

Forum: Historical Security Council 1990

Issue: Question of Afghanistan

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Introduction

Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) was a sovereign State established by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Since 1972, Afghanistan's sovereignty has been endangered by the outside interference of foreign States. The United Nations (UN) Charter commands the principle of self-determination and the right of people to decide their own government.¹ The situation in Afghanistan clearly violated the charter, making it important to the United Nations Security Council.

The United Nations had negotiated in the Geneva Accords of 1988 the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The UN believed the withdrawal would deter other States from challenging Afghanistan's sovereignty and the population's right to choose their own political governance, but sadly no such development occurred.² After the Soviet Union's (USSR) forces were withdrawn, the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, along with others, were still indirectly affecting the outcome of the conflict, by supporting the Mujahideen rebel group. The power struggle in Afghanistan between the PDPA and Mujahideen rebel troops required a resolution³.

After the Soviet withdrawal, the struggle for power between the PDPA and mujahideen rebels had not been resolved. The civil war endangered regional stability in the Middle East as well as international peace and security. In the spring of 1989, the Mujahideen began an attack in Jalalabad with help from the Pakistani Intelligence Agency (ISI). The attack marked a continuation of the conflict and the beginning of the Afghan civil war.⁴

¹ United Nations Security Council - Purposes and Principles of the UN (Chapter I of UN Charter)
<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/purposes-and-principles-un-chapter-i-un-charter#rel3> Accessed 02/01/2025

² UN Research Guides - Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its 44th session
<https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/547/74/img/nr054774.pdf> Accessed 02/01/2025

³ Britannica- Afghan War (Nov 22, 2024)
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Afghan-War> Accessed 02/01/2025

⁴ Wikipedia- Battle of Jalalabad (1989)
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Jalalabad_\(1989\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Jalalabad_(1989)) Accessed 02/01/2025

Definition of Key Terms

Tactical / Military Withdrawal

The act of pulling back or removing military personnel from a specific location and the ceasing of military activity in an area.⁵

Sovereignty

Full right and power of a state, or a governing body, to govern itself without external interference as stated by Articles 2 (4) and (7) of the UN Charter⁶

Statehood

The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) the capacity to enter into relations with other states.⁷

Regional Stability:

The condition in which a geographic region experiences political, social, and economic balance without conflict or external threats. Stability is crucial for economic growth, political cooperation, and social development among countries in a region.⁸

Afghan Civil War (1989–1992):

The conflict that followed the Soviet withdrawal involved the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and various Mujahideen factions. The war officially started when the Mujahideen, together with ISI's help, began the battle of Jalalabad.⁹

⁵ Wikipedia - Withdrawal (Military)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Withdrawal_\(military\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Withdrawal_(military)) Accessed 20/01/2025

⁶ Oxford Public International Law Library

<https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1472> Accessed 03/01/2025

⁷ ILSA - Montevideo Convention

<https://www.ilsa.org/Jessup/Jessup15/Montevideo%20Convention.pdf> Accessed 05/01/2025

⁸ Fiveable Library

<https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/united-states-history-since-1945/regional-stability> Accessed 20/01/2025

⁹ Wikipedia - Battle of Jalalabad

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Jalalabad_\(1989\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Jalalabad_(1989)) Accessed 20/01/2025

Proxy War:

A conflict where external powers support opposing sides without direct military involvement. In Afghanistan, the United States and its allies supported the Mujahideen, while the Soviet Union backed the PDPA government.¹⁰

Geneva Accords (1988):

A set of international agreements aimed at ending foreign involvement in the Afghan conflict and facilitating the withdrawal of Soviet forces.¹¹

Explanation of the Question

The conflict's roots are in the political and religious disagreements between the Muslim Mujahideen Rebels and the Communist party in power in Afghanistan. The supporting states with both parties were either invested in the issue because of one party's views or the attempt to extinguish the other's political ideas. For example, the United States supported the Mujahideen with weapons and training through the CIA's project Cyclone,¹²¹³ as they were against the spread of communism

At the beginning of 1990, the Secretary-General addressed the Security Council in a letter dated 9th of January 1990. The letter addressed the hope that the Security Council could take some further actions to enforce the Geneva Accords of 1989. The UN Secretary General's wishes were to send the United Nations' military personnel "to extend the temporary detachment of military officers to Afghanistan and Pakistan".^{14 15}

¹⁰Cambridge Dictionary - Proxy War

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/proxy-war> Accessed 20/01/2025

¹¹ UNGOMAP:

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/ungomap/background.html> Accessed 02/01/2025

¹² Wikipedia - Afghan Mujahideen

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_mujahideen Accessed 03/01/2025

