

Department of Political Science
Bachelor of Arts in Politics, Philosophy and Economics

Chair in Contemporary History

FROM THE FRYING PAN
INTO THE FIRE?
AFGHANISTAN BETWEEN
SOVIET OCCUPATION
AND TALIBAN RULE,
1989 - 1996

THESIS SUPERVISOR
Professor Christian Blasberg

CANDIDATE Rebecca Ciavari
STUDENT NUMBER 072422

ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/2016

Abstract

Even if the period between the Soviet withdrawal and the Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan is often disregarded, it marks an important milestone in the understanding of the reasons behind the rise of such an extremist movement as the Taliban. This final dissertation aims at exploring the legacies Afghanistan received from the Cold War, namely from the Soviet military occupation and from the American intervention on the opposition's side, in order to show how external involvement in regional conflicts can have unexpected and devastating consequences – especially if internal dynamics and bordering countries' influence are not considered very carefully. Previous literature tends to analyze in detail the situation on the grounds of one or two points of view, never focusing specifically on the period between 1989 and 1996. This paper will first analyze the Soviet occupation and withdrawal and it will secondly discuss the Afghan communist party and its ability to hold national power even after the Soviet demise, not forgetting to explain the role of the mujahidin resistance – supported by the US – and their fate after the communist party fall in 1992. Thirdly, the Afghan civil war will be analyzed as the contest in which the Taliban were able to seize power and become a predominant actor in the national scene. In conclusion, this thesis' findings will demonstrate as Afghanistan was not only influenced by the events of the Cold War, but also by its neighboring countries' support and its internal religious, tribal and ethnic contrasts.

Key Words

Afghanistan, USSR, USA, Cold War, Soviet Withdrawal, Islam, mujahidin, Taliban, civil war, fragmentation, factionalism.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
CHAPTER 1: Soviet Withdrawal.....	8
1.1 Soviet Occupation.....	8
1.2 The Decision to Withdrawal: USSR actions and USA reactions.....	11
1.3 Afghan factionalism of government and rebel leaders.....	15
CHAPTER 2: Between Najibullah and the Taliban.....	18
2.1 1989 withdrawal between National Reconciliation and Geneva Accords.....	18
2.2 Najibullah 1989 – 1992: why did he resist? why did he fall?.....	21
2.3 The context around the the Taliban rise.....	24
CHAPTER 3: The Taliban.....	27
3.1 Reasons for Taliban rise to power.....	27
3.2 Afghan civil war and endless regime transition.....	30
3.3 Features of the Taliban Rule.....	34
Conclusion.....	36
Bibliography.....	38
Riassunto.....	44

Introduction

Afghanistan has been, for centuries, the focus of geopolitical and economic interests of the strongest players of the global chessboard, from the Russians and the British during the 19th century “Great Game”, to the USSR and the USA during the 20th century Cold War, to NATO nowadays. Due to its strategic position, the state has been at the center of external wars and, at the same time, it has been challenged by the internal fragmentation of its population and the factionalism of its political élites and rebel groups.

While a lot has been written about the periods of the Soviet occupation and the Taliban rule, less has been discussed about the period between those years, namely between 1989 and 1996. The analysis of how events unfolded, influencing the dynamics of the variety of internal actors, and how the situation of Afghanistan was dealt with by the external actors involved are key to understand these crucial years. How did the Cold War influence Afghanistan? How and why the end of the Cold War could not generate a moderate rule and not even a return to conditions preceding the occupation, but generated such a radical Islamist force like the Taliban? This final thesis shows how actions perpetrated by the USA and the USSR during the final years of what seemed to be an endless indirect conflict influenced the internal actors’ fate in Afghanistan and how, vice versa, the positions of certain Afghan leaders affected the strategies of the two superpowers. The paper investigates the way in which power shifted from the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)’s aspiration for a Communist regime to the Taliban’s implementation of an Islamic State, providing with an insight of the ancient and recent reasons behind it, from the disparities between city and countryside to patrimonialism, from tribalism to regime transition dynamics.

The main focus of the dissertation is the instability of this region between the last years of Najibullah’s Rule to the gaining of momentum and final seizure of power by the Taliban, with the aim of going beyond the simple explanation of action and reaction of the Cold War bipolar system and with the scope of analyzing the complexity of factions among the power-holders and the different oppositions. The scope of this paper is to try to integrate to the Western perception of the subject matter the internal perception of the conflicts shaping Afghanistan in the indicated years.

The paper aims at contributing to a debate on the effectiveness of external intervention in internal conflicts and shows how, in this case, both the Soviets and the Americans believed that intervening would have been helpful for the stability and the peace of the country, but in reality it aggravated the situation and drove Afghanistan in a civil war ultimately dominated by the Taliban and their Islamic Rule.

The situation of Afghanistan in the years 1989-1996 is a quite complicated topic due to the fact that there are multiple actors involved, both external and internal, and that the succession of events, especially in the period following Najibullah's fall, tends to have a very quick pace, which has affected the analysis of that period in historical research. Those might be the reasons why past literature had the tendency to analyze the situation of the country focusing on just one or two of the many actors. Kalinovsky (2011)¹ analyses the topic from the Soviet point of view, while Crews and Tarzi (2008)² insist on the role of the Taliban. Among the few literature taking into account the great number of actors involved, it is worth mentioning Westad (2007),³ who dedicates three chapters to the interconnectedness of events and roles invested by both external and internal actors during the Cold War in Afghanistan; while, already in 1997, Khalilzad has confronted the national and international causes of the Afghan anarchy. Among review articles, there is another tendency to be noticed: the period's analysis. In fact, those articles generally focus on the period of the Soviet occupation, either including or not the end of Najibullah rule (1979-1989 or 1979-1992) as Halliday and Tanin (1998),⁴ or they concentrate their center of analysis on the Taliban rise (1992-1996) and rule (1996-2001), as Fatima⁵. There is therefore a gap in the presence of papers analyzing the roles of the majority of the actors involved in Afghanistan in the period between the Soviet withdrawal and the Kabul's occupation by the Taliban.

¹ Kalinovsky, A. M. (2011) *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

² Crews R. D. and Tarzi A. editors (2008) *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

³ Westad, O. A. (2015) *La Guerra Fredda Globale. Gli Stati Uniti, l'Unione Sovietica e il mondo: le relazioni internazionali del XX secolo*. Milano: Il Saggiatore S. r. l. (*The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. 2007, Cambridge University Press)

⁴ Halliday, F. and Tanin, Z. (1998) The Communist Regime in Afghanistan 1978 – 1992: Institutions and Conflicts. *Europe-Asia Studies* [online] volume 50, no. 8, pp. 1357 – 1380

⁵ Fatima, Q. (2014) The rise and the fall of Taliban regime (1994-2001) in Afghanistan: the internal dynamics. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Sciences* [online] Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 35-46

This paper will try give a focused examination of the matter, shedding light to the period between 1989 and 1996.

The use of primary sources has been limited to some original documents (e.g. *Peshawar Accord*), a few journalistic sources, including a report from the field by Vern Liebl, “*Pashtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and Taliban: A Short View*”, published in 2007 and political discourses such as the dialogue between Gorbachev and Karmal,⁶ the “*Memorandum Of Conversation*” of 14 March 1985.⁷ Primary sources such as memoirs and newspaper articles have been consulted to give different points of view and interpretations to the events. An example of memoir used is the 1991 “*Black Boy*” by Richard Wright, while the newspaper used is *The New York Times*. Notwithstanding the fact that the primary sources’ quantity is modest, it elucidates some particular views on the Soviet withdrawal on the one hand and the civil war during and after Najibullah’s Regime on the other.

A few problems concern the availability and accessibility of primary sources. The research had to be based on English literature, since the paper writer has not the means and the knowledge of any of the official languages spoken in Afghanistan, neither Pashto nor Dari. Due to this limitation, original language documents could be used just when translated and journalistic or similar sources in original language could not be consulted. For what concerns the English resources, no particular availability problem has been encountered, but sometimes online articles were not accessible due to restrictions (i.e. accession denied due to attempt to consult the article from country other than the USA or the UK).

