St. Xavier’s Collegiate School
Model United Nations Conference 2013

United Nations Security Council

Study Guide
Delegates,

"War doesn’t determine who’s right, only who’s left."

Welcome, delegates, to what promises to be the most challenging committee at St. Xavier’s Collegiate School Model United Nations Conference 2013, the Historic Security Council. The history of the world post WW II has been dominated for the greater part by two superpowers, the USSR and the USA, who were always engaged in shadow-boxing on multiple fronts. One of the most memorable showdowns in the history of the United Nations Security Council occurred in the aftermath of the decision of the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan in 1979-80 as one of the many fallouts of the country’s internal political turmoil.

It is the duty of the Security Council to ensure the peace and safety of all the citizens of the world. I can only hope that this Council fulfills its duties and lives up to the ideals and beliefs on which it was formed. Delegates are expected to be well-researched about their country’s foreign policy and to be able to effectively articulate their position on the invasion in committee. They are also expected to be able to work towards a solution to the crisis with their fellow delegates. Remember, networking skills are key to a good performance in a MUN Conference.

Anish Kanoria,
Chairman
United Nations Security Council
A Historic Security Council

The HSC is structured on the pattern of the United Nations Security Council as on 2nd January, 1980 and will meet to debate the invasion in what will undoubtedly be a very charged atmosphere. It is for the Council and its members to decide how they will treat this invasion - which has been termed the greatest ever summarization of the Cold War.
Afghanistan

An Introduction

Geography, demography, and culture are among the great “givens” of life. They can influence every aspect of our existence. Knowing about them is the first step in learning about a state, its peoples, and its policies.

Afghanistan’s most dominant feature is the Hindu Kush Mountains, which rise to 7,485 meters and cover all but the north central and southwest portions of the country. Even Kabul, the capital, lies at 1,789 meters in elevation. Semi-desert terrain is common in the south and west and in the flatter areas. Snow melt and a handful of rivers, aided by intricate and sometimes ancient irrigation systems bring water to farmland in many regions. Only 14 percent of the land is arable, a great limitation since farming and herding are the most common occupations. Afghanistan has as much as $1 trillion to $3 trillion in mineral wealth.

Politically, Afghanistan has an external border with Pakistan measuring 2,430 kilometers (km), disputed since it was drawn by the British along the Durand Line in 1893. It also has a border in the west with Iran measuring 936 km as well as significant borders with the USSR. There is also a short border with China (76 km).

Afghanistan is a multiethnic Muslim state. The most dominant group is the Pashtuns (also called Pathans, Pushtuns, or Pakhtoons). There may be as many as 400 tribes and clans of Pashtuns. The Pashtuns tend to live in the eastern and southern parts of the country, but pockets of Pashtuns can be found in the north. There are 30 known minor languages also spoken in Afghanistan. Most Afghans (not “Afghanis,” which refers to the local currency and is considered by some
Afghans as bad form if used to refer to people) are Sunni Muslims (80 percent), with the balance—mainly Hazaras—being Shia Muslims.

Many observers see Afghans as rather laid-back Muslims. Tribal ways that run counter to Islam may still hold sway in a few isolated areas. Pashtuns are defined by their tribes and their folkways. As noted, however, these tribal structures have been severely stressed by wars. Many who grew up in Pakistani refugee camps lost track of their tribal roots, leaving them much more open to the influence of religious figures, called mullahs and other non-tribal leaders. Since the Pashtuns dominate the nation’s leadership, Pashtun culture revolves around the Pashtunwali, their pre-Islamic code of honor. It emphasizes honor, hospitality, protection of women, and revenge.

Xenophobia is another aspect of Afghan culture. Throughout Afghanistan, suspicion of foreigners is strong. This no doubt stems from insularity and frequent invasions. Afghans are independence-minded. Afghans of all stripes have a strong sense of personal and national honor.

In all, the effects of geography, demography, and culture will echo through the history of Afghanistan.

First

The country is rugged, landlocked, and difficult to get around in. It is also hard to conduct trade or military operations in such terrain. The lack of good roads combines with high elevations to complicate commerce, logistics, and military operations. Local Afghans are accustomed to the terrain and can outmaneuver the untrained or heavily burdened foreigner. Limited urbanization puts harsh demands
on those who seek to protect the population as well.

Second

Afghanistan is not rich in farmland or other natural resources. A low-level of factor endowments makes poverty a natural condition. Iran and Pakistan control the outlets to the sea and to major markets. Afghanistan has great potential mineral wealth, but it has been whispered about for decades and will require enormous investment and many years to exploit fully. Moreover, many developing countries have had great difficulties managing the foreign extraction of oil or minerals and subsequently absorbing and disbursing the profits.

Third

Geography favors local and tribal power structures. While officials in Kabul have usually favored centralized arrangements, local officials or tribal leaders have always held much residual power over their populations. The highest powers in the capital have always had to contend with local power centers. The most successful Afghan rulers have found ways to control, co-opt, or otherwise work with tribal or regional leaders.

Finally

By the ironies of fate, Afghanistan has always stood between contending powers, whether they came from Arabia, Iran, USSR, Great Britain, the United States, or even India and Pakistan, Greeks, Persians, Arabs, and Mongols — Genghis Khan, Timur, Babur — as well as the British Raj, have had a turn at making war in Afghanistan. It is not true that Afghanistan has never been conquered. It is, however, accurate to note that the physical conquest of Afghanistan has often brought only a temporary Pyrrhic victory.

National security policy has often had to contend with the situation described by “the Iron Amir,” Abdur Rahman Khan, who ruled Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901:

How can a small power like Afghanistan, which is like a goat between these lions, or a grain of wheat between these two strong millstones of the grinding mill, stand in the midway of the stones without being crushed to death?
**History**

Afghanistan has long been used as a battleground for strategic wars by larger external powers. This is in part due to its geographic position between the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. In addition, the fragmented and polarized nature of Afghan society, which is made up of many different ethnic groups, has led to its multiple internal struggles which have gained support from different external powers. The almost continuous devastation caused to the country for over the past three decades is a testimony to the strength and endurance of its people and the groups who work towards rebuilding their country.

**The Struggle for Independence**

Afghanistan became a unified entity in the mid-1700s, a poor and underdeveloped country in a very rough neighborhood. Its size, shape, and degree of centralized power depended on leaders who were often from the Durrani confederation of southern Pashtuns, and whose biggest and toughest rivals were often the Ghilzai, or eastern Pashtuns, who were famous for their rebelliousness and martial spirit. Beginning in the 1830s, Afghanistan fought two wars over the issue of Russia’s feeble attempts at gaining influence and using Afghanistan against British India, which contained the territory of what is now modern Pakistan. The Third Anglo-Afghan War was fought after World War I for independence from British interference with Afghan affairs. This competition was referred to as the “Great Game.”

**The Great Game**

Collision between the expanding British and Russian Empire significantly influenced Afghanistan during the 19th century in what was termed “The Great Game.” Throughout the nineteenth century, Great Britain was obsessed by the fear that one of the other European powers would take advantage of the political decay of Islamic Asia.

At first it was France. Then it was Russia that moved along the caravan routes of the old conquerors and threatened to establish a new world monarchy on the ruins of the ancient ones. British governments were worried by the implications of the continuing march southward by the Russian empire in Asia. In the early part of
the century, the focus of strategic concern was Constantinople. Later, as czarist armies overran Central Asia, attention shifted to Persia, to Afghanistan and to the mountain passes of the Himalayas. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was a common assumption in Europe that the next great war, the inevitable war, was going to be the final showdown between Britain and Russia.

British concern over Russian advances in Central Asia and growing influence in Persia culminated in two Anglo-Afghan wars and "The Siege of Herat" 1837–1838, in which the Persians, trying to retake Afghanistan and throw out the British and Russians, sent armies into the country and fought the British mostly around and in the city of Herat. Abdur Rahman Khan was a ruler known by some as the "Iron Amir", to the Afghan throne. During his reign (1880–1901), the British and Russians officially established the boundaries of what would become modern Afghanistan. The British retained effective control over Kabul’s foreign affairs. Abdur Rahman’s reforms of the army, legal system and structure of government were able to give Afghanistan a degree of unity and stability which it had not before known. This, however, came at the cost of strong centralisation, harsh punishments for crime and corruption, and a certain degree of international isolation.

The following is a documentary on The Great Game.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agekmBqHCw

Anglo Afghan Wars

Anglo-Afghan Wars, also called Afghan Wars, three conflicts (1839–42; 1878–80; 1919) in which Great Britain, from its base in India, sought to extend its control over neighboring Afghanistan and to oppose Russian influence there.

- **The First Anglo-Afghan War, 1839–1842**, was about blocking the Russian influence from the Indian border and extending British influence into Central Asia. The war began with a massive British invasion, the toppling of ruler Dost Mohammad, and an occupation of Kabul and other cities. After the British political agent was assassinated, the remnants of the first British expeditionary force (16,000 soldiers, dependents, and camp followers) tried to retreat back into India. They were nearly all killed or dispersed, save for a
lone regimental surgeon who returned home to tell the tale.