¹³ Lumen Learning - The United States and the Mujahideen

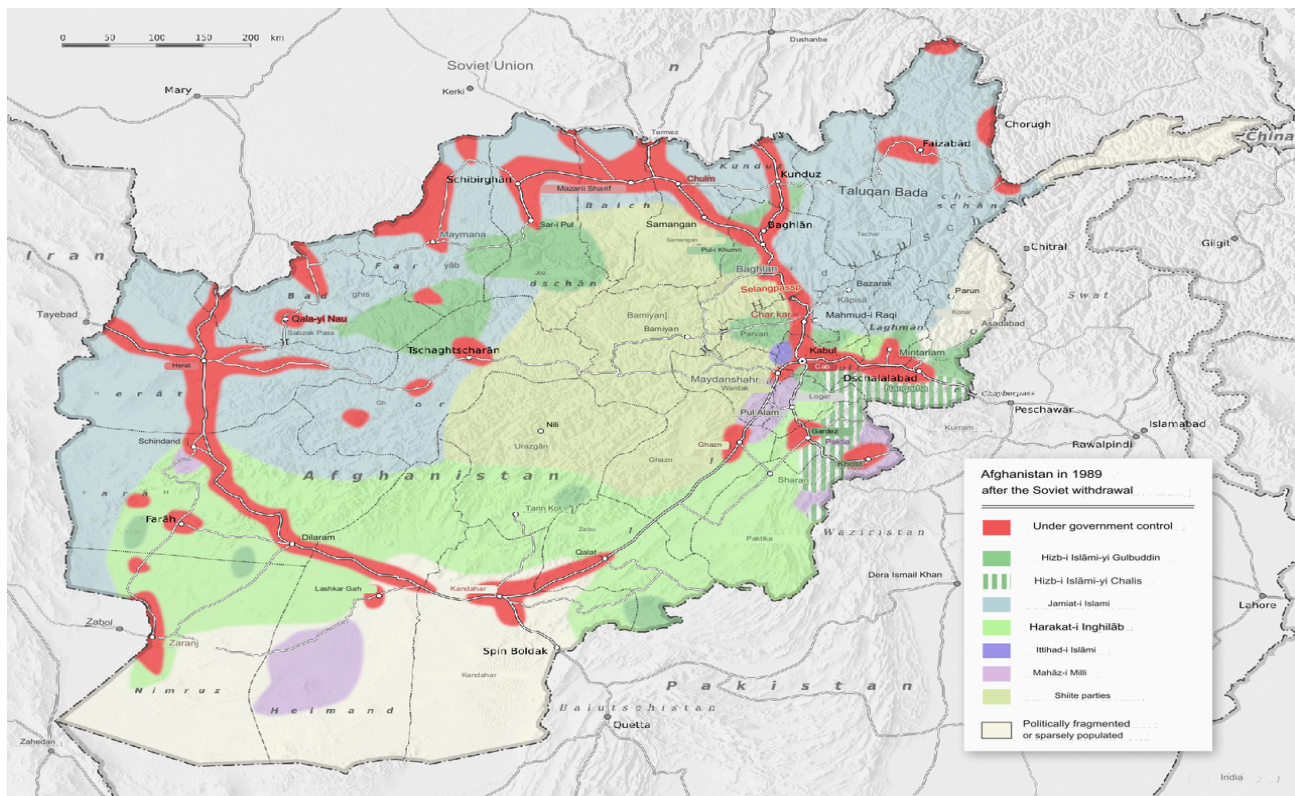
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/the-united-states-and-the-mujahideen/> Accessed 03/01/2025

¹⁴ United Nations Digital Library - 1990

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/82954?v=pdf#files> Accessed 03/01/2025

¹⁵United Nations Security Council - Resolutions adopted by the Security Council in 1990

<https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/574/97/pdf/nr057497.pdf> Accessed 03/01/2025



A political map of Afghanistan from 1989¹⁶

The situation in Afghanistan escalated with the PDPA's infighting. This led to a *coup d'état* led by General Shahnawas Tanai, the ex-minister of defence. Even though the coup was short-lived, it demonstrated that the situation in Afghanistan was not to end quickly.¹⁷

The continuous interference of outside parties in Afghanistan's politics worsened the situation significantly. The Cold War left a divide in the world's political stability, with aid to the Mujahideen from the United States and Pakistan keeping the tensions high.¹⁸

¹⁶ Wikipedia -Afghan Civil War

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_Civil_War_%281989%E2%80%931992%29#/media/File:Political_map_of_Afghanistan_in_1989.png Accessed 03/01/2025

¹⁷ Wikipedia - Afghan Coup attempt

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990_Afghan_coup_attempt Accessed 03/01/2025

¹⁸ National Security Archive Essay- Afghanistan: The making of US policy 1973-1990

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/essay.html> Accessed 04/01/2025

Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan

The Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was the legally recognized governing entity of Afghanistan. They assumed power in the Saur Revolution, ousting the unelected president, who gained power in the 1973 coup. In office, they started socialist reforms and the de-Islamization of Afghanistan. They also implemented the Universal Education and Rights for Women legislations, which were radical in Afghanistan's conservative Muslim society.