Due to limits in space and the decision to narrow the research around the years 1989-1992, the events of the Soviet occupation and the subsequent actual Taliban Rule are just briefly outlined to give a frame for the focus of the paper. Despite the fact that the research question is centered on how Cold War influenced Afghanistan, this dissertation will not deal with Cold War historiography unless it is directly connected with the topic of enquiry. The role and the influence of neighboring countries in the conflict will be just mentioned when directly involved in the support to the mujahidin and Taliban forces, as it is the case for Pakistan, but it will not analyze in detail the intertwined relations between Afghanistan and nearby regions.

⁶ Afghan communist leader and head of government between 1979 and 1986

⁷ Cde. M. S. Gorbachev and General Secretary of the CC NDPA, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of DRA B. Karmal. *Memorandum Of Conversation*. Kremlin, 14 March 1985

In this regard, a starting point for the matter of confining states involved can be the review article by Zalmay Khalizad, "*Anarchy in Afghanistan*" (1997). Furthermore, no deep guerilla strategic analysis will concern with the topic of this paper.

The final thesis will be based on the following outline: in the first chapter, after a brief overview of the occupation, the analysis will focus on the Soviet withdrawal, from Gorbachev's intentions to leave the country in 1985 to the actual collection of soviet troops in 1989. The analysis will include American actions and reactions to Russian moves and it will not leave uncovered the Afghan factionalism of government and rebel actors. A second part will deal with the situation between 1989 and 1992, first considering how the actual withdrawal was settled and what it left behind, then exploring the last years of Najibullah's Rule between Soviet external support and internal opposition. This section will present different interpretations explaining the reasons why Najibullah was able to stay in power for some more years, but ultimately failed to consolidate his rule and fell from power and why the Taliban started to take hold in the same time-frame. Finally, the years of the civil war between the Taliban and the Mujahidin, up to the seize of power by the formers in 1996, will be analyzed in detail, considering both the reasons behind the Taliban's rise and the unfolding of the events. In this analysis, the contribution of the bipolar superpowers will be taken into consideration.

CHAPTER 1: Soviet Withdrawal

1.1 Soviet Occupation

Since the 19th century, Russia has been interested in the territory of Afghanistan. But why has this territory been one of the principal protagonists in the contention between great powers? Afghanistan has always had a vital role strategically, as yesterday it hosted the silk road while today it's a way for oil pipelines. In that century, the country was situated between the British India and the Russian Empire: both powers wanted to gain control over the region in a conflict that the British called "the Great Game" and the Russians referred to as "the Tournament of Shadows".⁸

In the 1970s, relations increased between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, since the Kremlin saw in Daoud, the first president of the state, a modernizer, welcoming and sustaining financially his reforms, while the Afghan élite was inspired by the Soviet experience in regards to the economy and the state organization.⁹ This mutual interest found its common foundation in the Communist ideology embraced by both the CPSU¹⁰ and the PDPA.¹¹

Between the PDPA coup d'état perpetrated by the Khaqi wing of the party in April 1978 (denominated as the "Saur Revolution") and the beginning of Soviet operations in the territory at Christmas 1979, Afghanistan faced a period of over 20 months in which all the problems of the weak and fragmented state came to the surface. The party itself was marked by harsh factionalism between the Khalqi, Parcham and military leaderships, all aiming at coercively implementing their reforms in order to prevail. But, the more factional party élites tried to impose their will with coercion, the grater opposition they had to face from the population, which either decided to join the rebels or to leave the country.¹² In the meantime, the CPSU

⁸ Турниры теней (Turniry teney), in Russian language.

⁹ Odd Arne Westad, *La Guerra Fredda Globale. Gli Stati Uniti, l'Unione Sovietica e il mondo: le relazioni internazionali del XX secolo*. (il Saggiatore, Milano 2015), p. 338 (original title: *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, Cambridge University Press, 2007)

¹⁰ Communist Party of the Soviet Union

¹¹ People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, founded in 1965, divided into two formally acknowledged and distinct groups: the Parcham and the Khalqi.

¹² Fred Halliday and Zahir Tanin, *The Communist Regime in Afghanistan 1978 – 1992: Institutions and Conflicts*. *Europe-Asia Studies* (1998), volume 50, no. 8, pp. 1360-1362

tried to help the PDPA in strengthening itself and reconciling the Khalqi leader Amin with the Parcham Taraki, but no apparent results were achieved. Moreover, many people from the periphery of the state, such as the countryside and the mountains, together with army mutineers joined the Islamist resistance movements and started revolting, as the march revolts in Herat and, subsequently, in many other cities testify.¹³

At the end of 1979, the Soviets had no choice but intervening militarily in the region, since the Afghan Communist Party did nothing but worsening the difficult situation of disunity of the country, and the external Soviet advice and support were not followed, rather, it appeared that Amin was turning to the USA.¹⁴ At this point, the Cold War dynamics took over and the USSR abandoned the strategy of détente¹⁵ and engaged in Afghanistan with troops.¹⁶ Despite the intervention was planned to last a few months, time to give the leadership in the hands of Karmal¹⁷ and securing key cities and bases, it actually needed a lot more time between the training of the Afghan troops and the direct fighting against the opposition.¹⁸ The Soviets aimed at protecting socialism, both from American and Islamic opposition, through a strategy of “nation building”,¹⁹ enhancing the regime’s leverage and the army’s unity and readiness.

The intervention in Afghanistan was perceived as an aggressive provocation against the USA, which, under the Carter administration, decided to increase the financial and material support to the opposition, in particular to the mujahidin.²⁰ Also, for many Muslims, the Soviet Union was the number one enemy and its communist ideology ought to be defeated, exploiting an alliance with the Americans. From 1983 on, the Reagan presidency decided to continue the foreign policies initiated by Carter, aimed at sending more armaments, financial aids and providing combat training to the so called “Afghan freedom fighters”.²¹ The three main reasons

¹³ Halliday and Tanin, p. 1361-1362 and Westad, p. 346

¹⁴ Artemy Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2011), p. 21

¹⁵ détente (French language, meaning “relaxation”): general easing of the geopolitical tension between the two bipolar superpowers, USA and USSR

¹⁶ Richard K. Herrmann, Soviet Behavior in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies, and Important Lessons. *World Politics* (1992) Vol. 44, No. 3, p. 434, pp. 442-444

¹⁷ Parcham wing of the PDPA

¹⁸ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, pp. 24-25

¹⁹ *ibidem*, p. 37

²⁰ Westad, pp. 363 and pp. 369-370

²¹ otherwise known as “mujahidin”: مجاهدين (Arab Language), meaning “Jihad fighter”

behind this choice were the proof that the mujahidin were actually capable of resisting in the guerilla, the better relations between USA and the rebels' supporter Pakistan and the right interventionism that characterized the 1980s.²² As Regan cited from Whittaker Chambers, in one of his 1982 speeches: *"For in this century, within the next decades, will be decided for generations whether all mankind is to become Communist, whether the whole world is to become free, or whether in the struggle civilization as we know it is to be completely destroyed or completely changed. It is our fate to live upon that turning point in history."*²³

Since their decision to get involved in the Afghan territory, the Soviet leaders, from Brezhnev to Gorbachev, faced what it is known as a "Soviet Vietnam", so to say the engagement of an increasing number of troops, financial help and material means into a war that could not be won, yet not being able to leave it. The rebels had a great advantage on the Soviet army because they knew the terrain and could exploit tribal forces to their advantage, also, they indirectly benefited from CPSU and PDPA military issues on grounds of bad relations between Afghan and Soviet officials and PDPA stubbornness in not following CPSU leadership's advices.²⁴

Notwithstanding the fact that Karmal's "new course" brought some positive improvements to the regime, such as wider party membership, development of a new military system united to the party and the use of the KhAD²⁵ security forces to protect cities and oppose the rebels, the permanent strives between Khalqi and Parcham wings of the army led Gorbachev towards a change of PDPA leadership in 1987, which passed to Najibullah, the KhAD power-holder.²⁶

In the period of the Soviet occupation, the Najibullah leadership perpetrated the "National Reconciliation" policy, which tried to strengthen the government involving all those parties that had been excluded in the last decade on the grounds of state's unity and survival, not communist ideology.²⁷

²² Westad, pp. 396-404

²³ Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (Regnery Publishing Inc., Whashington D. C., 1952), p. 7 from the February 27, 1982 speech *The Agenda is Victory* by Ronald Reagan

²⁴ Halliday and Tanin, p. 1373

²⁵ دولتی اطلاعات خدمات (Khadamat-e Aetla'at-e Dawlati), in Pasho-Persian language: State Information Services

²⁶ Halliday and Tanin, pp. 1362-1367

²⁷ Shane A. Smith, Afghanistan After The Occupation: Examining The Post-Soviet Withdrawal And The Najibullah Regime It Left Behind, 1989 – 1992. *The Historian* (2014) Vol. 76, No. 2, pp. 319-321

As it will be presented in the next section, the years between 1986 and 1989 are of great importance for the actions of the Cold War superpowers in Afghanistan and for their perception of the conflict. Later, in Chapter 2, the post-occupation Najibullah Regime will be discussed and theories for its duration will be drawn.