- **In the Second Anglo-Afghan War, 1878–1880**, disputes over potential Russian influence on Kabul again produced a British ultimatum, a rapid and successful invasion, a troubled occupation, a murdered British envoy, and subsequent maneuver warfare. Abdur Rahman became emir after a Pyrrhic victory for Great Britain. He pursued, in Barnett Rubin’s phrase, “a coercion-intensive path to state formation” and ruled from the center with an iron fist (and significant British subsidies) until his death in 1901. Rahman brought the country together and ruled well but harshly. He was forced to accept the hated Durand Line drawn by the British envoy, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, to divide Afghanistan from India. It also divided the Pashtuns, leaving a third of them in Afghanistan and two-thirds in western India, which later became modern Pakistan. The results of the first two wars with Britain were longstanding Afghan-British tensions, an increase in Afghanistan’s xenophobia, and an unresolved issue over the homeland of the Pashtuns, which was split between two countries.

Interestingly, the Afghan leaders fought against British encroachment, but then after besting or severely vexing the British to establish that independence, often ended up taking subsidies from them. The British in return received control over Afghan foreign policy.

- **The Third Anglo-Afghan War** followed World War I and established full independence. It began with the mysterious death of the old emir, Habibullah, who did not want another war with Britain because it had paid him a healthy subsidy. He had ruled peacefully for nearly two decades and kept Afghanistan neutral during the First World War. According to some historians, the new emir, Amanullah—a third son who seized power from those with stronger dynastic claims—was involved in his father’s death. He wanted a showdown with Great Britain. The Third Anglo-Afghan War involved very few battles, but the British did manage to use biplanes to bomb Jalalabad and Kabul. The war-weary British, however, soon gave in to Afghan demands for full independence. The war ended British subsidies—a key revenue source for Afghan leaders—and Great Britain’s encroachment on Afghan sovereignty.

After victory in the third war, later celebrated as the beginning of Afghan self-rule, Amanullah decided to modernize his kingdom. He was the first Afghan ruler to take aid and military assistance from the Soviet Union.
Reforms in Afghanistan

King Amanullah Khan moved to end his country’s traditional isolation in the years following the Third Anglo-Afghan war. He established diplomatic relations with most major countries and, following a 1927 tour of Europe and Turkey introduced several reforms intended to modernize Afghanistan. In 1928, he returned with a notion of becoming an Afghan version of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the leader who made Turkey a modern secular state. Amanullah again pursued what were drastic reforms by Afghan standards, despite the fact that his previous attempts at reform had sparked a revolt in the east. This time he went further by removing the veil from women, pushing co-education, and forcing Afghans to wear Western-style clothing in the capital. He alienated the conservative clergy, including those who had previously supported his modernization program.

A revolt, the Civil War of 1929, broke out, the weakened king abdicated, and for 9 months a chaotic Afghanistan was ruled by Habibullah Kalakani.

Reigns of Nadir Shah and Zahir Shah

Nadir Shah and Zahir Shah ruled of Afghanistan from the beginning of the 20th century to the beginning of the Saur Revolution (which took place on 28 April 1978, just before the Russian invasion of Afghanistan).

Prince Mohammed Nadir Shah, cousin of Amanullah Khan, in turn defeated and executed Habibullah Kalakani in early November 1929. He was soon declared King Nadir Khan. He began consolidating power and regenerating the country. He abandoned the reforms of Amanullah Khan in favour of a more gradual approach to modernization. He restored conservative rule only to be assassinated in 1933 by a young man seeking revenge for the death of a family member. Nadir Shah’s dynasty, called Musahiban after the family name, ruled from 1929 to 1978.

After Nadir Shah’s death, his teenage son, Zahir Shah, succeeded to the throne, although his paternal uncles ruled as regents until 1953. During Zahir Shah’s reign, Afghanistan managed to remain neutral in World War II, began to develop economically with the help of foreign aid, created a modern military with the help of the USSR, and stayed at an uneasy peace with its neighbors. Trouble with the new state of Pakistan, home to more than twice as many Pashtuns as Afghanistan, was a near constant. The Durand Line was always an issue, and from time to time the status of “Pashtunistan” was formally placed on the table by Afghan nationalists.
who demanded a plebiscite. Afghanistan even cast the only vote against Pakistan being admitted to the United Nations in 1947. In 1953, Mohammed Daoud Khan, the king's cousin and brother-in-law, became the Prime Minister. Daoud looked for a closer relationship with the Soviet Union and a more distant one towards Pakistan. However, disputes with Pakistan led to an economic crisis and he was asked to resign in 1963. From 1963 until 1973, Zahir Shah took a more active role.

In 1964, King Zahir Shah promulgated a liberal constitution providing for a bicameral legislature to which the king appointed one-third of the deputies. The people elected another third, and the remainder were selected indirectly by provincial assemblies. Although Zahir's "experiment in democracy" produced few lasting reforms, it permitted the growth of unofficial extremist parties on both the left and the right. These included the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

Fall of the Monarchy

For its part, the United States did provide aid but in general was much less interested in Afghanistan than the Soviet Union was. Afghanistan was much more important for the Soviet Union. It was a neutral, developing state on the periphery of the USSR, beholden to Moscow for economic and military aid which was generously applied, especially in the early 1970s.

Daoud, the king's cousin, served as prime minister from 1953 until the start of the constitutional monarchy in 1964, which ended his term. The king chafed under the tutelage of his cousin and had it written into the constitution that no relative of the king could be a government minister. The constitutional monarchy—a half-hearted attempt at
democracy with a parliament but no political parties—lasted about a decade until 1973, when the spurned Daoud, with the help of leftist army officers, launched a bloodless coup while Zahir Shah was abroad. Five years later, Daoud, who some inaccurately called “the Red Prince,” was himself toppled in a coup by the leftists on whom he had turned his back. Another cycle of rapid and fruitless modernization efforts followed, accompanied by an unusually high amount of repression. The new and more radical heirs of Amanullah were avowed communists. Their power base was found among disaffected eastern Pashtun intellectuals and Soviet-trained army officers.

**International Reactions**

Moscow, not surprisingly, hailed Daoud’s takeover. His record in facilitating extensive Soviet influence, and the fact that Soviet-supported political and military factions had backed his move, was viewed in Moscow as promising signs for the future. A message from the Soviet leadership a week after the takeover expressed confidence that the “friendship and cooperation” between their governments would “further successfully develop.” Offers of increased assistance followed, and during a visit to Moscow in June 1974, Daoud concluded an agreement for an additional $600 million in economic assistance. The Soviets were investing in the expected future accession to power of Karmal and his Parcham faction, which they considered more pliable than the headstrong, confrontational Khalq.

The implications of Daoud’s coup for expanding Soviet power in the region generated shared concerns in Washington, Tehran and Islamabad. The leaders in Iran and Pakistan made this clear to US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger when he visited their capitals in November 1973.

Their worst nightmare was of Soviet power creeping closer to the Indian Ocean.

Iran took the lead in a joint effort to use generous economic and technical assistance to wean Daoud away from dependence on Moscow and to persuade him to shed the Soviet-backed factions in his government. In 1974, Iran gave $40 million in easy credit to the Daoud regime as an initial step in what subsequently would develop into an economic aid package larger than those offered by any other group including Moscow. Secretary Kissinger visited Kabul in November 1974, and shortly thereafter dispatched a delegation from the US Agency for International Development to Afghanistan with an offer of economic and technical assistance.
A significant impediment to US political and economic initiatives, however, was the continuing conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the status of the ethnic Pashtuns in Pakistan’s border regions. This ongoing antagonism in the face of the US-Pakistan anticommunist alliance had impeded US aid to Afghanistan during Daoud’s earlier tenure as head of the government and contributed to his turn to Moscow. Iran, in the wake of a booming oil market, offered a potential new source of assistance. But once again, Afghan antagonism toward Pakistan impeded an offer of aid. Because of Tehran’s status in US regional security arrangements, the Shah found himself with little room for maneuver. He also had his own problems with ethnic minority spillovers in Iran.

These issues were escalating at the time of Daoud’s coup. By early 1974, an armed revolt was underway in Baluchistan, the southwestern region of Pakistan bordering on Afghanistan and Iran. In northwest Pakistan, populated mainly by ethnic Afghan-Pashtuns, insurrectionist sabotage was a common occurrence. The extent of the Daoud regime’s involvement in these insurrections has been a matter of some debate, but he clearly was allowing Baluch resistance fighters to set up bases in Afghanistan, and was providing sanctuary to Pashtun dissidents who were under warrant of arrest in Pakistan.