These changes caused outrage and uprisings around the country, along with the executions of political and religious figures and the Shi'a Muslim minority that had long been oppressed. The uprisings prompted the Soviet Union's interference between 1979 and 1988.¹⁹

The PDPA managed to defeat the Mujahideen troops in the battle of Jalalabad but struggled due to the lack of support from the population, and due to the support that the Mujahideen troops were getting. Their largest ally, the Soviet Union, was in a weak situation with economic and political problems. The Soviet Union's weakness meant they could not support the PDPA with full power.

Mujahideen Rebel Troops

The Mujahideen Rebel Troops were a collection of seven major pro-Islam and anti-Communist rebel troop companies fighting against the PDPA. Mujahideen is the plural form of Mujahid, meaning those who engage in Jihad (the struggle for the sake of Islam). The Mujahideens' issue with the government was the oppression of the Islamic culture in Afghanistan and the legislation that violated their moral code.^{20 21}

The Mujahideen guerilla coalition had seen a lot of infighting due to ideological differences. The Mujahideen guerilla coalition was not a single unified power, but a combination of seven different companies fighting under seven different leaders. This disunity led to there never being a strong unified

¹⁹ HRW- BACKGROUNDER ON AFGHANISTAN

<https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/asia/afghan-bck1023.pdf>

Accessed 05/01/2025

²⁰

Wikipedia - Afghan Mujahideen

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_mujahideen

Accessed 06/01/2025

²¹ United States Historian of the State - The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. Response, 1978-1980

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan> Accessed 06/01/2025

front against the Soviet Union, but many local conflicts that had no significant large-scale accomplishments. These reasons prolonged the conflict.²²

United States

The United States was not expecting the Soviet Union's interference in the conflict, even when the Afghan government was close to collapsing. The United States' president reiterated: "Moscow would not intervene in force even if it appeared likely that the Khalq government was about to collapse." Thus when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the USA was not prepared.²³

At the beginning of the Soviet invasion, Jimmy Carter authorized the collaboration of the United States intelligence service, CIA, and Pakistan's intelligence service ISI. The USA also funnelled \$500,000 worth of assistance to the Mujahideen troops through Pakistan.²⁴



²²Conflict Studies Research Centre - Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War
https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/96457/02_Jan.pdf Accessed 06/01/2025

²³Lumen learning - United States and the Mujahideen
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/the-united-states-and-the-mujahideen/>
 Accessed 05/01/2025

²⁴ Wikipedia - Operation Cyclone
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Cyclone Accessed 05/01/2025

The President of the United States Ronald Reagan meeting with Mujahideen leaders in 1983²⁵

In case of a civil war, the United States would stand behind the Mujahideen Groups, with Pakistan being against the Communist government of Afghanistan. Pakistan grounded their stance in their own anti-communist agenda and attempts to stop the spread of communism. Similarly, the US stance manifested itself for example in Nicaragua a few years prior; The United States' cooperation with the Nicaraguan Contras resembled their relations with the Mujahideen in many ways.²⁶

The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union was the largest ally of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Their war efforts in Afghanistan were called the Soviet-Afghan War, which proceeded the civil war in question. The Soviet Union's main aim in the occupation of Afghanistan was to ease the spread of communism in the Middle East. The USSR attempted to further reinforce their Southern borders, with a like-minded government.²⁷

The Soviet Union was forced to withdraw their troops in 1988 and completed the withdrawal of its last troops in 1989. This didn't stop the Soviet Union from backing up the DRA, but it ended the Soviet-Afghan war. After the conflict, the Soviet Union's main channel for influence came from material help to the DRA government and the backing of The Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB). In 1990, the Soviet Union supplied the DRA with: "54 military aircrafts, 380 tanks, 865 armored personnel carriers, 680 anti-aircraft guns, 150 R-17 rocket launchers and thousands of tons of fuel."²⁸

²⁵Wikipedia - Reagan sitting with people from Afghanistan and Pakistan region
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mujahideen#/media/File:Reagan_sitting_with_people_from_the_Afghanistan-Pakistan_region_in_February_1983.jpg Accessed 05/01/2025

²⁶Britannica - Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/contra-Nicaraguan-counterrevolutionary> Accessed 05/01/2025

²⁷PBS News - The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-july-dec06-soviet_10-10 Accessed 06/01/2025

²⁸The Diplomat - 30-Year Anniversary of Soviet Withdrawal From Afghanistan: A Successful Disengagement Operation?
<https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/30-year-anniversary-of-soviet-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-a-successful-disengagement-operation/> Accessed 06/01/2025



Soviet soldiers directing tank traffic outside Kabul on January 7th, 1980²⁹

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
27-28 April, 1978	The Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan took control from President Mohammed Doud Khan's government in the Saur Revolution. A founding member of the party Nur Muhammad Taraki becomes president. ³⁰
14 September, 1979	President Taraki was killed by supporters of the Deputy Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin.