1.2 The Decision to Withdrawal: USSR actions and USA reactions

From the initial Soviet intention to withdraw, wished by Gorbachev as early as in 1985, when he took office,²⁸ to the actual withdrawal of February 15, 1989, almost four years of difficulties – both internal and external – slowed the process of troops' removal, which left Afghanistan in a civil war between a client government and externally supported opposition.²⁹

In order to understand how policies and strategies changed in these almost four years, it should be mentioned that the USA and the USSR engaged in the Cold War because they both wanted to establish their ideology as a model of modernity to the rest of the world. Both superpowers knew that if they were successful in shaping the society of a third country as they liked, they could institute their ideology. That is why the two antagonists engaged in direct operations in Afghanistan as well as in other "Third World" countries: the Soviet Union wanted to make room for revolutions, while the United States wished to break down the communist threat.³⁰ The first to make a move from a strategy of containment to one of détente was the USSR: Gorbachev, in fact, stopped using force whenever socialism appeared to be threatened and aimed at switching a military occupation with a political presence.³¹ He replaced Brezhnev's reasons for intervention against the "hand of imperialism" with the image of Afghanistan as a "bleeding wound", when speaking at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1986.³² In a meeting with Karmal, Gorbachev told the Afghan leadership that "*Soviet troops cannot stay in Afghanistan forever*"³³ already in March 1985, while it made it clear

²⁸ Alan J. Kuperman, The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan. *Political Science Quarterly* (1999) Vol. 114, No. 2, p. 235

²⁹ Smith, p. 313

³⁰ Westad, chapters 1-2

³¹ Richard K. Herrmann, Soviet Behavior in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies, and Important Lessons. *World Politics* (1992) Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 447-448

³² Sarah E. Mendelson, Internal Battles and External Wars: Politics, Learning, and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan. *World Politics*, (1993) Vol. 45, No. 3 p. 350

³³ *Memorandum Of Conversation* Between cde. M. S. Gorbachev and General Secretary of the CC NDPA, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of DRA B. Karmal. Kremlin, 14 March 1985

that a withdrawal was in the agenda in another meeting in October since he told Karmal *“by the summer of 1986 you will have to defend yourselves. We shall help, but with arms, not soldiers. If you want to survive, broaden the base of the regime, forget about socialism, share power with those who have real influence, including the mujahidin leaders and organizations that are at the moment opposed to you, revive Islam in the laws. Operate on the basis of traditional authorities, and try to act so that the people will see that it is getting benefits from your revolt.”*³⁴ Gorbachev understood that if he was to continue supporting militarily Kabul, the Soviet Union was going to “keep bleeding” and losing in terms of finances and human lives. He therefore aimed at strengthening the Afghan regime and leaving the country as soon as possible, because he was not going to play the Americans’ game any longer, even though the Afghan leaders were pushing for the Soviets to stay.³⁵

Why did the Americans, then, send Stinger missiles to the mujahidin, supported by the Pakistani leader Zia ul-Haq,³⁶ even if Gorbachev was moving towards policies of arms reduction³⁷ and was planning to remove his troops from Afghanistan?

In the summer of 1986, after the NSDD 166³⁸ legitimized American help to the rebels in all possible forms,³⁹ following a long process of decision making, the administration officials sent missiles to the Afghan opposition, strongly supported by the CIA’s head Casey, and the rebels started knocking down the first Soviets aircrafts already in September.⁴⁰ The roots behind this sharp interventionism can be found in the American tendency to look at the reality of the world as black or white, with no shades in-between, and its propensity to condemn what appears different, justifying the measures against it because acting following a path of rectitude.⁴¹

Besides interventionism, the Reagan administration’s decision was based on economic interests, given by the presence of oil in the country, and a lack of reliable information about the actual intentions of the Soviets due to the typical Cold War

³⁴ Halliday and Tanin, p. 1347

³⁵ Westad, p. 415

³⁶ Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, General and President in Pakistan

³⁷ Serge Schmemmann, “Gorbachev says U.S. arms note is not adequate.” *New York Times*, February 26, 1986

³⁸ National Security Decision Directive, signed by the US president Ronald Reagan on March 27, 1985

³⁹ Kuperman, p. 227

⁴⁰ *ibidem*, p. 233-235

⁴¹ Richard Wright, *Black Boy. American Hunger* (Library of America, New York, 1991) chapter 1

fear to let communism win and due to Gorbachev's unclear and therefore misleading actions. The Soviet leader started opening to USA-USSR relations and pronounced himself in favor of a military withdrawal from the region, but at the same time his support to Najibullah with delivers was larger than the Americans' aid to the opposite side.⁴²

In order to give an answer to the question above, we should consider the fact that Gorbachev and his circle of "New Thinkers" were not able to actually change the course of their foreign policies, even though the general secretary made some formal declarations about it, without having changed the Soviet ideology and institutions inside Russia. Those internal changes took place only in the late 1980s, with the 19th Party Conference held in June 1988, when the Soviet leader was able to completely implement his "perestroika"⁴³ and "glasnost"⁴⁴ policies, while transforming his repressive regime to a more democratic and open one. This internal policy of democratization is testified by the establishment of open elections, the creation of stronger legislature and judiciary together with a system of checks and balances of the executive and the possibility of a wider freedom of speech. American behavior changed when the so feared communist threat cease to exist because the Soviet institutions appeared more similar to the western ones.⁴⁵ In this year, the Reagan administration started considering possible improvements in the American-Russian relations, but it still proceeded cautiously in stopping the military aids to rebels, until the very last 40th Army soldier would have left Afghanistan.⁴⁶

The theoretical framework behind this interpretation is linked to the systemic constructivist and ideological explanations based on the democratic peace theory. The change of institutions based on transparency and representation and the shift from a Marxist belief to a liberal ideology were then mirrored in the decision to withdraw from Afghanistan.⁴⁷

⁴² Richard K. Herrmann, Soviet Behavior in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies, and Important Lessons. *World Politics* (1992) Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 455-456

⁴³ перестройка (Russian language) literally means "reconstruction"

⁴⁴ гласность (Russia language) literally means "publicity"

⁴⁵ Mark L. Haas, The United States and the End of the Cold War: Reactions to Shifts in Soviet Power, Policies, or Domestic Politics? *International Organization* (2007) Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 161-164

⁴⁶ David K. Shipler, "A Cautious U.S. Response To Plan on Afghanistan." *New York Times*, January 10, 1988

⁴⁷ Haas, pp. 152-156

This paper's research question is "How Cold War influenced Afghanistan?" but it should be noted that Afghanistan influenced the fate of Cold War too, and, ultimately, was one of the factors that brought the conflict between those superpowers to an end. In fact, among the causes of the Soviet withdrawal, there were the Russian and the international skepticism against the Soviet occupation of the territory and the hope to find a compromise with the USA regarding the "Third World" countries.⁴⁸ The behavior of the USSR in the region, together with its changes institutions, drove the Americans into giving more importance to the relations with the Soviet Union and less to the containment policy.