To retaliate against Afghanistan’s actions, Pakistan provided funds, material and weapons to Islamic fundamentalist organizations and other anti-Daoud Afghan extremists conducting raids and sabotage inside Afghanistan. A former member of Pakistan’s government at the time has insisted that these operations were not intended to overthrow Daoud but to force him to negotiate. This could explain why Iran, at the same time it was offering economic aid to Daoud and pressing him to resolve the conflict with Pakistan, was also supplying US weapons and equipment to the insurgent groups in Afghanistan. Some of this material went through Pakistani channels and some passed directly to groups operating in western Afghanistan. Iran, because of its own sizable Baluch community, had its own motives for seeing the armed revolt in Baluchistan quelled, and provided Pakistan with US helicopters for use in this effort. According to at least one source, these actions by Iran were carried out in "loose collaboration" with the US. Egypt and Saudi Arabia also were providing support to Afghan Islamic fundamentalist groups, some of which would have a lasting presence on the Afghan battleground.

A former deputy foreign minister of Afghanistan has said that a message came through clearly in diplomatic channels: demonstrable efforts to resolve the conflict with Pakistan were necessary if Daoud hoped to sustain significant economic aid from the US and its allies. Iran’s Prime Minister, visiting Kabul in August 1974, proposed the opening of a dialogue between Afghan and Pakistani
representatives, as did Turkish officials. Kissinger pressed the issue in his visit in November.

Daoud had his own reasons for widening his international sources of support and suppressing the power of Soviet-backed elements inside Afghanistan. One observer on the scene has said that Daoud probably understood the motives and objectives of the Parcham faction better than it understood his. So it is hard to assess how much the external pressure and enticements accounted for his turning away from Moscow and the Soviet-backed factions inside Afghanistan, but turn he did.

Daoud Moves Away From Moscow
As early as mid-1974, when Daoud made his first official visit to Moscow after his coup, he had already removed two communists from his cabinet and had begun to purge his interior ministry, which controlled internal security forces. By the beginning of 1975, he had reached agreement with Pakistani leader Zulfiqar Ali-Butto to begin talks on resolving their conflicts. The opening of these talks was derailed for more than a year, however, by the killing of a Bhutto friend and colleague by a terrorist bomb in Pakistan’s Pashtun tribal agency, which led Bhutto to retaliate against indigenous Pashtun political officials. Nonetheless, Daoud's demonstrated willingness to work on the problem appears to have registered. In April 1975, he visited Iran and came away with a credit extension of $2 billion, of which $1.7 billion was to be devoted to a rail system linking the Afghan cities of Herat, Kandahar, and Kabul to Iranian lines extending to the Persian Gulf. (The subsequent collapse of the oil market and the fall of the Shah would prevent much of this from being realized).

Shortly after his return from Iran, Daoud announced that Afghanistan would not tolerate "imported ideology," clearly a swipe at the Moscow-backed communist factions in his own government.

A few months later, he removed three more communists from ministerial positions, including the Minister of the Interior. By the end of December 1975, there were no remaining Parcham communists in Daoud’s cabinet and he had drastically reduced the numbers in other government positions. He then announced that he was putting forward a new constitution that would establish a one-party state. He called for the dissolution of Parcham and Khalq and said the communists should join his new party of National Revolution.

Daoud proceeded more cautiously in reducing the communist factions in the army. According to one of his supporters, he was concerned over the potential
implications of a military backlash. Nonetheless, in October 1975, he dismissed 40 Soviet-trained military officers and sent others to remote garrisons. He also began arranging training for Afghan military officers in India and Egypt (whose armed forces were also equipped with Soviet weapons), thereby enabling him to reduce the number of officers subject to the political influence of training in the USSR. Some military officers were sent to the US for schooling. Daoud also tried to reduce the number of Soviet military advisors in Afghanistan.

The Soviets decided it was time to invite Daoud to Moscow for discussions, and a visit was set for 12-15 April 1977. On the second day of the meetings, Soviet party leader Leonid Brezhnev launched into a tirade about the large number of "experts" from "NATO countries" involved in various projects in Afghanistan. He asserted that they were "spies" and demanded they be sent out of the country. Daoud stiffly retorted that Brezhnev's remarks were "unacceptable interference" in Afghanistan's internal affairs. The two reportedly patched things up superficially on the spot, but Daoud canceled the remaining private discussions he was scheduled to have with the Soviet leader and returned to Kabul a day later. From the perspective of both Moscow and Kabul, this was a demonstrable end of the affair.

After the Moscow face-off, Daoud stepped up his "outreach" program. He increased the proportion of military officers sent for training in Egypt and India, and began sending air force officers to train in Turkey. He also aggressively associated himself with "moderate" non-aligned states such as Yugoslavia. By early 1978, he had concluded economic aid agreements generating about $500 million each from Saudi Arabia and the United States. A visit to Kabul by the Shah of Iran was set for June, and Daoud was scheduled to meet with President Jimmy Carter in Washington in September. Meanwhile, despite Bhutto's overthrow in Pakistan by a military regime in 1977, talks between Kabul and Islamabad were continuing, and there appeared to be a strong possibility of settling their longstanding dispute. Although Moscow might plausibly have encouraged such talks with the leftist Bhutto government as a wedge against the US, a settlement with a rightist regime in Pakistan, one strongly supported by Washington, held the prospect of a significant shift in regional alignments.

For Soviet leaders, enough clearly was enough.
Political Parties of Afghanistan

Afghanistan has a multi-party system in development, with numerous parties in which no one party often has a chance of gaining power alone, and parties must work with each other to form coalition governments.

No political party is permitted to exist that advocates anything that is deemed to go against Islamic morality.

Jamiat-e Islami

It is an Islamic political party in Afghanistan along the line of the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan and Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. Jamiat-e Islami means "Islamic society" in the Persian language (its Dari variant is co-official in Afghanistan) and is also known as just Jamiat for short. Jamiat is the oldest Islamic political party in Afghanistan. It has a communitarian ideology based on Islamic law but is also considered moderately progressive. The majority of the party is ethnic Tajiks of northern and western Afghanistan. Since 1968 the official leader of Jamiat has been Burhanuddin Rabbani, although his actual power within the party has fluctuated.

People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) secretly encouraged and financed Afghan communists from before the formation of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1965 until the party unexpectedly came to power through a military coup d'état on 27 April 1978. There was no evidence that the USSR organized or controlled the coup, but it rushed advisers to Kabul to help consolidate the new regime under the PDPA leader, Nur Muhammad Taraki. When popular
opposition to the regime’s economic and social changes provoked armed resistance, Moscow supplied weapons and military advisers who took unofficial command of the Afghan armed forces. In mid-1979, the Soviets sought the removal of Taraki’s deputy, Hafizullah Amin. They blamed Amin for antagonizing the Afghan people into rebellion.

**Factions within the party**

After the revolution, Taraki assumed the Presidency, Prime Ministership and General Secretary of the PDPA. The government was divided along factional lines, with President Taraki and Deputy Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin of the Khalq faction against Parcham leaders such as Babrak Karmal and Mohammed Najibullah. Within the PDPA, conflicts resulted in exiles, purges and executions of Parcham members.

During its first 18 months of rule, the PDPA applied a Soviet-style program of modernizing reforms, many of which were viewed by conservatives as opposing Islam. Decrees setting forth changes in marriage customs and land reform were not received well by a population deeply immersed in tradition and Islam, particularly by the powerful land owners who were harmed economically by the abolition of usury (though usury is prohibited in Islam) and the cancellation of farmers’ debts. By mid-1978, a rebellion started with rebels attacking the local military garrison in the Nuristan region of eastern Afghanistan and soon civil war spread throughout the country. In September 1979, Deputy Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin seized power after a palace shootout that resulted in the death of President Taraki. Over two months of instability overwhelmed Amin’s regime as he moved against his opponents in the PDPA and the growing rebellion.
The Saur Revolution

By the time of the Daoud-Brezhnev face-off, the Soviets already had begun aggressively pressing the Parcham and Khalq factions to reunite into a single Communist party. Moscow had enlisted the help of intermediaries from other Communist parties in the region—the Iraqi and Indian parties, for example—as well as a leader of the ethnic dissident group in Pakistan who was living in exile in Afghanistan. These efforts were stymied for more than a year as each of the Afghan communist factions maneuvered for dominance. But the combination of Daoud’s moves and Soviet pressure finally convinced the two factions to agree—at the beginning of July 1977—to form a unified PDPA.

The fundamental split between the factions did not end, however; it was merely papered over for the time being. As in their earlier unified party, Taraki was given the top position of party General Secretary, with Karmal in second place under the title of First Secretary. Positions on the new party Central Committee were divided equally between Parcham and Khalq.

The equal division of positions did not extend to the military, where Khalq had established widespread influence. The disaffection of military officers who had survived Daoud’s purging, and their perception that Parcham was linked to him, drew them to the Khalq faction, which had launched a significant covert recruitment effort in the military after Daoud had banned open recruiting. Leading this recruiting was Amin, who now held—over virulent Parcham objection—the party position in charge of the military. This made him the point man for planning
the overthrow of Daoud.

Nine months after patching together their reunified party, the communists seized control of the government. The precipitating event was the assassination on 17 April 1978 of a top Parcham official, Mir Akbar Khyber. The PDPA accused the Daoud regime of being behind it, and organized large-scale demonstrations in protest. In response, police arrested Taraki, Karmal and five other top PDPA officials in the night and early morning hours of 25-26 April, but they did not initially arrest Amin. The police reportedly searched his residence and put him under surveillance in a form of house arrest, but did not actually take him into custody until sometime later on 26 April. In the meantime, he reportedly was able to pass the coup plans and implementing orders to key party supporters in the military.

