department of State Bulletin, August 1983, p, 70.
65 Peter was accused by the Kabul regime of selling obscene literature to buy rugs.
67 Shultz inspected outpost manned by Khyber Rifle Regiment less than a mile from Afghanistan. See The New York Times, 2 July 1983; Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger also visited the Afghan border in October and convinced the Afghan refugees that "we are strong and reliable friends." Ibid., 2 October 1983.
68 Ibid., 16 September 1983.
President Reagan in a statement on 27 December 1983 said that while the US would continue to do its part to maintain and improve the US-Soviet dialogue, it could not remain silent on the tragedy of Afghanistan. The Soviet 'occupation' of Afghanistan had created serious international tensions. He said that it was not only the Afghans themselves who were opposing the “Soviet occupation of their country, but virtually the entire world community.” This was “demonstrated time and again in five consecutive votes of the UN General Assembly,” when “resounding majorities of the world’s nations called upon the Soviet Union to end its occupation and restore the independence and non-aligned status of Afghanistan.” In fact, the most recent UN resolution was adopted in November 1983 by the largest vote yet: 116 to 20.\(^69\) Reagan called the mujahideens as “freedom fighters” and the Afghan war an ‘indigenous’ movement:

> Afghanistan’s freedom fighters...represent an indigenous movement that swept through their mountainous land to challenge a foreign military power threatening their religion and their way of life. With little in the way of arms or organization, the vast majority of the Afghan people have demonstrated that they will not be dominated and that they are prepared to give their lives for independence and freedom. The price they have so willingly paid is incalculable.\(^70\)

He said that the struggle for a free Afghanistan would continue: “This is not because of any outside manipulation, but because of the Afghan people’s own desire to be free. And their struggle will continue until a negotiated political settlement can be found to allow the Afghan people to determine


\(^70\) Ibid.
their own destiny.” Reagan pointed out that the US goal was “to do everything we can to help bring about a peaceful solution which removes the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, ends the agony and destruction of the Afghan nation, and restores that country’s independence and non-alignment.71

In January 1984, the State Department brought out a report concerning the situation in Afghanistan. It stated that the US goals for Afghanistan remained the same: the earliest possible political settlement to effect the withdrawal of Soviet forces and end the agony of the Afghan people; the independent and non-aligned status of Afghanistan; self-determination of the Afghan people; and the return of the refugees.72 The report stated that while the mujahideens had demonstrated increasing military effectiveness and cooperation, the resistance was still plagued by internal divisions and factional fighting. It said that no nationwide resistance organisation had yet evolved that was capable of coordinating activities throughout the country, and progress towards organisational and logistical coordination was slowed by serious territorial and ideological rivalries.73 The report further stated that the US contributed more than $300 million to Afghan refugees since 1980.74

While observing the Afghan day on 20 March 1984, President Reagan issued a proclamation outlining the goal of US policy in Afghanistan. “The goal of

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72 “Afghanistan: 4 Years of Occupation” US, Department of State Bulletin, January 1984, p.73.

73 The report also stated that the Karmal regime faced continued widespread popular dissatisfaction. Ibid., p.76.

74 During the fiscal year 1983, the US contributed $80 million to support Afghan refugees.
US policy remains clear and consistent. We seek the removal of Soviet military forces so that the Afghan people can live freely in their own country and are able to choose their own way of life and government."75 In a major foreign policy speech on 6 April 1984, Reagan observed:

Regional tensions often begin in long standing social, political and economic inequalities and in ethnic and religious disputes. But throughout the 1970s, increased Soviet support for terrorism, insurgency and aggression coupled with the perceptions of weakening US power and resolve greatly exacerbated these tensions.76

He spoke out the strategy which the US government would follow: "In the Middle East, which has so rarely known peace, we seek a similar mix of economic aid, diplomatic mediation and military assistance and cooperation. These will, we believe, make the use of the forces unnecessary, and make the risk of East-West conflict less." Elsewhere he said:

The simple fact is that in the last half of the 1970s we were not deterring, as events from Angola to Afghanistan made clear. Today we are. And that fact has fundamentally altered the future for millions of human beings. Gone are the days when the US was perceived as a rudderless super power, a helpless hostage to world events. American leadership is back. Peace through strength is not a slogan. It's a fact of life. And we will not return to the days of hand-wringing, defeatism, decline and despair.77

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77 Ibid.
The material base for such a shift might have been provided by the economic strength gained over years:

Economic strength, the underlying base of support for our defense build up, has received a dramatic new boost. We have transformed a non-growth economy, coupled by disincentives, double-digit inflation, 21 \( \frac{1}{2} \) per cent interest rates, plunging productivity and a weak dollar, into a dynamic growth economy bolstered by new incentives, stable prices, lower interest rates, a rebirth of productivity and restored our confidence on our currency.\(^7\)

This meant not only to declare that any policy towards Afghanistan, even though it involved big economic burden to its internal economy, would not affect its growth negatively and also that the economic structure of the present world must be sustained to persist the contemporary position of US in it. For furthering this economic growth, the US required the existence of the contemporary world economic order. The sufficient condition for that could be achieved only by making condition for the reproduction of the existing economic order. This explains why the US has been keen on other states: “Our industries depend on the importation of energy and minerals from distant lands. Our prosperity requires a sound international financial system and free and open trading markets. And our security is inseparable from the security of our friends and neighbours.”\(^8\)

In July 1984, the Reagan administration, as part of the policy of improving relations with the Soviet Union, decided to end ban on Soviet commercial fishing in US water. The embargo was imposed by the Carter administration

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 867.
\(^8\) Ibid.
in 1980 in response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. A few weeks after this, there were reports about Afghan attacks on Pakistan border which cost 50 people and injured many. The US State Department deplored these attacks and called upon Kabul and Moscow to put an end to these actions. It said: "These attacks once again highlight the tragedy and suffering caused by the Soviet Union's effort to subjugate the Afghan nation and to intimidate Afghanistan's neighbours."81

Meanwhile reports appeared that there were groups working in the United States which continued to mobilise support for the Afghan cause. One, an independent group called the Federation for American Afghan Action, was highly critical of the quality and quantity of US aid to the Afghans and had been the major advocate of the Congressional resolutions calling for increased aid. The other group, the Committee for a Free Afghanistan, focused on Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan. It sponsored a Washington rally in March, at which the keynote speaker was Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.82

In October 1984 both the US Senate and the House of Representatives passed a resolution (S Con. Res. 74) supporting "anti-Soviet guerrillas in Afghanistan." Paul E. Tsongas had initially proposed the idea in September 1982. Opponents, including the administration, had blocked action, claiming

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82 The Federation lobbied for increased aid to the rebels. It also insisted that better weapons were needed and that the US must wrest from Pakistan control over how the arms were distributed. See Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, Vol. 42, 4 August 1984, p.1905.
the measure promised more aid than the US would provide and that it drew attention to Pakistan, the entry point for aid to the rebels. The resolution originally had called for “material assistance.” Tsongas changed the wording to call on the Administration to “effectively support” the Muslim rebels. The administration then dropped its opposition to the resolution.83

The US had persistently declared that it would do everything “to win freedom for the Afghans” by supporting the “freedom fighters.” The goal was removal of Soviet military relying on the resolutions UN declared earlier.84 On 26 December 1984 Reagan asked the Soviet Union to quit the Afghan territory:

By overwhelming margins in the UN, the world community has repeatedly expressed its condemnation of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. For our part, the US has made clear to Soviet leaders that the presence of Soviet occupying force in Afghanistan constitutes a serious impediment to the improvement of our bilateral relations. We cannot and will not remain silent on Afghanistan. We join our voice with other members of the world community in calling for a prompt, negotiated end to this brutal conflict....