The years between 1986 and 1989 are crucial as they shaped Afghanistan and they gave ground for the rise and power of the Taliban. Not only the Soviet intervention sharpened the country's factionalism and divisions within the leadership and the population,⁴⁹ but also the American intervention gave the rebels the means to gain power. Despite the debate on whether the Stinger missile anticipated or postponed the 40th Army's retreat, which appears to be resolved in the evidence of having no relevance in the Soviet decision,⁵⁰ it should be pondered whether or not this gave greater leverage to extremist groups among the Afghan rebels. This appears as a case in which the USA intervened in order to attack the communist threat but, due to an irresponsible distribution of the missiles handled by the CIA,⁵¹ its actions turned against them in the form of military means in the hand of extremist which, in the long term, turned into Islamic terrorists against the USA.

The next section will present the factionalism in the Afghan territory, while the actual withdrawal together with its consequences and the context around the rise of the Taliban will be best discussed in chapter 2.

⁴⁸ Westad, p. 429

⁴⁹ Halliday and Tanin, pp. 1375-1376

⁵⁰ Kuperman, p. 252

⁵¹ *ibidem*, p. 256

1.3 Afghan factionalism of government and rebel leaders

Fragmentation has always been present in Afghanistan, well before the Saur Revolution. The land has always been an ethnically diverse society composed by Pashtuns, which is the most segmented group in the world, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras and 50 more ethnic groups, which have a common Afghan heritage.⁵² It is worth specifying that some of those groups are unified, while other are more factionalized. Among the highly factionalized Pashtuns, groups such as Safi, Karlanri and Durrani can be distinguished, while there exist factionalizations within the fragmentation, as the Ghilzai group testifies, being divided in Ghaznavid, Ghauri, Khalq and others.⁵³ The power has always been held locally⁵⁴ and personal loyalty has always been devoted first to family and tribe, while only occasionally to national leaders.⁵⁵ The Soviet occupation, with its attempt to unify the state's power under the PDPA, aggravated the rivalry among ethnic groups, sharpened factionalism among them and did not solve the situation before leaving the territory. The factions' inability to reach a power-sharing agreement and the competition between the Cold War superpowers influenced Afghanistan in a way to make it a terrain for civil wars and instability.⁵⁶

External intervention both sharpened factionalism in the the PDPA holding power and in the opposition, but it is not clear if the policies of the states supporting the opposition was purposely structured in a way that did not contemplate cohesion. The Afghan Communist Party was mainly Pashtun, but it was separated in the Khalq and the Parcham factions. The former represented the Afghan proletariat, it aimed at an instant social revolution and it was mainly composed by Ghilzais; the latter stood for the revolutionary élites, pushed for a more gradual process to implement socialism and it grouped Durrani and non-Pashtuns.⁵⁷ The two factions competed to gain the military and financial support from the Soviet Union, both in the pre and in the post withdrawal periods, but each socialist policy – from the

⁵² Lester W. Grau, The Soviet–Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains. *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* (2004) Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 131 and Vern Liebl, Report from the field. Pashtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and Taliban: A Short View. *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (2007) Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 492-494

⁵³ Liebl, p. 496, p. 498

⁵⁴ *ibidem*, p. 494

⁵⁵ Grau, p. 130

⁵⁶ Zalmay Khalilzad, Anarchy in Afghanistan. *Journal of International Affairs* [online] Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 37-39

⁵⁷ Liebl, pp. 498-499

agricultural to the school reforms – they tried to implement in order to unify the country had the opposite result of a wide popular discontent poured in sharper fragmentation and stronger opposition.⁵⁸

The opposition to the central government began as a secular one and it concerned the rural inhabitants going against the communist reforms of the PDPA and, later, fighting to oust the Soviets. Among the secular factions, some supported a monarchic rule, while others a republic. The fact that the USSR was an atheist state made the opposition become a religious matter.⁵⁹

The Islamic opposition to the communist ideology took hold as soon as the leftist party started recruitment among the university students in Kabul in the 1970s: it was based on the circulation of pamphlets inspired by the Koran. This is how the Islamic Party (HIH)⁶⁰ began gaining ground before becoming one of the strongest opposition party among a dozen of them.⁶¹ When those parties were forced to seek sanctuary in neighboring countries, Pakistan – with Peshawar as the center of the opposition activity⁶² – and Iran welcomed them and gave them aids, favoring the most fundamentalists groups of mujahidin, first of all the one for Hekmatyar's HIH party.⁶³ Other party leaders that are worth mentioning are Khalis, the fundamentalist moderate of the Islamic Party (HIK)⁶⁴ and Rabbani and his Islamic Society (JIA),⁶⁵ which collaborated with the commanders Massoud and Khan⁶⁶ and will be key in analyzing the civil war between groups of mujahidin after the fall of Najibullah's regime, as it will be presented in the last chapter. The religious opposition was mainly composed by students formed in religious schools, the "madrasas", where actors as the Taliban received an education.

Attention should be drawn on the following matter: while the seven most prominent Islamist parties were able to find some sort of agreement when the 40th Army first took over Afghanistan and they used the common ground of religion as a connection

⁵⁸ Halliday and Tanin, p. 1375

⁵⁹ Grau, p. 143

⁶⁰ Hezb-e-Islamie-i-Gulbuddin, guided by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar

⁶¹ David B. Edwards, Summoning Muslims: Print, Politics, and Religious Ideology in Afghanistan. *The Journal of Asian Studies* [online] Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 609-612

⁶² W. Michael Reisman and James Silk, Which Law Applies to the Afghan Conflict? *The American Journal of International Law* (1988) Vol. 82, No. 3, p. 469

⁶³ Grau, pp. 135-140 (for the complete list of the parties and their tendencies those pages sum up quite well the fragmentation of the Islamic parties)

⁶⁴ Hezb-e-Islami-Khalis

⁶⁵ Jamiat-i-Islami

⁶⁶ Grau, pp. 136-138 and Khalilzad, pp. 43-45

among them, because their common aim was expelling them from the region. Once the Soviets put withdrawal in the agenda, the Islamic parties and their supporting mujahidin were no longer able to agree on how to share power or work towards a mutual understanding, because now they were competing for the control of the country.⁶⁷

Even if the West – mostly the US, Britain, France and to some extent Italy – supported the mujahidin and the Islamic parties both with financial aids and military means, it appears that the most fundamentalist among those parties were already against both the “Great Satan” USA and USSR, as Hekmatyar frequently specified.⁶⁸ This raises the question whether the West gave the Islamic fundamentalists the weapons to turn against them, as it happened with 9/11, or whether terrorist attacks toward the West would have found others financiers. Either way, what this section and this chapter want to stress is how external action has magnified the factionalism among the government and the rebel groups.

The next chapter will consist on an overview of the regime transition from Najibullah to the Taliban, in light of this die-hard factionalism.

⁶⁷ Khalilzad, p. 56

⁶⁸ Westad, p. 402

CHAPTER 2: Between Najibullah and the Taliban

2.1 1989 withdrawal between National Reconciliation and Geneva Accords

As mentioned in section 1.1, in 1987 the Soviets designated Najibullah as head of party and of government, after Karmal's forced resignation,⁶⁹ because they believed he was a pragmatic politician who understood the USSR's willingness to withdraw and, thanks to his Pashtun background, he could become a symbol of unity for the country.⁷⁰ Through him, Soviet advisers implemented the Policy of National Reconciliation (PNR),⁷¹ which aimed at establishing a new system, close to a parliamentary democracy,⁷² and at reintegrating opposition groups inside the government, strengthening it before the Soviet departure. PNR tried to achieve so with a new constitution, reasserting the Muslim character of the state, promoting laws aimed at widening commerce and praising Afghan nationalism against Pakistan and the USSR.⁷³ Was this just a propaganda campaign or did it lead to actual developments? It appears that this was a way for the Soviet to secure the communist power-holders and, initially, it was indeed propaganda, but in the long run, especially after the last 40th Army soldier left Afghanistan, PNR set the basis for the deconstruction of the communist rule.⁷⁴ On the one hand, this policy helped the government getting closer to its people, but on the other it increased the factionalism among PDPA members: once again, the external intervention did not solve the internal conflict.