The Saur Revolution is the name given to the PDPA takeover of political power from the government of Afghanistan on 28 April 1978. The word 'Saur', i.e. Taurus, refers to the Dari name of the second month of the Persian, the month in which the uprising took place.

The Coup d'état

The government of President Mohammad Daoud Khan came to a violent end in the early morning hours of April 28, 1978, when military units loyal to the Khalq faction of the PDPA stormed the palace in the heart of Kabul. The coup was strategically planned to begin Thursday, April 27, because it was the day before Friday, the Muslim day of worship, and most military commanders and government workers were off duty. With the help of a few airplanes of Afghanistan's military air force, which were mainly Soviet made MiG-21s and SU-7s, the insurgent troops overcame the resistance of the Presidential Guard and killed Daoud and most members of his family.

According to an eyewitness, the first signs of the impending coup in Kabul, about noon on April 27, were reports of a tank column headed toward the city, smoke of unknown origin near the Ministry of Defense, and armed men, some in military uniform and others not, guarding Pashtunistan Circle, a major intersection. The first shots heard were near the Ministry of Interior in the New City (Shari Nau) section of Kabul where a company of policemen apparently confronted an advancing tank column. From there the fighting spread to other areas of the city. Later, that afternoon, the first fighter planes, SU-7s, came in low and firing rockets at the national palace in the center of the city. In early evening came an announcement
on government-owned Radio Afghanistan that the Khalq (people) were overthrowing the Daoud regime. The use of the word Khalq, and its traditional association with the Communists in Afghanistan, made clear that the PDPA was leading the coup—and also that the rebels had captured the radio station.

The aerial attacks on the palace intensified about midnight as six SU-7s made repeated rocket attacks, lighting up the city. The next morning, April 28, the city was mostly quiet, although the sound of gunfire could still be heard on the southern side of the city. As the people of Kabul ventured out of their homes they realized that the rebels were in complete control of the city and learned that President Daoud and his brother Naim had been killed early that morning. A group of soldiers had surrounded the heavily-damaged palace and demanded their surrender. Instead, Daoud and Naim, pistols in hand, charged at the soldiers, and were killed in a hail of bullets.

A few days later, decrees announced that the Revolutionary Military Council had been replaced by a "Revolutionary Council" of a newly titled "Democratic Republic of Afghanistan." Taraki was named Chairman of the Council (de facto President of Afghanistan) and Prime Minister. Karmal was made Deputy Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister, with Amin ranking third as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. The military officer who led the army troops in the coup, Aslam Watanjar, nominally a Khalq sympathizer, was also given the rank of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Communications. The Ministry of Defense went to the officer who commanded the air force operations, Abdul Qadir, an open Parcham supporter.

From Washington's perspective, the Soviets' obvious motivation to reverse the direction in which Daoud had been taking Afghanistan, and to re-establish a more compliant client regime led naturally to suspicions that Moscow had engineered the government takeover. The fact that the USSR was the first state to formally recognize the new government reinforced this view. US embassy officers also had reported seeing Soviet advisors mingling with some of the Afghan military units carrying out the operations.
US intelligence assessments, however, said there was no evidence the Soviets had been involved in launching the coup, although Moscow had moved quickly to exploit the situation once it began. The assessments said that the more fervent Soviet ideologues and military officials probably saw the developments as offering an opportunity to create another allied Communist regime on the borders of the USSR.

Evidence now available from numerous and diverse sources indicates the Soviets had indeed been advised of PDPA coup planning. The coup that took place, however, was not the one they were expecting. Former PDPA and Soviet officials have all said that the plans being coordinated with Moscow envisaged the coup taking place later, around August. Often-contradictory accounts of the events that produced the move in April--beginning with the assassination of Khyber--have attributed them to diverse conspiracies and subplots. Some observers have described the move as resulting from an ill-advised provocation by Daoud, who had been informed of plotting among PDPA factions and sought to justify a preemptive strike. This scenario has Amin simply exploiting an opportunity. Many other sources have described the move as a scheme by Amin to eliminate his rivals--especially those with influence in the military--and set the stage for taking power for himself when the coup ultimately was launched. Some claim Amin planned it--with the help of clandestine supporters in the intelligence service and army--to preempt the plan being coordinated with Parcham and to position himself to dictate the resulting power hierarchy. And at least one knowledgeable scholar has argued that Amin was simply the beneficiary of actions taken by the military, on its own initiative, in response to the sweeping arrests Daoud ordered.

Whatever the case, the Soviets clearly sought to make the best of the hand that had been dealt them.

Moscow quickly dispatched political advisors from the CPSU International Department (the organization for coordinating relations with foreign Communist parties) to mediate the struggle for power between the two PDPA factions and coerce them into forming a viable regime. According to US intelligence reports, the number of Soviet military advisors in Afghanistan was increased from 350 at the time of the coup to 500 by the end of May, many of them in the Ministry of Defense in Kabul. US intelligence sources also disclosed that a delegation from the Soviet General Staff Operations Directorate signed a new military assistance protocol with the Taraki regime on 31 May.
The Second Stage of Party Purging

Soon the split between the PDPA factions erupted again. In a power play reportedly assisted by the defection of at least one or two Parchamites, Amin engineered a party vote giving his Khalq faction the decisive role in setting state policy. By mid-July, Karmal and six of the other top Parcham leaders had been "exiled" to ambassadorial posts. Amin formally took over Karmal's position as the Deputy Chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Council. Parcham supporter Abdul Qadir remained as Defense Minister for the time being, but Amin saw to it that he was isolated and under close watch. The fact that the Parcham leaders were exiled rather than imprisoned--or worse--and that Qadir and other, lower level Parcham members were allowed to retain their positions reportedly was the result of Soviet intervention. Amin would live to regret this benevolence.

A month after Newsom returned from Kabul, Afghan Defense Minister Qadir and two other senior military officers associated with the Parcham faction were arrested on charges of plotting to overthrow the new government. Their confessions were publicized a month later. As is the case with most other events in Afghanistan during this time, there are diverse accounts of what actually transpired, including the means by which the confessions were obtained. The most commonly accepted version is that Karmal, shortly before he left for Prague in July, conspired to have Qadir and a group of Parcham supporters in the army seize control of the government. The move was to be carried out on the Muslim holiday Eid, at the end of Ramadan, which that year would have been 4 September. (This timing has led some scholars to suggest that what Karmal and Qadir intended was to carry out the original plan the PDPA had been coordinating with Moscow prior to Amin's April preemption.) Qadir's plan was leaked to Amin--according to most accounts, by the Afghan ambassador to India, who was secretly an Amin supporter. Amin then ordered the arrests of the three senior Parcham military supporters.

Amin used the plot as grounds for purging the remaining Parcham members from the government, imprisoning many and executing some. He also summoned the seven exiled Parcham ambassadors back to Kabul, but they all--understandably--went into hiding, taking with them substantial funds from their various embassies.

With the elimination of Qadir as Defense Minister, Amin sought to take the post himself, in effect to take overt, official control over what already was his principal--
albeit eroding—power base. He was opposed by Watanjar, who believed that—as an army officer and the primary field commander of the coup that brought the PDPA to power—he was entitled to head the military. While nominally a Khalq supporter, Watanjar’s strongest loyalties were to himself and to the military cells formed under the tutelage of Soviet military intelligence. In a superficial compromise, Taraki took the Defense Minister title for himself, but Amin, as the principal Deputy Prime Minister—with widespread, as well as some covert support elements in the military—exercised primary control. Watanjar was demoted from his Deputy Prime Minister status, and became one of those whose enmity to Amin would play a key role in future events.

Policy of the USA

By this time, PDPA efforts to impose a socialist revolution throughout the countryside were meeting a violent backlash. Some scholars pointed out that the regime’s declared objectives of reducing the inequities and repressive measures of Afghanistan’s tribal feudalism were justified. The regime’s program of revolution called for redistributing monopolized land holdings, relieving peasant indenture status, reforming women’s marriage rights, and outlawing old customs that propped up the tribal leaders and Mullahs. But the measures were imposed dictatorially, and the inevitable resistance of feudal landholders and tribal chiefs, moneylenders, and mullahs was met with a repressive pattern of arrests and summary trials. Many mullahs were among those arrested and many others were ejected from their positions. Provincial administration in much of the countryside was placed under the central control of the Communist Party.

Armed opposition erupted. In November 1978, US intelligence reported that fighting in the provinces was escalating, and that insurgents appeared to have taken control of large areas of north and east Afghanistan. The insurgents reportedly were receiving arms and assistance from ethnic Pashtun guerrilla organizations operating from Pakistan. Intelligence reports that the loyalty of the army was eroding were borne out when the commander of the Afghan Army corps in Qandahar, in southeast Afghanistan, was arrested for supporting the insurgents. Soviet military advisors reportedly had been assigned to Afghan units directly engaged in combating the insurgents.