²⁹The Atlantic- The soviet war in Afghanistan

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/08/the-soviet-war-in-afghanistan-1979-1989/100786/> Accessed 06/01/2025

³⁰ NPR - A look at Afghanistan's 40 year Crisis

<https://adst.org/2016/04/the-saur-revolution-prelude-to-the-soviet-invasion-of-afghanistan/> Accessed 04/01/2025

25-27 December, 1979	The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to help the crumbling communist regime. Soviets execute many of Amin's followers and Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Karmal becomes the Prime Minister. ³¹
1986	The Mujahideen rebels received weapons from the United States, United Kingdom and China. President Mohammad Najibullah took office. ³²
1988	The Geneva Accords were reached and the Soviet Union withdrew all of their troops from Afghanistan's land. The UN sent 50 peacekeepers to make sure the withdrawal of troops was completed without issue. ³³
Spring 1989	The Mujahideen Troops (also known as "The Exiled Government" or the "Afghan Interim Government") began an attack in Jalalabad that started the Afghan civil war.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations had keenly observed the situation in Afghanistan and passed resolutions as well as legislation to protect Afghan sovereignty. The United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly have had many conferences such as the Geneva Negotiations, to fight against outside powers' influence in Afghanistan.

In 1978³⁴ the Secretary General appointed personal representatives in the issue and managed to pass the Geneva Accords. The UN also signed the United Nations Good Offices Mission of Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) as well and forced the Soviet withdrawal administered by the UN. Further, 50 UN soldiers were sent to observe the withdrawal.

³¹PBS - A historical Timeline of Afghanistan.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>

³²Amnesty - Afghanistan: International responsibility for human rights disaster

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/asa110091995en.pdf> Accessed 06/01/2025

³³Lernemuseum - UN Mission in Afghanistan

<https://www.lernemuseum.org/1946-to-present/1980-1989/un-mission-in-afghanistan-and-pakistan-1988-1990> Accessed 04/01/2025

³⁴<https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/ungomap/background.html> Accessed 02/01/2025

The UN United Nations Charter (26th June 1945)³⁵ The Charter asserts states of every country's right to sovereignty, which led to the UN taking a stance in the conflict and resultingly driving all UN action in the conflict.

Resolution 647 (11th January 1990) S/RES/647³⁶ The resolution reaffirmed the need to keep other countries from interfering in civil wars such as the war that took place in Afghanistan.

Resolution 36/34 (18th November 1981) A/RES/36/34³⁷ The resolution reiterates many previously mentioned problems in Afghanistan. The resolution calls for the withdrawal of foreign troops and the people's right to self-governance. The resolution further looks to provide safe and honorable passage for Afghani refugees back to their country.

Possible Solutions

United Nations Forum for Peace

The root issue stemmed from the incompatible ideological differences between the two groups and their inability to find solutions peacefully. The most simple, but possibly not the easiest solution would be creating a forum of UN members and world leaders with ties to the issue. This forum could lead to solutions through democratic and political means rather than means of war and violence.

The two-state solution

Another possible solution, which would be effective in theory, but has shown it can be very unattractive to many, is the two-state solution. This measure was proposed in Israel-Palestine in 1947, but it led to large discontent in the area and resulted in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.³⁸ Though this solution did not work in the area formerly known as Mandatory Palestine, there is a possibility that the parties in the conflict in Afghanistan would find it acceptable.

Negotiations and International Court for offenders of sovereignty

One last solution would be to reopen the talks at the Geneva Forums and proceed as in 1988. This time the negotiations could focus on completely removing the influence of other states from the

³⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text> Accessed 03/01/2025

³⁶ <https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/574/97/pdf/nr057497.pdf> Accessed 3/1/2025

³⁷ <https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/406/60/pdf/nr040660.pdf> Accessed 3/1/2025

³⁸ Wikipedia - Two state solution

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-state_solution Accessed 07/01/2025

conflict and guaranteeing that the conflict is fought under fair circumstances, if it cannot be otherwise stopped. Removing the non-Afghan states from the conflict would need similar measures as were implemented in Nicaragua in 1986,³⁹ when the US sent arms to the country. This implementation would make sure that states such as the United States, the Soviet Union and Pakistan would be tried in the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) under Article 36 paragraphs 2 and 5.⁴⁰

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³⁹ Wikipedia - Nicaragua v. United States
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaragua_v._United_States Accessed 07/01/2025

⁴⁰ International Court of Justice - case 70 Nicaragua vs the United States
<https://www.icj-cij.org/case/70> Accessed 07/01/2025

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