The ongoing civil war between the government militia and the mujahidin nor was solved by, nor did it end with the Geneva Accords of April 14, 1988 signed by Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the USA and USSR acting as guarantors. The accords were the result of talks between the two former countries and were strongly favored by the UN, which, since 1980, had condemned the Soviet occupation of the region because it did not respect the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity

⁶⁹ Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending. Afghanistan, 1979 to the present*. Hurst & Company, London in association with the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Paris (2005), pp. 193-194

⁷⁰ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, p. 99

⁷¹ *ashti-yi melli* (Persian language)

⁷² Halliday and Tanin, p. 1368

⁷³ Dorronsoro, p. 197 and Smith, p. 320

⁷⁴ Dorronsoro, p. 196 and Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, pp. 105-106

or political independence.⁷⁵ Soviet occupation went indeed against article 2, paragraph 2 of the Geneva Convention II: “*The convention shall also apply to all cases of partial or total occupation of the territory of a High Contracting Party, even if said occupation meets with no resistance.*”⁷⁶ The war in Afghanistan cannot be classified as purely internal or international because it concerns with the politics of USA-USSR rivalry,⁷⁷ but since the USSR installed a new government and intervened without being invited, international law applies to the conflict.⁷⁸

The Geneva Accords were based on the principles of non-interference and non-intervention, thus prohibiting the support, training and assistance of rebels against the other contracting state,⁷⁹ favored “*the voluntary, orderly and peaceful repatriation of all Afghan refugees*”⁸⁰ and they set the dates for the phases of the withdrawal of the 40th Army, half of which would have left by August 15, 1988 and the other half in the nine following months.⁸¹

How were these accords reached and who were the main players in this negotiations? In answering those questions, we have to take into account that talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan were mediated by the UN in the presence of the American and Soviet observers, meaning that the Afghan conflict was not only shaped by Cold War actors but also by international law and IOs.⁸² The talks did not involve the mujahidin but the aids they received were one of the central issues. The negotiations between the USA and the USSR involved a long game of gains and concession, where Gorbachev’s staff wished to obtain a “negative symmetry”, while the Reagan’s administration was firm in not giving up helping the rebels. Once the Soviet leader announced a start date for the withdrawal in a statement on February 8, 1988, he unblocked the negotiations’ stalemate but, at the same time, he lost bargaining power. At this point, the Americans saw no reason to stop

⁷⁵ W. Michael Reisman, The Resistance in Afghanistan Is Engaged in a War of National Liberation. *The American Journal of International Law* [online] Vol. 81, No. 4, pp. 906-907

⁷⁶ Geneva Convention II: for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (1949)

⁷⁷ Reisman and Silk, pp. 466-467

⁷⁸ *ibidem*, pp. 483-486

⁷⁹ Geneva Accords, Bilateral agreement between the Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the principles of mutual relations, in particular on non-interference and non-intervention (1988) art. 1, art. 2 par. 7-8

⁸⁰ Geneva Accords, Bilateral agreement between the Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the voluntary return of refugees (1988) art. 3

⁸¹ Geneva Accords, Agreement on the interrelationships for the settlement of the situation relating to Afghanistan (1988) art. 5

⁸² Dorronsoro, pp. 198-199

supplying the mujahidin with arms and training since the Soviets seemed so desperate to leave.⁸³ It could seem like Gorbachev walked this path only because he needed to mask the military defeat with diplomatic means,⁸⁴ but he believed the loss in Afghanistan would have been repaid with more favorable relations with the West.⁸⁵

How did the Geneva Accords influence Afghanistan? Actually, the 1988 Accords specified that the Soviets would have withdrawn their last troop in early 1989 but they left open the political fate of the country.⁸⁶ Also, the principle of non-interference was not observed as both the mujahidin and Najibullah were still receiving support from the US and the Soviet Union respectively, in a way that, in reality, allowed for the perpetration of the civil war in the country.⁸⁷

The USSR left Afghanistan honoring the Geneva Accords: a half of over 100,000 Soviet soldiers left by August 1988,⁸⁸ while the last troop left the country in February 1989, crossing the Friendship Bridge, passing through the same way they entered the region, as the whole event was broadcasted.⁸⁹ Even if Gorbachev stopped the wound from bleeding, the 40th Army left a bloodstained Afghanistan. As USSR foreign minister Shevardnadze said: *"We are leaving this country in a pitiable state. The cities and villages are ravaged. The economy is paralyzed. Hundreds of people have died."*⁹⁰ Estimates approximately count 1.5 million Afghan deaths,⁹¹ while officially declared Soviet casualties were over 13,000, but estimates were much higher, between 40,000 and 50,000.⁹²

The public opinion from all around the world, as well as Reagan's administration, thought that, once Najibullah was left alone with no Soviet army backing him, he would have fallen in a matter of weeks or, at the latest, months. Facts prove that the withdrawal had changed the balance of power between the Afghan government and the insurgents, but the regime's resistance was underestimated.⁹³

⁸³Artemy M. Kalinovsky, Old politics, new diplomacy: the Geneva Accords and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. *Cold War History* (2008) Vol. 8. No. 3, pp. 390-393

⁸⁴ Dorronsoro, p. 198

⁸⁵ Kalinovsky, Old politics, new diplomacy, p. 399

⁸⁶ Dorronsoro, p. 200

⁸⁷ Khalilzad, p. 43

⁸⁸ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, p. 147, 165

⁸⁹ Smith, p. 313

⁹⁰ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, p. 206

⁹¹ Liebl, p. 502

⁹² Dorronsoro, p. 192

⁹³ Smith, p. 315

The next section will analyze the reasons why Najibullah was able to detain power as long as in 1992, but ultimately failed to consolidate his rule, providing with theoretical explanations.

2.2 Najibullah 1989 – 1992: why did he resist? why did he fall?

In the years of the withdrawal, Najibullah tried with every means he could to convince the 40th Army if not to stay, to at least to slow down the retreat, but Gorbachev resisted to his insisting requests.⁹⁴ Also, the Soviet high ranks agreed to keep sending ammunitions to the Afghan government,⁹⁵ but they did not find a common policy on how it should have been formed. Gorbachev was for a coalition between Najibullah and the opposition, while the foreign minister Shevardnadze and the KGB head Khrushchev were for the autonomous authority of Najibullah, while the military favored the leadership of the Tajik Massoud, one of the opposition commanders.⁹⁶

Thanks to the military material and the 300 to 500 Soviet advisers the withdrawal left behind, matched with the monthly assistance of \$300 million from Moscow, the regime could survive until 1992. Najibullah's longevity was not only secured by these external factors, but could also exploit the internal situation of great factionalism among mujahidin groups, which partly tried to compromise with the regime's government in order to stabilize their local power.⁹⁷ In those years, the PNR began to bear fruit, as Najibullah reorganized the political structures of the PDPA, changing its name into Party of the Nation,⁹⁸ opening to a coalition government with the mujahidin, authorizing a multi-party system and allowing opposition's commanders to administrate the territory they controlled.⁹⁹

The opposition, instead, was losing grounds as the financial support it received from Pakistan and the US was lower than the regime's one and the 1990 attacks to cities such as Jalalabad, Khost and Shindand proved to be a failure. Moreover, the mujahidin disunity and the competitiveness among their factions in the Peshawar-

⁹⁴ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, p. 165

⁹⁵ Smith, p. 316

⁹⁶ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, p. 147 and Old politics, new diplomacy, pp. 383-384

⁹⁷ Mark N. Katz, Commentary: Lessons from the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan. Middle East Policy Council

⁹⁸ افغانستان وطن حزب : Hezb-e Watan (Persian language)

⁹⁹ Dorronsoro, pp. 202-203

based Afghan Interim Government (AIG) weakened the prospective for their near-term victory.¹⁰⁰

Why did Najibullah stay in power for so long and did not fall as soon as the Soviet army left? His grip on power was possible until the USSR kept on providing him with help, and this proved to be even more effective than military presence in the region.