The way to end this tragic situation is based on the criterion advanced repeatedly by the UN.... Until these goals are achieved, the Soviet Union will continue to pay a high price for its suppression of Afghanistan’s freedom.85


84 For details of the UN resolutions see Year Book of UN 1985, Vol.39(New York: Department of Public Information, UN),pp.232-33

It may be noted that early in the year President Reagan had tried to clarify the US position on Afghanistan in an overall policy framework. This was in response to a question as to why the US had been giving active support to the opponents of the leftist Nicaraguan regime, but little direct help to the Afghan's resistance to Soviet occupation. Reagan said:

The US has been active, along with the vast majority of the free nations of the world, in trying to help the Afghan people win back their independence. Such support has taken many forms - diplomatic activities within the United Nations, making Afghanistan an important part of our bilateral agenda with the Soviets, substantial aid for the refugee communities, and firm backing for Pakistan in its efforts to resist soviet intimidation.

The general point is that there is more than one effective response to Soviet backed aggression. These problems are complex and vary from region to region. So do our responses. But one thing should be clear: Soviet actions in Afghanistan, including recent escalation of warfare there, seriously undermine the search for a negotiated political settlement, based on the four elements of the repeated UN general assembly resolution...

The US remains committed to achieving these internationally agreed objectives. It is past time that the Soviet Union respect the wishes of the world community and bring to an end the terrible ordeal which they have imposed on the Afghan people.86

In early 1985, the State Department recorded that the "outlook for the immediate future of Afghanistan is grim, with the expectation that the fighting will continue for the foreseeable future." The Soviets seemed "intent on a long-term strategy based on maintaining the regime in Kabul, wearing down the resistance and the Sovietization of Afghanistan." The official

86 *Presidential Documents*, n.75, p.671.
report, however, noted that the *mujahideens* were willing to pay the heavy cost of continuing their struggle, and the latter said that they would not give up. The United States, however, continued to support the UN negotiating process based on the four points of the UN resolution and sustained efforts to achieve unity of all Afghan groups, whether in exile or struggling inside the country.

Meanwhile, some indications of a more pronounced policy statement on Afghanistan came when President Reagan in his State of the Union Address affirmed: "We must stand by all our democratic allies. We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives - on every continent from Afghanistan to Nicaragua - to defy Soviet aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth. Support for freedom fighters is self-defense." This came to be known as the Reagan Doctrine. Secretary of State George Shultz further elaborated this policy stance in a speech in February 1985. Their policy pronouncements had obvious implications for US stance on Afghanistan.

During this period, the Reagan administration officials were concerned that China's reported efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union would...

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87 The report further said that much would depend on the outside world, on attitudes towards the conflict in the bordering states and in the world at large. US, *Department of State Bulletin*, January 1985, p.45; TASS at this time accused the US of offering Afghan rebels bounty for live Soviet soldiers. See *The New York Times*, 17 January 1985.

88 The US believed that despite tremendous privations and the dislocations attendant to modern warfare practiced against a traditional society, showed every sign of persevering." See US, *Department of State Bulletin*, February 1985, p. 35.

89 *Presidential Documents*, n.13, p.6.

90 George Shultz, n.17, p.17
lead to softening of Beijing's stand against Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. The officials, at this time, were closely watching the developments in Moscow, including the change of leadership. Later, President Reagan said that the Soviets became "frustrated with their inability to crush the spirit of the Afghan freedom fighters" and were increasingly turning their military might against the civilian populations of the country. He said: "All Americans are outraged by this growing Soviet brutality against the proud and freedom-loving people of Afghanistan." Reagan also asked his countrymen to pledge their "continuing admiration for their cause and their perseverance and continue to do everything we can to provide humanitarian support to the brave Afghan people, including the millions of Afghan refugees who have been forced to flee their own country."93

An important development in 1985 was that after four years of internal conflicts on foreign policy issues, Congress and President Reagan reached an accommodation: Congress adopted Reagan's aggressive posture towards communist regimes in the Third World, and the President allowed Congress to set the agenda on a handful of issues that were tangential to his preoccupation with the East-West struggle. Ending a decade of reluctance to intervene in foreign conflicts, Congress in 1985 supported or removed obstacles to US aid for guerrilla movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Nicaragua. Congress in 1985 passed a foreign aid


93 Ibid.
authorisation bill providing for nearly $13 billion for foreign aid annually in fiscal year 1986-87. The most important feature of the bill was its general acceptance of the administration’s proposition that the US should support a broad range of guerrilla forces that were battling established communist regimes. The bill authorised aid, directly or indirectly, to guerrilla groups in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Nicaragua and lifted a mid-1970s ban on US aid to a similar group in Angola.94

Obviously, on the strength of the Congressional support, the Reagan administration came down heavily against Soviet Union for its role in Afghanistan. Towards the end of the year, Reagan spelled out how the “Soviet invasion destructed the internal system of Afghanistan.”