Early in December, Taraki and Amin flew to Moscow on what US analysts interpreted as a mission to gain increased assistance for combating the
insurrection. On 5 December, the two governments signed a 20-year treaty on "cooperation and friendship." US intelligence assessments pointed out that it included no explicit mutual defense commitment and contained a clause referring to Afghanistan's non-alignment. But the treaty also included an article under which the two governments would continue military cooperation and "consult with each other and take appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence, and territorial integrity" of the two states. As intelligence reporting pointed out, the Afghan government could invoke this provision to request military assistance from the USSR.

The 5 December treaty marked the beginning of a turn in US policy.

Former Secretary of State Vance has since said that Washington saw the treaty "as a Soviet reaction to the fact that Kabul's authority outside major cities had collapsed." Former National Security Advisor Brzezinski is reported to have said in an interview after leaving office that while the United States continued strict adherence to President Carter’s injunction against direct US assistance and the use of US weapons to support the Afghan insurgency, the CIA did consult with the Pakistan Government on its support to the opposition forces. At the same time, however, apparently reflecting both US hopes of offering Amin alternatives and Amin's efforts to assuage US concerns, Washington agreed to resume a small program for training Afghan military officers in the US that had been cut off after the April coup.

In mid-January 1979, a guerrilla force composed of Afghan refugees from Pakistan carried out a raid on a provincial capital—Asadabad—near the northeastern border of Afghanistan, and seized an army garrison there. The guerrillas were eventually driven out, but were able to hold the garrison briefly because the Afghan commander had already secretly defected to the insurrection. That same month, US intelligence reported that a high-level Soviet military delegation had arrived in Kabul to discuss further Soviet military aid. By this time, according to US intelligence information, the number of military advisors had been raised to as many as 1,000, with another 2,000 Soviet political and economic advisors also in the country.

On 14 February, US Ambassador Dubs was abducted off the streets of Kabul by an extremist Afghan anti-government cell. The kidnappers offered to swap him for the release of a group of their leaders imprisoned by the Afghan regime. The regime refused to deal with the abductors, despite demands from the US Embassy. Dubs was killed a few hours later when Afghan police stormed the hotel room where the terrorists were holding him. According to intelligence reports, Soviet advisors were
seen accompanying the Afghan forces that carried out the raid. To some senior Washington officials, the Afghan leaders' refusal to accept responsibility or apologize for the action reflected their anti-US, pro-Soviet bent. A week later, the Carter Administration cut its already modest economic assistance and canceled its plan to train a small number of Afghan military officers. The fact that the killing of the ambassador occurred one month after the Shah of Iran was ousted in a seizure of power by an Islamic fundamentalist regime may have influenced the US reaction.

The Soviets would be most reluctant to introduce large numbers of ground forces into Afghanistan to keep in power an Afghan government that had lost the support of virtually all segments of the population. Not only would the Soviets find themselves in an awkward morass in Afghanistan, but their actions could seriously damage their relations with India, and--to a lesser degree--with Pakistan. As a more likely option, the Soviets probably could seek to reestablish ties with those members of the Afghan opposition [Parcham] with whom Moscow had dealt profitably in the past.
As the situation in Afghanistan worsened during the summer of 1979, the Soviets were seeking alternatives to the Taraki-Amin regime. Soviet officials made no effort to hide their displeasure with their inability to coerce the regime into pulling back from the extreme social and economic measures that were inflaming tribal and Islamic groups. In conversations with US Embassy officials and other members of the international diplomatic corps in Kabul, Safronchuk made it clear that Moscow was looking for a way to replace Taraki and Amin--especially Amin. According to various accounts, Safronchuk said the Soviets were frustrated by their inability to persuade the Afghan regime to create a coalition that might win stronger support by bringing representatives of diverse political constituencies into the government. Other Soviet officials took the same line.

In mid-July, the East German ambassador in Kabul told US diplomats that the Soviets’ desire to replace the Afghan regime was such that they were willing to use force if necessary. Other sources said Moscow was planning a takeover by military officers opposed to Amin. There were several reports that exiled members of the Parcham faction in East Europe were claiming that the Soviets had promised to return them to power. Intelligence analysts viewed the "military takeover" option as the more likely, believing that Moscow would have no reason to expect the base of support for a Karmal government to be any broader than that of the Taraki-Amin faction.
Amin was considered a "zealous revolutionary" who was the real power in Afghanistan and who continued to push his inflammatory reform policies despite Soviet urging to proceed more cautiously. The high visibility being given to this Soviet outlook led the US Embassy in Kabul to posit in July that Moscow was engaged in a calculated effort to soften reaction to the growing Soviet military presence and to mitigate reaction if a regime turnover ultimately was achieved. Another purpose not mentioned in this Embassy report may have been to step up pressures on Taraki and Amin to moderate their revolutionary policies.

Whatever the reason for the high noise level, Taraki and Amin clearly got the word that the Soviets were out to replace them. In late July, US intelligence analysts described a shakeup in the Afghan cabinet as a move by Taraki and Amin to preempt a feared Soviet-sponsored takeover by alienated military officers. Amin reclaimed the post of Defense Minister, a move that intelligence analysts described as probably designed to improve his vantage point for spotting and heading off any coup from within the military. Watanjar was "reported to have figured in the plan" for installing a new government, and was sent back to the Interior Ministry, deepening his antagonism toward Amin.

Soviet Reactions & US Interpretations

This view was reinforced when, on 17 August, a top-level Soviet military delegation of 13 generals and six colonels arrived in Kabul. Unlike the group of officers sent to Kabul in April after the Herat uprising, this delegation was not made up of "political generals" concerned with "ideological outlook." It was headed by the Deputy Chief of the Soviet General Staff and Commander of the Soviet Ground Forces General I. G. Pavlovsky, and was composed of officers responsible for planning and directing military operations. The fact that this delegation was dispatched less than two weeks after the Bala Hissar uprising led intelligence assessments to report that its mission was probably to conduct a close-up examination of the military situation and operational conditions in the aftermath of the rebellion. And the rank and composition of the delegation also led intelligence analysts to suggest Moscow was contemplating a major decision on the level and form of field-level military support it was willing to give to the Taraki regime.

At about the time of the Bala Hissar mutiny, intelligence analysts had concluded that the Soviets had essentially given up on their efforts to replace Taraki and Amin. Having been unsuccessful in their attempts to create an Afghan coalition that would offer anything better, the Soviets appeared to have decided to focus on the aid and advisors needed to help the existing regime survive. If the Soviets were
to make such an investment, however, they presumably needed some assurance that the Afghan Army could muster the cohesion and commitment to take the offensive against the insurgency. And in view of the uncertainty about this, some analysts presumed that part of the Pavlovsky delegation's mission was to evaluate the operational feasibility of committing Soviet military forces to the task of crushing the insurrection.

Nonetheless, a week after the delegation had arrived in Kabul, it was reported that the majority of its analysts "continue to feel that the deteriorating situation does not presage an escalation of Soviet military involvement in the form of a direct combat role."

It was reported that one "possible" purpose of the Pavlovsky mission was to lay the groundwork for Soviet military intervention, in the event Moscow decided that it was necessary. An Embassy cable concluded that "at some point the hemorrhaging of Khalq military manpower [through death, desertion and defection] will require the USSR to make a decision whether to commit its own combat units." The cable pointed out that "there were not enough Afghan tank crews to man the large number of tanks being delivered by the USSR," and that at some point the Taraki-Amin regime might feel compelled to ask for assistance from Soviet troops.

The Embassy also reported that many diplomats in Kabul did not rule out the possibility that Moscow might feel compelled to send in troops to save the revolution. These officials believed that, in such an event, the initial involvement would be limited--perhaps to a special airborne force to protect Soviet housing installations--but that, once there, the troop commitment probably would expand. Others diplomats believed the Soviets would withhold combat support in the belief they could "do business with almost any successor regime." The Embassy's own view was that "The time has not yet arrived for a Khalq plea for help---nor is there yet any solid evidence that the USSR is poising itself for armed intervention. Undoubtedly, the USSR has been making its contingency plans and preparations."

A newspaper article described the growing number of Soviet military personnel already in the country, their "takeover" of Bagram air base, the heavy traffic of military transport aircraft there, and the reports of Soviet advisors participating in combat operations. The Soviets were said to recognize that military intervention would have severe implications for relations with the US, India, Iran and other Islamic countries. Nevertheless, the article quoted one "foreign expert" as saying that "The Soviets' inability to find a political solution was moving them toward direct military intervention. If you accept the premise that the Russians cannot let Afghanistan go, and if you also realize that the Afghan institutions can no longer
hope to contain the insurrections, the only possible conclusion is that the Soviets come in forcefully."

The Subtle Initial Indicators

Meanwhile, in the last week of August, intelligence agencies were again seeing activity in some of the same Soviet combat forces opposite the northern border of Afghanistan that had been active in March. The 5th Guards Motorized Rifle Division at Kushka had again moved components out of garrison. Some of its subordinate units— including a battalion of tanks, an antiaircraft artillery battalion, a mortar battery, and groups of trucks—had been moved to a nearby rail yard. Intelligence assessments said the movements appeared to be connected to a field training exercise, again with some apparent reservist participation.