Najibullah's power was neopatrimonial in nature, meaning that it was based on a relationship of dependence and loyalty between the ruled and the ruler, while it founded its legitimacy in the rational-legal institutions of the state: these characteristics made the regime a hybrid one, a mixture of traditional and rational types of authority.¹⁰¹ Afghanistan was dependent upon foreign resources, which the leader used to induce the more moderate resistance groups to cooperate with the government. Examples of rewards in this patrimonialistic state were lands' ownership, healthcare provision, debt forgiveness, arms and, for those taking part in the militia, regular salaries. Najibullah used the NRP in order to develop a great network to support his personal patronage and strengthen his position both within the party and within the state. Some would therefore argue that his regime was able to survive thanks to these neopatrimonialistic features.¹⁰²

The good performances of the Afghan military, the employment of local militia and the availability of a qualified air force were all factors that helped in the counteroffensive against the less well-off mujahidin.

Why did Najibullah fall in 1992 and was not able to consolidate his regime? It is true that since 1991 the mujahidin were gaining momentum, but at the end it was the cease of Soviet financial and material help, and not the mujahidin military strength, that put an end to his power. In fact, once the Soviet Union broke down in 1991, the Russian Federation's president Boris Yeltsin stopped the aid which the patrimonialistic state was dependent on. When Najibullah was no longer able to pay the local militia, the latter grew more autonomous and sided with the insurgent groups.¹⁰³ The fact that the opposition was fixated on him, together with the loss of

¹⁰⁰ Smith, pp. 320-325

¹⁰¹ Steve Hess, Coming to terms with neopatrimonialism: Soviet and American nation-building projects in Afghanistan. *Central Asian Surveys*, (2010) Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 171-173

¹⁰² Hess, Giustiozzi, Smith

¹⁰³ Dorronsoro, pp. 205-206

interest by many actors, such as Russia and the US, only fast-forwarded the process of regime erosion.¹⁰⁴

The survival of Najibullah regime is the result of the sum of external and internal factors, as Soviet aids guaranteed the possibility for the distribution of rewards for the loyalty to the regime and the traditional patrimonialistic structure of the Afghan society enabled the creation of a network which supported the government's leader. In the unfolding of the events, internal factors such as ethnicity and religion are the ones that led Najibullah to his defeat. In fact, he lost control when the most extremist mujahidin groups began to conquer some provinces and when he started purging his government from non-Pashtun elements. This action provoked Dostum, the Uzbek militia commander previously allied to the government, who shifted to the rebels' side, backing up the Tajik Massoud.¹⁰⁵ The two commanders gained their forces against the government's garrisons and when Najibullah resigned on April 15, 1992, they took part in the formation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The problem was that the interim government collapsed and left the country in a civil war between rival ethnic groups.

The PDPA - Hezb-i Watan's unsuccessful attempt to create a unitary state testifies how the "revolution from above" was indeed a failure as the regime factions did not agree on how to consolidate the regime, becoming increasingly divided, and the post-withdrawal external support encouraged extremisms and divisions both among the leadership and the opposition. This brought Afghanistan to a point in which all that the communist revolutionaries had fought against took power in the ultra conservative regime of the Taliban in 1996,¹⁰⁶ as it will be exposed and analyzed in chapter 3. As history took its path, Najibullah's call for Western help before his fall appears more like a prediction of what did subsequently happen and less as a desperate attempt to get resources. In reality, he described himself as a bulwark against fundamentalism and he upheld that Afghanistan was going to become a center of terrorism in the instance of the mujahidin's victory.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Smith, pp. 331-343

¹⁰⁵ Hess, pp. 180-181

¹⁰⁶ Halliday and Tanin, pp. 1375-1377

¹⁰⁷ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. Penguin Books, New York (2004) pp. 234-235

The next section will explore the contest in which the fundamentalist group which ended up gaining the power – the Taliban – started and rose among the different opposition groups.

2.3 The contest around the Taliban rise

The communist rule ended, but the Afghan conflict was far from being over, since the mujahidin who fought against the regime of Najibullah did not find an agreement on how to administer the territory and turned their arms against each other. Everyone was determined in conquering Kabul. On April 24, 1992, the Islamist parties signed the Peshawar Accord, agreeing on a transitional government of 51 members that was going to hold power for two years,¹⁰⁸ whose president was Rabbani.¹⁰⁹ This settlement did not bring to a mujahidin cooperation since Hekmatyar's HIH party did not sign the Accord. Moreover, Afghanistan was failing at consolidating its state and it was experiencing a shift in resources from traditional tribal leaders to warlords.¹¹⁰

Who are those Afghan warlords and how did they gain power? Warlords are military commanders coming from mujahidin's ranks, exercising local power through a clientelist network and providing the population with law and order from 1992 to 1996.¹¹¹ They gained power because they replaced the traditional power-holders, and acquired control on the arms, the aids from foreign countries and the opium economy.¹¹² In fact, the leaders of the original revolts, namely the rural notables and the landed élites, lost their role due to the devastation of the war and were replaced by leaders who could lead a battle and could gather armed men, respectively warlords and strongmen.¹¹³ However, it should be noted that warlords found it more difficult to gain political legitimacy in the Pashtun areas, since the political role of the tribes prevented warlords from finding grounds to establish a

¹⁰⁸ Frank A. Clements, *Conflict in Afghanistan: An Historical Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO (2003) pp. 203-204

¹⁰⁹ Peshawar Accord, Art. 2 (1992)

¹¹⁰ Romain Malejacq, Warlords, Intervention, and State Consolidation: A Typology of Political Orders in Weak and Failed States. *Security Studies* [online] Vol. 25, No.1, p. 98

¹¹¹ Dominique Orsini, Walking the Tightrope, *The RUSI Journal* (2007) Vol. 152, No. 5, p. 46

¹¹² Salman Hussain, Looking for 'tribals' without politics, 'warlords' without history: the drug economy, development and political power in Afghanistan. *Identities* (2007) Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 250

¹¹³ Antonio Giustozzi, Afghanistan: transition without end. *Crisis States Working Papers Series no. 2* (2008) Working Paper 40, p. 28

new clientelistic network. In fact, they tended to find space where they could easily achieve political control.¹¹⁴ Among the numerous warlords controlling different areas of the territory, it is worth remembering two of them: Hekmatyar, a committed Islamist radical, emerged thanks to the US and Pakistani funding, and Massoud, the military commander and strategist of the Panjshir Valley. They were drug-warlords who had to rely on illegitimate means in order to found themselves, once the foreign aid stopped, and were able to establish a client-patron relationship because they controlled and redistributed material resources acquired selling opium.¹¹⁵

In the same time-frame, the Pashtun tribes were experiencing a shift of power in their “leadership triangle”. Traditionally, authority was shared between the khan, the tribe leader, the malik, the government official, and the mullah, the religious authority. Before the Saur Revolution, the former two held the biggest portion of the power, while the latter the smallest. As the Revolution caused a million Pashtun deaths and the creation of refugee camps, the greatest part of khans and maliks left the territory for Pakistan and the population had to rely on the remaining authority, the mullahs. The mullahs were able to become the only reliable Pashtun authority and eclipse both khans and maliks, gaining power thanks to the Soviet and the Pakistani indirect and direct actions. Using mosques and madrasas, they helped in the formation of the Taliban, which can be defined as Pashtun Islamic fundamentalists.¹¹⁶

The phenomena of warlords and of mullahs, however presenting substantial differences and producing two antagonist power-holders, need to be read not as passive targets created and supported by foreign intervention. Instead, they have to be considered as players who exploited the resources external intervention gave them in order to establish themselves on the local populations, both politically and economically.¹¹⁷

The Taliban emerged in this contest, between the warlords’ power and the mullahs’ increasing political influence. In a few years, they went from being simple Koran’s students, spending their time in madrasas on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, to forming a movement grouped around the quasi-legendary figure of

¹¹⁴ Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Hullah, “Tribes” and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005. *Crisis States Working Papers Series no. 2* (2006) Working Paper 7, p. 17

¹¹⁵ Hussain, pp. 260-264

¹¹⁶ Liebl, pp. 501-504

¹¹⁷ Hussain, p. 265

the mullah Mohammed Omar, fighting against the warlords while sustained by popular consensus.

In the final chapter, the focus of the research will be centered on the Taliban, the reasons why they gained consensus among the Afghan population and were able to gain control of many Afghan provinces from 1994 to the 1996 conquest of Kabul. In considering those facts and their interpretations, the direct and indirect contribution of the bipolar powers into making the Taliban possible will be taken into account.