The Soviets and their Afghan surrogates have resorted to barbaric methods of waging war in their effort to crush this war of national liberation. Indiscriminate air and artillery bombardments against civilian areas, savage reprisals against non-combatants suspected of supporting the resistance and the calculated destruction of crops and irrigation systems have raged the Afghan countryside. Thousands of young Afghans are being shipped to the Soviet Union for re education in summer camps, universities and specialized institutions....

The United States has played, and will continue to play, a major role in the humanitarian efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the 2 to 3 million Afghan refugees now living in Pakistan. Since 1980 we have spent over $ 430 million in aid. In the face of deteriorating conditions inside Afghanistan caused largely by the increasingly widespread Soviet

reprisals against civilians suspected of opposing the regime, we have allocated, in the current 2-year time frame, almost $25 million in assistance to the brave people who remain inside Afghanistan.95

In early 1986, Babrak Karmal rejected an offer by President Reagan to serve as guarantor of settlement of war in Afghanistan. Karmal also accused Washington of ignoring political and social realities in his country.96 Later, he asserted that the US should stop aiding Muslim guerrillas if it wanted to end war between rebel and his government.97 During this time the Reagan administration took an important decision to suspend most-favoured-nation (MFN) status for Afghanistan, thereby raising duties on imports.98 It was also reported that the administration decided to rush advanced portable Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to rebels in Angola and Afghanistan.99 The House Intelligence Committee Chairman, Lee Hamilton, called for an end to covert US support for insurgents in Afghanistan and Angola. He rather sought an open aid programme which could be voted on by entire Congress.100

In the middle of 1986, the House Panel approved a foreign aid bill for the fiscal year 1987 wherein Pakistan, along with three other countries, was exempted from foreign aid cuts. Pakistan got special treatment because of its

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97 Ibid., 27 January 1986.

98 Ibid., 2 February 1986.

99 Stinger was said to be an effective weapon against Soviet helicopter gunships that were being used with increasing success against rebels. The US State Department estimated that the Soviet Union had stepped up its military operations in 1986 and modernized and inducted weapons to deal with the rebels. See *New York Times*, 30 March 1986; also US, *Department of State Bulletin*, February 1987, pp.10-11.

support for the rebels battling the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, a change of government in Kabul came when Najibullah replaced Babrak Karmal. The Reagan administration, however, said that the resignation of Karmal would not help Afghans unless Soviet troops were withdrawn. The Afghan rebel leaders who were getting enormous support from the United States, visited Washington at this time and requested President Reagan to extend diplomatic recognition to them and severe relations with the Kabul regime. Though Reagan rejected their request for diplomatic recognition, he assured his "unshakable commitment of support" to them.

By early 1987, Moscow declared its willingness to withdraw from Afghanistan. Najibullah government also announced that its forces would observe ceasefire in battle with Muslim guerrillas from 15 January. It was described as an important step towards 'national reconciliation' in seven-year-old war. However, the Afghan rebel leaders rejected the proposal as 'sham.' US officials said that despite growing signs of interest by Moscow in getting its troops out of Afghanistan, early withdrawal seemed unlikely unless Afghan insurgents moderated their opposition to forming coalition government acceptable to Moscow. Meanwhile, in a statement made before

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101 Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 26 July 1986, p.1675; also see Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1986, pp.355-357.


103 A senior administration official said that the US would extend diplomatic recognition to the Afghan rebels if they acquired "more of the attributes of a government." New York Times, 17-18 June 1986.