Components of the 105th Guards Airborne Division also were again detected in what appeared to be preparations for air movement. (Unlike the motorized rifle divisions, airborne divisions based in the USSR were maintained at or near full manning levels.) The airborne unit activities seemed to involve training in specific techniques for loading equipment on a new and more advanced military transport aircraft (the IL-76) than the model (AN-12) normally used by this airborne division. This prompted the first intelligence assessment suggesting that the Soviets might be preparing to commit airborne troops to Afghanistan. The assessment said the likely purpose of such an operation would be to defend Kabul in the event of a sudden, drastic deterioration that threatened to overwhelm the Afghan capital.

An Alert Memorandum on 14 September from Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner to the President and other senior US officials, reflecting this concern, warned that "The Soviet leaders may be on the threshold of a decision to commit their own forces to prevent the collapse of the regime and to protect their sizable stakes in Afghanistan."

This memorandum also said, however, that Moscow was sensitive to the potentially open-ended military and political costs that could result from such a venture. Therefore, if the Soviets ultimately did increase their military role they were likely to do so only incrementally—raising the number of military advisors, expanding involvement in combat operations, and possibly bringing in small units to provide security in key cities. The Alert Memorandum nonetheless acknowledged that, even if the commitment initially was limited to incremental steps, the Soviets would risk amplifying their stake in the ultimate outcome, making it harder to resist further
increasing their military commitment if their initial steps did not produce the results they sought.

Another Duel in the Palace
The same day this Alert Memorandum was sent to US policy officials, a new leadership crisis occurred in Kabul. On the evening of 14 September (mid-day in Washington) Kabul radio announced the dismissal of four top government officials—Minister of the Interior Watanjar, Minister of Communications Ghulabzoy, Minister of Tribal Affairs Mazdoorjar, and Chief of Intelligence (the AGCA, which included the secret police) Sarwari. The radio announcement said the dismissals had been at Amin's recommendation and with Taraki's approval. Troops and armored vehicles had surrounded the presidential palace and begun to occupy key positions in the capital. (These military components were from the 4th Afghan Army Armored Corps, which had carried out similar functions in the coup against Daoud a year and a half earlier.) Gunfire had been heard in the palace area.

Two days later, on 16 September, Kabul radio announced that an "extraordinary meeting" of the PDPA Central Committee had been held and that Taraki had "requested that he be relieved of his party and government leadership positions due to health reasons and physical incapacity." The announcement said that Amin had been appointed to replace Taraki as the new party general secretary. The top government body, the "Revolutionary Council," had also met that day, according to the radio broadcast, also "approving" Taraki's "request" to be relieved of the Presidency and appointing Amin as his successor.

In the following days, US Intelligence again detected heightened activity in Soviet combat forces across the border from Afghanistan. A regiment of the 105th Guards Airborne Division had once more been moved into convoy formation, apparently being readied for deployment. Armored troop carriers and field artillery normally kept in covered storage were again positioned for loading aboard transport aircraft. Partial mobilization also appeared to be taking place in a ground force motorized rifle division—the 58th located at Kizyl Arvat, west of Kushka—that was not one of those seen engaging in such activity in March. This raised to three the number of such divisions in this region seen mobilizing in recent months. Two airborne divisions located farther from the Afghan border—the 104th in the Transcaucasus and the 98th in Odessa—also appeared to be preparing to deploy. The activity in all these forces would continue until the beginning of October, at which time all would return to their garrisons.

On 19 September, the State Department included in its press briefing a statement that the US had detected "increased activity" in Soviet military units near the
United Nations Security Council

Afghan border. The statement said that while the purpose of this activity could not be confirmed, the US "wanted to reiterate [its] opposition to any intervention in Afghan internal affairs." On the same day, National Security Advisor Brzezinski informed the President that he believed a Soviet invasion was becoming more probable. A day later, officials from various US agencies met to examine plans for dealing with this potential development, and Brzezinski asked the DCI to prepare an intelligence appraisal "of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan to date, so that we can differentiate between creeping involvement and direct invasion."

Meanwhile, information from diverse sources was providing a basic outline of the events that had brought about the sudden leadership change in the Afghan regime. A few days before the shootout at the presidential palace, Taraki--returning from a conference in Havana--had stopped off for discussions in Moscow. Upon Taraki's return to Kabul, Amin demanded that four officials whom he accused of plotting his ouster be summarily dismissed. (He reportedly had been tipped off by conspirators of his own.) Taraki sternly rebuffed this demand, but Amin defiantly dismissed the four officials. Taraki reacted by summoning Amin to a meeting at the presidential palace on 14 September. When Amin entered the palace and began to mount the stairs to Taraki's suite, one or more of the palace security guards--reportedly acting under instructions from one of the dismissed plotters--tried to shoot him. Amin survived because of the effort of the chief of the palace security force, a secret Amin supporter who was killed in the shooting (and later extolled as a hero). Amin escaped, and immediately launched his military move to take power.

Uncertainty surrounded the question of a Soviet role. The various conflicting reports received through diplomatic and other channels included allegations that Taraki had discussed the plan during his stopover in Moscow, and that an Amin sympathizer who was in Taraki's travel delegation got wind of it and warned Amin. These stories varied as to whether the scheme originated with the Afghan plotters and was supported by the Soviets, or was pushed on Taraki by Moscow. The US Embassy in Kabul, for its part, was skeptical that the plot had been discussed in Moscow.

Taraki's whereabouts in the immediate aftermath of the announcement of his ouster were initially unknown. Stories circulated that he had been injured, if not killed, in the shooting at the presidential palace on 14 September. The Embassy subsequently learned that he was alive but being held prisoner at the presidential palace. In the ensuing weeks there would be reports that three of the plotters had escaped (Defense Minister Watanjar, intelligence chief Sawari, and Minister of Tribal Affairs Ghulabzoy) and were hiding at the Soviet mission compound in
Kabul, although the US embassy again expressed skepticism about the validity of such stories. (The fourth plotter, Minister of Communications Mazdoorjar, was known to have been captured and placed under house arrest.)

As murky as the picture was, there was one point on which reports were virtually unanimous, and that was that Moscow was not happy with the outcome.

Western news media pointed out that Amin had been a principal obstacle to Soviet efforts to find a political solution to the turmoil in Afghanistan.

The Intelligence Community concluded that the Soviets probably believed Amin’s coup had narrowed the regime’s base of support and made the counterinsurgency task even more difficult. An Interagency Intelligence Memorandum disseminated on 28 September, prepared in response to Brzezinski’s request a week earlier, said that "Moscow probably views the situation as even more unstable...[and] may fear that this coup might fragment the Afghan Army and lead to a breakdown of control in Kabul." It said that "The threat raised by the Muslim insurgency to the survival of the Marxist government in Afghanistan appears to be more serious now than at any time since the government assumed power in April 1978."

Deeper Insight into USSR Military Operations

The 28 September 1979 Interagency Intelligence Memorandum also provided an in-depth examination of where Moscow’s military involvement in Afghanistan was likely to lead in the longer term. It noted that the estimated number of Soviet military advisors in Afghanistan had grown from 350 at the time of the communist coup to some 750-1,000 by the beginning of 1979, and to 2,500 at the time of Amin’s takeover. It also pointed out that advisors were attached to every command level in the Afghan Army, including at least some regimental and battalion level units engaged in combat.

The Interagency Intelligence Assessment described the Soviet military as having two very distinct options in Afghanistan: to serve in a support capacity, assisting in a military campaign carried out primarily by the Afghan Army, or to mount a large-scale intervention in which Soviet forces would take over most of the combat operations. Potential actions in the first category were described as including:

- Increased equipment and advisors, with advisors allowed to participate more extensively in combat and combat air support and in ferrying men and material within Afghanistan;

- Limited intervention of combat and combat service support units, including attack helicopter units and logistic support and maintenance components to
enhance Afghan "combat reach and effectiveness;"

- Limited intervention with Soviet combat units to provide security for Kabul and key cities and critical points, and perhaps to operate selectively in combat operations alongside Afghan Army units to stiffen their resolve. To do anything beyond securing Kabul and a few other key cities or critical points, the interagency assessment gave the Soviets only the second category of military options--committing massive numbers of ground forces in a potentially open-ended operation.

As a practical matter, the three courses of action postulated under the first category were not alternatives, but gradations of escalating military involvement, and the choice was how far to go and how fast. All of these moves were designed to help the Afghan Army defeat the insurgent forces, and all of them relied on the Afghan Army taking the main role in nationwide military operations. Thus the linchpin of Moscow's willingness and ability to undertake one or more of these steps was, according to intelligence analysts, its assessment of the loyalty and cohesion of the Afghan Army.