CHAPTER 3: The Taliban

3.1 Reasons for Taliban rise to power

When Taliban are presented in the context of the 1990s Afghanistan, often it appears that they came into existence in that decade. It is true that 1994 is the year in which they took part in the Afghan scene as key actors, but it must not be forgotten that Taliban mean “students”¹¹⁸ and those came from the religious education of madrasas.¹¹⁹ Even though their movement might appear as a new force, the Taliban actually took part in many political events between the 19th and 20th centuries and were active actors during the Soviet occupation, as they were recruits of the opposition to the communist rule.¹²⁰

What were the reasons behind the origins and the success of a radical Islamist force such as the Taliban? External and internal factors contributing to their rise are intertwined and will be discussed in this section.

The Taliban received their education in madrasas, which were generally located on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. There, during the Soviet occupation and the warlords’ era, Afghan refugees received free education to the Islamic Law and were trained for the Afghan jihad. Thanks to the foreign financial support of US and Pakistan, together with the donation of Wahhabi textbooks from Saudi Arabia, the most radical madrasas spread and educated the students to a form of violent Islam.¹²¹ While the Islamist parties lost popular support due to their bloody fight for national power’s seizure, those religious schools fed the Afghan belief that the state could be unified under an ideal Islamic polity. What is striking about the Taliban generation is that they did not experience the ethnic and tribal factionalism their fathers struggled so much with and the main ethnic groups¹²² blended with one another under their main ideology, free from any client-patron relationship. Since their different tribal origins did not affect them as a group, at least at the beginning,

¹¹⁸ Taliban, plural of Talib (Pashto language)

¹¹⁹ Qamar Fatima, The rise and the fall of Taliban regime (1994-2001) in Afghanistan: the internal dynamics. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Sciences* (2014) Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 38

¹²⁰ David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: genealogies of Afghan jihad*. London, England: University of California Press (2002) pp. 291-292

¹²¹ Fatima, p. 37

¹²² Pashtun (38%), Tajick (25%) Hazara (19%) and Uzbek (16%): Fatima, p. 38

they were unified under the “village identity” of a purist and traditional Islam, even if their understanding of village’s life was mostly idealized.¹²³

External factors influenced the Taliban’s rise to power, but ultimately it was internal dynamics which shaped the movement and brought success to them. It can be argued that the Taliban were a creation of Pakistan, since its military and secret services trained and equipped them, while Saudi Arabia supported their cause ideologically and financially.¹²⁴ At the same time, countries such as the US and Russia did not take active roles neither in their creation nor in the fight against them, since the Americans were not concerned with Afghanistan in that period, while the newly formed Russian Federation was mostly preoccupied with interweaving good relations with the West and recovering its internal economy.¹²⁵ What indirectly helped the Taliban were the weaponry and military supplies both superpowers left behind after the withdrawal, as arms proliferated among the most radical Islamist wings.¹²⁶ Asserting that their rise was possible thanks to favorable external circumstances is too simplistic, because the other Islamist parties were receiving aids too, but did not achieve such results. The ability of the Taliban to reach their goals and control large portions of the territory is what distinguished them from the mujahidin and warlords, making the external support they received effective for their success.¹²⁷

There are other internal factors which helped the Taliban in prevailing. The rise of such a group can be addressed to the formation of a power vacuum in Southern Afghanistan: they found no difficulties in expanding because they simply filled this political void.¹²⁸ Since the south and south-east regions proved to be the most chaotic ones and the strongmen ruling them could not manage the lawlessness, the clergy and the locals started supporting the Taliban, who promised security. It appears that the reasons for their success is not connected with their ability in the

¹²³ Edwards, pp. 293-294

¹²⁴ William Maley, The dynamics of regime transition in Afghanistan. *Central Asian Survey* (1997) Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 170

¹²⁵ Barnett R. Rubin, The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan, *World Development* (2000) Vol. 28, No. 10, p. 1794

¹²⁶ Kuperman, pp. 253-255

¹²⁷ Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi editors, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2008) pp. 69-76

¹²⁸ *ibidem*, pp. 72-73, p. 101

battlefield, although it certainly contributed, but with the support and religious legitimacy they received from the Islamic clergy.¹²⁹

The Taliban also enjoyed popular support, as David B. Edwards explains: “*with much of the population exhausted and impoverished from decades of war, distrustful of political leaders and of other ethnic groups, and, in many areas, suffering from prolonged drought and famine, it is not surprising that, with the exception of Massoud’s continuing holdout in the Panjshir Valley, a widespread and sustained military challenge to the Taliban has not yet arisen.*”¹³⁰ However, it should be emphasized that they found easier access to Pashtun territories than other ethnicities’. In fact, the movement was composed mainly by Pashtun who perpetrated specific values, rules and traditions, which were often stricter than Hazara’s and Tajik’s ones. This is why they encountered popular discontent, especially in non Pashtun areas, and had to fight against organized troops, as Abdul Malik.¹³¹

If on the one hand the reasons behind the Taliban’s rise to power can be found in the disengagement of the previously rival superpowers of the Cold War externally, on the other, it can be rooted in the population’s unwillingness or inability to oppose them, together with the inexistence of a stable and legitimate government internally. They were able to gain many of the Pashtun regions because they promoted the local defection against the élites, mostly in the countryside and in places where the rulers had weakest grips on power and frail patron-client ties. The only Pashtun opposition which was strong enough to fight the Taliban was Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e-Islamie-i-Gulbuddin.¹³² They appealed a great section of the population with their morality and their promise of security, while they aimed at restoring peace, disarm the population and impose Islamic Laws through Pastunwali cultural assets.¹³³ The population perceived them as not aligned to any of the political party nor to any urban political élite, because their religious message was more important than their different ethnicities.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Giustozzi, Afghanistan: transition without end, pp. 29-30

¹³⁰ Edwards, p. 301

¹³¹ Crews and Tarzi, pp. 73-82 and Edwards, p. 301

¹³² *ibidem*, p. 81

¹³³ Edwards, p. 239

¹³⁴ Crews and Tarzi, pp. 84-85

Those are just some of the reasons for the Taliban's rise. The way in which events unfolded are key to understand the medium-term impact of Cold War on Afghanistan and those will be described in the next section.

3.2 Afghan civil war and endless regime transition

The disunity and the competition between Islamic parties had provided the Taliban with the ideal environment for their rise. Their force was indeed a quasi-monopoly in Afghanistan, but it never was able to gain full control of the country.¹³⁵

The civil war between the mujahidin and the Taliban can be divided into two periods, while their conflict can be interpreted in three different ways. Time wise, the first period, which includes the years between 1992 and 1994, is characterized by the beginning of the civil war between the different parties and their struggle for the control of the capital, Kabul. These years were dominated by chaos, the mujahidin were not fighting a jihad anymore, but they were involved in a struggle for survival. The second phase of the civil war took place between 1994 and 1996, when neither side of the disagreeing parties was able to win a broad supremacy, while the Taliban began to gain ground.¹³⁶ The conflict can be understood either in ethnic, ideological or social terms, depending on the way in which it is read and on which factors are taken into account when analyzing the actors involved.¹³⁷ Due to the quick pace and the different interpretations of events in this period, there is no agreement among scholars on the actual causes of the civil war, there are just different interpretations.