104 Najibullah denounced the rejection of his cease-fire proposal by rebel leaders as "crime against the people." Ibid., 2-3 and 19 January 1987.

the Senate Armed Services Committee, Secretary of State Shultz said that the Soviet Union posed "a clear and sobering strategic threat to the United States and its allies." Having said that, the ceasefire offer of the Najibullah government was in the air, the Reagan administration intended to supply Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to Afghan rebels, though some Congressmen expressed concerns. Even as the ceasefire offer of the Najibullah government was in the air, the Reagan administration intended to supply Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to Afghan rebels, though some Congressmen expressed concerns.107 Reagan also challenged Moscow to establish a firm date for withdrawing from Afghanistan and to move ahead on reaching an agreement to eliminate medium-range nuclear missiles.108

Towards the end of April 1987, Michael Armacost, US Under Secretary for Political Affairs, said that the essentials of the Afghan conflict had not changed in recent months. Rejecting the argument that the US strategic purpose in Afghanistan was to achieve "historic revenge" for Vietnam, he said that the US objectives were to get the Soviet forces out, to permit the Afghan refugees to return home to allow the Afghans to determine their own political future, and to restore the country to its traditional status as a neutral, non-aligned buffer. Armacost said that there were two key elements to a political settlement; first, a timetable providing for the rapid and complete withdrawal of all Soviet forces; and second, political arrangements inspiring sufficient confidence among the Afghan refugees to induce them voluntarily to return home.109

108 bid., 11 April 1987.
During the year President Reagan asked Congress to approve the first instalment on a six year, $4 billion aid programme for Pakistan; to receive the aid, Pakistan had to get a new exemption from US laws barring aid to nations that tries to build nuclear bombs. Congressional proponents of tough non-proliferation policy tried all year to devise legislation that would force Pakistan to choose between the aid or its bomb programme. In the end, Congress accepted a compromise that allowed Pakistan’s aid to go forward without significant restrictions, but for approximately two and a half years, rather than the six years that Reagan wanted.110

In November 1987, the US Representative to the UN, Herbert S. Okun, made a statement on Afghanistan in the General Assembly. He expressed the US suspicion about the Soviet-Afghan proposals under way:

In January 1987, the Kabul regime announced a “ceasefire”. It subsequently claimed to have extended the “ceasefire” until January 1988. What did they do? They stepped up their military efforts, and in the summer of 1987, the Soviets and the Kabul regime mounted the largest offensive engagements of the war against the resistance in Quandahar and Paktia Provinces.111

Okun said that the Soviet Union’s deeds did not correspond to its words. Its military continued to construct an elaborate and permanent logistical infrastructure in Afghanistan: “Hundreds of Soviet advisers are in


Afghanistan to try to prop up an increasingly weakened client regime.” He said that the Kabul regime tried “to appear flexible and willing to compromise.” But the “reality is quite different.” Okun even called Najibullah “Moscow’s hand-chosen satrap” and a “former head of the Afghan secret police” and a “creature of the Soviet KGB.”

The mere declaration of the Soviet Union to withdraw was not sufficient for the US to end its involvements in Afghanistan. In November 1987, the mujahideen leaders went to meet Reagan to discuss the question of the formation of an alternative political order in Afghanistan in place of Marxist regime. Obviously, Reagan did not want the Najibullah government to continue, since that would practically impede its policy realisation. The following was the statement of Reagan issued immediately after the meeting he had with the Chairman of the Islamic Union of mujahideens:

Unfortunately, the Soviet answer on a date for rapid withdrawal has been silence. Instead we have seen the Kabul regime announce a phantom ceasefire and proposed a transitional government, one that would leave this discredited and doomed group in control. These gambits have been rejected by the only voice that really counts: that of the Afghan people, speaking through their resistance representatives. Any proposal unacceptable to the resistance is destined to fail....

And as the resistance continues the fight, we and other responsible governments will stand by it. The support that the US has been providing the resistance will be strengthened, rather than diminished, so that it can continue to fight effectively for freedom. The just struggle against foreign tyranny can count upon worldwide support, both political and material....