Analysts also believed that, even for limited combat support options, the Soviets would need to move cautiously lest they alienate rather than bolster the Afghan forces they still were counting on to play the major combat role. For this reason, even if the Soviets decided to introduce limited combat forces, they were expected to do so incrementally, beginning with a few battalions and working up to an airborne division or two at the most. The 105th Guards Airborne Division--seen in preparatory activities during previous upheavals in Afghanistan, and with a full-strength troop complement of 7,900--was judged to be the most likely force to be brought in.

One postulated exception that might cause the Soviets to move more rapidly would be a backlash to the Amin coup that provoked severe fighting in the capital. In such a situation, according to the intelligence assessment, the Soviets probably were prepared to deploy one or more airborne divisions to Kabul and vicinity to protect Soviets already there as well as to maintain a pro-Soviet regime. (Again, the preparations of the 105th Guards Airborne Division would certainly have supported such a view.) The intelligence community analysis said that such a deployment would not be intended for use in fighting the Muslim insurgency but acknowledged that, once there, Soviet units could get drawn into the fighting.

If the Afghan Army came apart, according to this analysis, Moscow would confront
the prospect that preserving the current Afghan regime would mean taking the lead role in combating the insurgency—what the assessment described as "massive" Soviet military intervention. Soviet ground force units moving into Afghanistan would meet armed opposition not only from the insurgents but from defecting Afghan Army forces.

The Interagency Intelligence Memorandum described such an undertaking by the Soviets as a "multidivisional operation" requiring more than the four ground force divisions and one airborne division (the 105th) based in the Turkestan Military District. It noted that some additional divisions could be drawn from the nearby Central Asian Military District opposite the Xinjiang Province of China, but said the Soviets probably would be reluctant to weaken their position there. "An operation of this magnitude would therefore require the re-deployment of forces—and their supporting elements—from western and central [USSR] military districts, in addition to those near the Soviet-Afghan border," according to the assessment.

The memorandum said Moscow had seemed prepared before the Amin coup to offer some combat help well short of the major intervention that the assessment defined as a "multidivisional ground force operation." Given the uncertainty immediately following the coup, any such moves probably had been deferred, according to the memorandum, until the Soviets were satisfied that Amin would consolidate his position. But as soon as Moscow felt assured he had done so, according to intelligence analysts, the Soviet leaders' desire to avoid facing an all-or-nothing choice would cause them to begin increasing their combat support, up to what the memorandum characterized as a "sprinkling" of Soviet combat units.

If, in fact, the Afghan Army did come apart, and Moscow confronted a situation where only large-scale intervention by Soviet troops would save the regime, the intelligence analysis concluded that Soviet leaders were more likely to abandon the Khalq regime than to be willing to incur the costs of invasion. Their first choice obviously would be to find some viable leftist alternative to Amin, but if no such faction appeared, according to the analysis, "the Soviets would promote installation of a moderate regime willing to deal with them." Intelligence analysts acknowledged that abandoning a communist regime Moscow had so demonstrably sponsored would be seen by many Soviet leaders as damaging to the USSR. The Soviets could deflect this to some extent by standing behind their policy and blaming the Afghan communists for not following Moscow's guidance.

By comparison, according to the intelligence analysis, the price of an invasion would include:
"The grave and open-ended task of holding down an Afghan insurgency in rugged terrain. The Soviets would also have to consider the likely prospect that they would be contending with an increasingly hostile and anti-Soviet population. The USSR would then have to consider the likelihood of an adverse reaction in the West, as well as further complications with Iran, India, and Pakistan. Moscow would also have to weigh the negative effects elsewhere in the Muslim world of a massive Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. A conspicuous use of Soviet military force against an Asian population would also provide the Chinese considerable political capital."

On balance, the Interagency Intelligence Memorandum concluded (with no dissents) that Moscow would not believe that saving the current Khalq regime or even another communist regime was worth this price. The final sentence of the memorandum listed examples of situations in which there would be a "substantially greater" chance that Moscow would be willing "to pay the price of large-scale and long-term military intervention." Examples included "the prospect of the advent of an anti-Soviet regime," "foreign military intervention" and "prolonged political chaos." In light of the events that ultimately occurred, it should be noted that the condition of "prolonged political chaos" could accompany most scenarios for intervention.

The interagency assessment did not address the activities that had been observed in the airborne division or in three of the four motorized rifle divisions in the Turkestan Military District. Nor did it mention the alerting of airborne divisions in the central and western USSR during times of crisis in Afghanistan. The only comment offered on the status and activities of the Soviet forces was the conclusion that "We have not seen indications that the Soviets are at the moment preparing ground forces for large-scale military intervention in Afghanistan." By "large scale" the memorandum presumably was referring to the "multi-division" force described above.
Approaching the Boiling Point

On 10 October, Kabul radio announced that Taraki had died the previous day of a "serious illness," and that his remains had immediately been buried. In Washington it was generally believed he had in fact been fatally wounded during the palace shootout and probably had died well before the official announcement.

Less than a week later, an entire infantry division of the Afghan Army garrisoned at Rishkor, about nine miles southwest of Kabul, mutinied and launched an attack toward Kabul. Several days of intense combat ensued before the mutiny finally was put down. In addressing the critical importance of the Afghan Army's loyalty in determining Soviet actions, the intelligence appraisal disseminated at the end of September had pointed out that "with four major mutinies in the past seven months, its continued allegiance is suspect." The "frequency ratio" was now up to five in eight.

Once again, as had been the case in every crisis in Afghanistan since the Herat uprising in March, the Soviet 105th Guards Airborne Division at Fergana--the military unit the recent Interagency Intelligence Memorandum had described as most likely to be deployed to Kabul if Moscow urgently sought to beef-up security there—was getting ready to move.

Heightened activity also was seen in the same three divisions: the 5th Motorized Rifle Division at Kushka; the 108th at Termez; and the 58th that Kizyl Arvat that had been periodically engaging in field deployments and unusual training and mobilization rehearsals in the preceeding months.

The insurgents had begun to focus particularly on cutting supply lines to cities and military bases. The Afghan regime was forced to provide armored convoys for movements along major roads linking Kabul and the other major cities, and to increase its reliance on aerial supply of its major army garrisons. US government analysts were publicly quoted as saying that, while the Afghan Army controlled Kabul and a handful of major cities, insurgents operated with impunity in about half of the country.

Offensive operations by the Afghan Army succeeded when Soviet military personnel were heavily involved both in combat and combat support at all echelons down to the front-line units.

Also, the Soviet motorized rifle divisions in the area were again engaging in activity that, although below a level indicating imminent deployment, suggested efforts to
raise their overall readiness. This mainly was field training at the battalion and regimental level, apparently including activated reservists. By the last week of November, at least two of these divisions—the 5th at Kushka and the 108th at Termez—were mobilized at least to a limited degree.

By this time, however, the crisis ignited in Iran by the seizure of the US Embassy there was adding a new element of ambiguity to the analysts’ interpretations of Soviet military activities in the region. This was especially so for the ground force motorized rifle divisions. Some intelligence reporting postulated that the apparent effort to improve their readiness was a manifestation of Moscow’s unease over possible US reactions to the Iranian crisis.

On 29 November, senior Soviet Deputy Interior Minister Viktor Paputin, who carried the rank of general in the Soviet internal security forces, arrived in Kabul. Over the next few days he met with his counterparts in the Afghan internal security forces and with Amin.

Also on 29 November and continuing for the next few days, Soviet military transport aircraft were flying into Kabul. Some of them remained parked at the Kabul airport, but reports from observers in Kabul indicated that a portion of the aircraft had apparently discharged whatever cargo or personnel they were carrying and quickly departed. The type of aircraft seen at Kabul, and other evidence, indicated that they probably had come from the western USSR, either flying directly or staging through Soviet bases north of Afghanistan.

Whatever they brought had been expeditiously removed from the airport, and there were reports that some special Soviet troop units had been moved into the city.

On 8 December, a second Soviet airborne battalion had been brought to the airfield at Bagram, site of the main operating base for Moscow’s military assistance mission.

The United States of America’s DIA’s Defense Intelligence Notes (DIN) stated that the heightened preparations suggested “the threat is perceived in Moscow as greater than our reporting indicates...[and] demonstrates Moscow’s resolve in pursuing its interests in Afghanistan despite obvious pitfalls and at a time when the Kremlin may consider the US to be preoccupied with events in Tehran.”

Two days later, a motorized rifle battalion, equipped with armored vehicles for transportation and for combat operations, as well as with field artillery and
antiaircraft artillery had arrived. This represented a new level of Soviet military presence.

On 11 December, the National Intelligence Officer for Warning (U.S.A) convened a group of senior analysts to address the question of whether the deployment of the motorized rifle battalion to Bagram signaled that the Soviets had “crossed a line” in their intentions to engage in military combat operations in Afghanistan. The clear majority of those participating in this meeting supported the view that already had been given in the daily intelligence: that the additional forces had been introduced to provide increased security, especially in the event of a potential need to evacuate Soviet personnel in a rapidly deteriorating situation. Their judgment was, therefore, that although the deployment significantly expanded the security forces, it did not yet foreshadow intentions to escalate Soviet engagement in the Afghan conflict itself. A small minority of the participants dissented, pointing out that the battalion included a full complement of anti-aircraft artillery. These analysts argued that it was difficult to conceive of any aircraft posing such a threat to Soviet troops in Afghanistan as to warrant including anti-aircraft weapons, with one exception—the Afghan Air Force. They believed this suggested that Moscow might be contemplating an operation of sufficient magnitude to risk a reaction by at least parts of the Afghan military.

In the next few days, the US Embassy in Kabul reported that observers there had seen what were believed to be soldiers of a Soviet combat battalion being stationed discreetly around the Afghan capital. This information seemed to confirm what some analysts believed was the most likely explanation for the mysterious Soviet military air transport flights into Kabul at the end of November. Their presumption was that these troops probably were from the “Spetznaz,” Soviet military units roughly comparable to US Special Forces.

By 15 December, the Soviet 5th Guards and 108th motorized rifle divisions—the ones most frequently seen in heightened training and mobilization activity—had been brought to what appeared to be full strength, and that the 108th was leaving its garrison. A buildup of transport and combat helicopters had been detected at Kokaty air base in the south of the USSR’s Turkestan Military District, and other military transport aircraft were being marshaled at air bases in this area. A substantial buildup of tactical combat aircraft—fighters, fighter-bombers and light bombers—also was seen at Soviet airfields in the region, including at some airfields that normally did not serve as bases for such aircraft.

Also on 15 December, the Secretary of State of the United States’ special advisor on Soviet affairs, Marshal Schulman, called in the chargé from the Soviet Embassy
(Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin had departed for the USSR a week earlier) and asked that Moscow provide an explanation for the sudden increase of its military presence in Afghanistan. A cable was also sent that day to the US Embassy in Moscow instructing the ambassador to put the same question directly to the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

It was decided at a national security meeting held on the 17th of December that the US would explore with Pakistan and the United Kingdom the possibility of providing additional funds, weapons and communications to the Afghan rebels "to make it as expensive as possible for the Soviets to continue their efforts." The US also would increase worldwide propaganda relating to the Soviet activities, recommending to its European allies that they encourage more media attention to the Afghan situation and step up efforts "to cast the Soviets as opposing Muslim religious and nationalist expression." The participants in the meeting also concluded, however, that for now the US would continue to keep its diplomatic demarches to the Soviets in private channels "for the record," in the belief that "there was no benefit in going public at this time."

Also on 17 December an event occurred in Kabul which, in the light of later developments, may have been of greater significance than was recognized at the time. An assassination attempt on Amin took place at his presidential palace residence. Once again he survived, although there were reports that he suffered a slight leg wound. His nephew, who was head of the intelligence service and Amin's top security aide, was seriously wounded and taken to the USSR for treatment. Two days later, Amin moved his residence to a former royal palace complex about seven miles southeast of the center of Kabul, and took his security detachment with him.

The Main Forces Deploy

The alert memorandum finally was shaken loose on 19 December when large stocks of gasoline and other fuels pre-positioned in mobile containers near the key road crossings from the USSR into Afghanistan. A train was also unloading bridging equipment near one of the crossings. The 5th Guards Motorized Rifle Division had left Kushka and was heading toward the border. Preparations were under way to move additional airborne units from three air bases in the western USSR. The buildup of tactical aircraft was continuing at airfields in the border region. There also was evidence that troops from a Soviet unit already in Afghanistan (suspected to be from the motorized rifle battalion recently brought to Bagram) were securing a key intersection (the Salang Pass) on the main road from
the USSR to Kabul.

On 21 December, the United States began publicizing extensive details of the expanded Soviet military presence in Afghanistan and the buildup of Soviet forces north of the Afghan border. According to press reports, "Carter Administration officials" said they were providing this information "in line with a recent decision to publicize Moscow's military role in the Afghan war". They described the movement of three battalions of Soviet armored and airborne troops to an air base near Kabul within the previous two weeks, resulting in the addition of some 1,500 combat soldiers to the Soviet forces already in country. The press also was told that two Soviet motorized rifle divisions and an airborne division, totaling more than 30,000 troops, had been put on alert near the border. One State Department official "who asked not to be identified" said that "several times in recent days" the US had voiced its concern to Moscow over the buildup of forces in and near Afghanistan.

These same press accounts also reflected divided views among intelligence analysts and Administration officials over the implications of the buildup. One "White House national security aide," was reported to have said that the Soviet preparations around Afghanistan "show all the marks of a major military intervention," pointing out that the same signs had been seen before the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. Some intelligence analysts reportedly had cited the creation of a special Soviet operational headquarters near the border as a signal that Soviet forces were about to go in.

"However, other officials said that they doubted that Moscow would begin a major invasion and that the buildup was part of a more gradual process of military intervention in the guerrilla war," according to the press reports.

On 24 December, a massive airlift by Soviet military transport aircraft was carried out. The majority of flights were from the western USSR to air bases in the Soviet Military District of Turkestan, but a sizable portion also were landing at Kabul and Bagram airfields in Afghanistan. The same day, the National Security Agency issued a report saying a major Soviet move into Afghanistan was possibly imminent.

On December 25, waves of military aircraft were surging into Afghanistan, most from the Turkestan Military District. The aircraft detected the night before flying into airfields in the Soviet border region near Afghanistan were using those airfields as staging bases. The units being airlifted included not only those from the 105th Airborne Division at nearby Fergana, but also the 103rd Airborne Division headquartered at Vitebsk, in the Belorussian Military District in the Western USSR.
Some flights also were coming from bases in the Moscow Military District, and were carrying special forces units. In addition to landing at the two main air bases of Bagram and Kabul, some flights were detected going into Shindand and Qandahar, in the western and southern parts of Afghanistan.

The airlift continued at a high level until the evening of 27 December, when it began to tail off. Between 24 and 27 December 1979 there were 250 to 300 flights. The forces brought in were initially estimated to be about five to six battalions, amounting to 2,000 to 2,500 troops.

The perception of an operation merely to prop up the existing Amin regime was definitively squashed on 27 December (late in the evening Kabul time) when Soviet troops carried out an assault on Amin’s new residence that resulted in his death. In a broadcast on Kabul radio, Babrak Karmal announced that Amin had been ousted by the "People's Democratic Party and the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan." Karmal said he was heading the new government even then being formed.

There still are differing versions, even from Soviet and Afghan participants, of exactly how Amin was killed—whether his Soviet attackers shot him, or he shot himself as they burst into his palace. There were no doubts, however, that it was a Soviet operation to install the new regime of their choice. Soviet special forces ("Spetznaz") troops attacking Amin’s presidential palace were outfitted in Afghan Army uniforms and appeared to have been selected by ethnic origin to assist their disguise. Too many eyewitnesses observed Soviet combat units simultaneously seizing or cordoning off several other key political and military facilities, including the ministries of defense, interior, and even the Kabul radio station. Some of the Soviet units included armored combat vehicles, and in some cases they engaged in firefights with the few Afghan units that put up nominal resistance.

By 28 December, two Soviet motorized rifle divisions near the border were moving into Afghanistan. The 108th Division from Termez was moving along the road that went through the now-secured Salang pass to Bagram and Kabul. The other, the 5th Guards from Kushka, crossed over further west and headed down a road that circled through Herat toward the major southwest Afghan city of Qandahar. The airlift, together with the movement of the two motorized rifle divisions meant that there now were some 30,000 troops in or entering Afghanistan. The Carter administration immediately publicized this information.
At about the time these divisions were crossing the border, the new Kabul regime announced in a broadcast that Moscow had accepted its request for military assistance. The broadcast also announced the formation of the new government, whose members would include at least two of the plotters (Watanjar and Sarwari) who had been in hiding--reportedly with Soviet assistance--since their failed attempt to remove Amin in September.

There no longer was any doubt in Washington about what had begun on Christmas Eve. The Soviets had airlifted major combat forces into Afghanistan, using them to seize control of the capital and major cities and transportation nodes. They eliminated the existing government, installed a proxy regime and used it to provide cover for sending in the additional combat divisions. At a National Security Council meeting President Carter chaired that day, "All knew," according to Brzezinski, "that a major watershed had been reached."

There was a new combat zone on the Cold War battleground.

The American Embassy in Kabul cabled Washington announcing "what the British first, and later the Americans, tried to prevent for a hundred years has happened: the Russian Bear has moved south of the Hindu Kush."
**Conclusion**

It is not possible now to chart an exact course for the future. Afghanistan’s history is replete with examples where entire armed factions change sides in recognition of new realities.

Delegates, you need to understand the complexity and sensitivity of the entire situation. The cold war has reached its boiling point and as it stands today, the security of the world is at stake. The world today is on the verge of a potential Third World War. It is up to the delegates to present the viewpoint of their respective country and arrive at a solution acceptable to all. It is the duty of each and every delegate present in the Security Council to try and resolve this crisis, always keeping in mind his/her country’s stand on the said issue.

However, note that this is only a starting point for you. Delegates are expected to be thorough in their research and put forth their point emphatically. Also note that Wikipedia will not be considered as an authentic source of information.

I can only hope that this is not the beginning of the end.