112 Ibid.
The goal of the US remains a genuinely independent Afghanistan, free from external interference, an Afghanistan whose people choose the type of government they wish, an Afghanistan to which the four million refugees from Soviet aggression may return in safety, and yes, in honor.\textsuperscript{114}

On the question of continuing support to the mujahideens even after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Reagan said:

I don't think we could do anything of that kind, because the puppet government that has been left there has a military, and it would be the same as what I'm arguing about with regard to the freedom fighters. In Nicaragua you can't suddenly disarm them and leave them prey to the other government- and this is p-r-e-y, not p-r-a-y. No, the people of Afghanistan must be assured of the right of all of them to participate in establishing the government they want, and that requires more than just getting his (Gorbachev's) forces out of there.\textsuperscript{115}

In early December the US officials described Afghan government's proposal to have Soviet troops withdraw over a period of 12 months as “inadequate.”\textsuperscript{116} During the month, President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev met in Washington and dealt with two crucial problems of their three-day summit – war in Afghanistan and cutbacks in strategic nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{117} Assessing results of the summit meeting, the US officials

\textsuperscript{114} Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents: The Administration of Ronald Reagan, 12 November 1987, pp.1324-25; also see US, Department of State Bulletin, January 1988, pp.43-44.

\textsuperscript{115} Presidential Documents, n.114, pp. 1428-1429.


\textsuperscript{117} Gorbachev proposed to withdraw troops from Afghanistan over 12-month period, which Americans took as small concession, but he refused to set date for pullout to start, which disappointed Reagan and his staff. Ibid., 10-11 December 1987.
concluded that a tough stand by Washington would have forced further compromises from Moscow on timing and manner of its proposed troop withdrawal.\textsuperscript{118}

The United States continued to remind Moscow that a mere withdrawal of troops was not sufficient. It called for complete evacuation of the Soviet traces. Hence it argued that the US would continue to supply all kinds of aid to the Afghan rebels as well as Pakistan “to restore a just government in Afghanistan.” Declaration of such policy proceeded with assertions like the following: “On a number of occasions I have invited the Soviet leadership to explore all opportunities to bring peace to Afghanistan. We have welcomed recent Soviet statement of intent to withdraw. Unfortunately, their deeds have yet to match their words...”\textsuperscript{119} Meanwhile, the US government continued the policy of shipping aid to Pakistan even after the declaration of the withdrawal by Soviet Union. The US put forward the rationale for its support for Pakistan in its vital posture of opposition to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. According to Washington, Pakistan was “carrying an enormous burden in caring for 3 million Afghan refugees and standing up to Soviet pressure and intimidation.” Hence, it “deserves our continuing strong support, just as much as we believe we deserve their respect for our laws. The US, at the same time, claimed that its support to Pakistan would also serve to encourage Islamabad to adopt a “nuclear restraint and to

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 15 December 1987.

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents: The Administration of Ronald Reagan}, 27 December 1987, p.1553-
undercut any perceived security need for acquisition of a national nuclear deterrent."^{120}

The Reagan administrations’ policy responses to the Afghan crisis during 1981-87 reveal the greater involvement of Washington in terms of assisting the *mujahideen* forces against the Kabul regime and the Soviet troops. For this, the US relied heavily on Pakistan and even overlooked domestic laws prohibiting assistance to countries having nuclear weapons programme. The Reagan administration, however, envisaged a new policy strategy seeking to justify its greater involvements in the Third World through a doctrine. Afghanistan was, thus, a prime target of the Reagan Doctrine. The period also witnessed Congressional pressures for more overt support to the rebel forces in Afghanistan and the conservative members put enormous influence on the administration to take a tougher line on the question. The US, though being aware of the internal bickering of the *mujahideen*, did not show any interest in a political settlement based on a collective, democratic-secular framework of political development in Afghanistan. Fundamentalism gained ascendancy during this period and tended to dictate the future course of political developments in Afghanistan. Much of the political uncertainty and chaos in Afghanistan that persisted even after the Geneva Accords and the Soviet troop withdrawal seemed to have emanated from the manner in which the whole question had been handled in Washington, Islamabad and Moscow.