The main parties of the Afghan civil war were the Najibullah's formed Hezb-e Watan,¹³⁸ the Jombesh-e Melli,¹³⁹ formed by Parchami communists supported by the militia of general and party's leader Dostum, the Hezb-e Islami¹⁴⁰ lead by Hekmatyar and the Jamiat-e Islami,¹⁴¹ headed by Rabbani, each of them had external support from different neighboring countries.¹⁴² The Taliban presented

¹³⁵ Malejacq, p. 102

¹³⁶ Giustozzi, Afghanistan: transition without end, pp. 28-29

¹³⁷ Dorronsoro, pp. 233-234

¹³⁸ "Party of the Nation", whose origins are explained on page 21 on this thesis

¹³⁹ "National Front"

¹⁴⁰ "Islamic Party", whose origins are explained on page 16 on this thesis

¹⁴¹ "Islamic Society", whose origins are explained on page 16 on this thesis

¹⁴² Crews and Tarzi, p. 62

themselves as an opposition to the whole system of parties.¹⁴³ It is important to notice that, in the unwinding of the conflict, great cities such as Kandahar and Jalalabad found themselves in an anarchic state. This situation was very different from the one experienced during the Soviet occupation, where the cities were protected by the 40th Army and by the local military.¹⁴⁴

In the first phase, the conflict can be referred to as regionalized: without entering in too deep details, each party controlled a portion of the territory and intertwined alliances with one another if not to gain land, at least to keep the region they controlled. Often, around those regions administered by parties, there were politically fragmented areas, which had no clear party affiliation.¹⁴⁵ After a few years of confrontations, it was clear that the fight between the parties acquired ethnic shades: the Hezb-e Watan upheld the Hazara's interests, the Jombesh-e Melli emphasized their Turkish origins while the Jamiat-e Islami shifted toward Tajik nationalism, in a climax of tension and mutual distrust.¹⁴⁶ The Taliban took part in this process of ethicization, too, as they began recruiting among Pashtuns, endorsing their culture and Islamic traditions.¹⁴⁷ In 1993 there has been an attempt for a settlement among the parties, the Islamabad Accords, but they proved to be useless, since Hekmatyar tried to seize power in Kabul in the same year.¹⁴⁸

In the second phase of the civil war, the Taliban gained ground, both ideologically and territorially, as they were able to concentrate the resources and break the regionalization. However, Kabul was still under the control of the Jamiat-e Islami, which was able to win over his adversaries and established a shaky government under Rabbani,¹⁴⁹ but it will take the Taliban only two years to acquire power over the capital.

Why did the Taliban prosper in this context? They seemed to identify with the population and they showed to be willing to protect them. For too long the locals were object of injustice and oppression by the warlords and their militia, as they were killed during the mujahidin's fights and were often abused by those

¹⁴³ Dorronsoro, p. 236, pp. 258-271

¹⁴⁴ Fatima, pp. 35-36

¹⁴⁵ Dorronsoro, p. 247

¹⁴⁶ *ibidem*, pp. 258-266 and Giustozzi, p. 28

¹⁴⁷ Khalilzad, p. 46

¹⁴⁸ Maley, p. 174

¹⁴⁹ Crews and Tarzi, p. 37

institutions which were supposed to take care of their security.¹⁵⁰ The “*causus belli*” which induced the Taliban at intervening in the national scene was the harassment of a family from Herat by some mujahidin at a checkpoint. The girls were raped and the boys molested before being killed. This family’s relatives asked for help to the local mullah, Muhammad Omar, in order to recover the dead bodies and honor them with burial. The mullah gathered some thirty Islamic students – the Taliban, precisely – , led an attack to the warlord base and prevailed against them.¹⁵¹ Mullah Omar was an ex-mujahidin from the province of Kandahar, whose story lies between legend and reality. He was a rural fundamentalist religious figure who had a vision about his destiny: he was chosen by Allah to defeat the mujahidin and guide the Afghan state under Islamic laws. He engaged in fighting banditry and abuse of power to the locals.¹⁵² In only three months, Mullah Omar was able to gain one third of the Afghan territory, as his followers grew in number. He could do so thanks to weaponry’s seizure, strong Pakistani support and Al-Qaeda’s leader – Osama Bin Laden – financial help.¹⁵³

The Taliban were able to gain momentum in this context because they appeared as the sole group following a unified direction and they were able to make religion identical to state rule, fusing the three pillars of Afghan political culture, namely Islam, tribalism and state.¹⁵⁴ Also, their success was given by their ability to rebuild a centralized authority supported locally, and they did so undermining the traditional ethnic hierarchies which were on the base of the clientelistic network of the other parties.¹⁵⁵

In this chaotic framework characterized by endless civil war and incomplete regime transition, two important observations should be made.

First, notwithstanding the evidence of improvements in state consolidation, the Taliban could never carry it out completely due to Massoud’s resistance – which culminated with the creation of the Northern Alliance in 1996 –¹⁵⁶ and the Taliban’s inability to institutionalize politics while integrating the various political élites of

¹⁵⁰ Fatima, p. 35

¹⁵¹ *ibidem*

¹⁵² Crews and Tarzi, p. 101

¹⁵³ *ibidem*, pp. 104-105

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, p. 298

¹⁵⁵ Dorronsoro, pp. 268-271

¹⁵⁶ Malejacq, p. 102

the country.¹⁵⁷ The issue of leaderships' fragmentation could be solved either through collaboration in electoral politics, or negotiating compromises or restructuration of a single, new and united élite. All the varied attempts aimed at settling the parties' diverging views failed, even though the UN tried to facilitate the process, both by mediating the accords stipulated between the élites and by creating a body for the formation of a transitional government.¹⁵⁸ The Taliban were not able to monopolize the use of force so to gain state legitimacy, neither they were capable of disarming the population while supplying them with a sustainable lifestyle.¹⁵⁹

Second, the purpose of this thesis is to understand how the Cold War influenced Afghanistan. How was the Taliban experience possible after the Soviet efforts to establish a Communist rule and the American endeavor to set a nationally recognized force? Why did the superpowers' disengagement from the country leave such a radical Islamist force? In essence, what went wrong? Once the Soviet Union collapsed in 1992, stopping the aids' shipment to the Afghans and the Americans lost their interest in the region, the fragmentation and the radicalization worsened. Maybe, in order to make their intervention more effective, the two superpowers should have taken into consideration the Afghan national dynamics and roles of neighboring countries. In fact, the latter were the ones who stepped in and supported the different Islamic parties and, ultimately, the Taliban: Pakistan trained them, Saudi Arabia financed them and provided them with the fundamentalist Osama Bin Laden. This paper did not analyze in great detail the dynamics between Afghanistan and its bordering states, but it emerges that there have been a multitude of actors who managed to influence Afghanistan towards the most radical forms of Islam. Could it be avoided? This is hard to say, but what should be clear is that once a foreign power intervenes in external conflicts, the consequences of his actions are going to unleash much more complicated consequences than expected. In the following final section, the Taliban rule will be briefly described, in order to give a sense of what the Cold War unwillingly left behind.

¹⁵⁷ Maley, p. 167

¹⁵⁸ *ibidem*, pp. 171-176

¹⁵⁹ *ibidem*, p. 179

3.3 Features of the Taliban Rule

After conquering the South, the Taliban gained power over Kabul in September 1996, when Hekmatyar was long defeated and the “Lion of the Panjshir Valley” Massoud retreated to the North. Despite the hopes of the population for a more just and freer state, the Taliban immediately establish themselves as a violent new power, since the first thing they did was to kill former president Najibullah and hang him on a traffic light, putting money in his hands in order to symbolize his corruption. From September 27, the fundamentalist group ruled the greatest portion of the country, imposing strict Islamic laws, as they believed they were given a divine mandate to govern Afghanistan.¹⁶⁰

The Taliban regime was clerical in nature, imposed from above and, most importantly, reactionary. The state structures between 1996 and 2001 was based on the Sharia Law as interpreted by the ulema,¹⁶¹ a small state administration, religious judges trained in madrasas and an exclusive leadership composed mainly by mullahs of Ghilzai Pashtun ethnicity.¹⁶² They also established a Taliban Bureau for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice,¹⁶³ a sort of Islamic religious police which imposed religious morality and inflicted public punishments to those who did not respect it. Their approach to Islam was rather orthodox and concerned dress and hair codes, Friday attendance at the mosque, shrine’s visitations and many others religious practices.¹⁶⁴

In this context, the Afghan women’s status was deeply affected, as they were obliged to wear the burqua and they were denied access to the vast majority of schools. Moreover, male domination over female weakness was emphasized by legal implications: arranged marriages, male polygamy, divorce allowed only by man’s initiative, female adultery punished with death penalty and restricted freedom of movement for women.¹⁶⁵ It must be noted, however, that women who lived in the countryside experienced a very different reality from those who lived in the city. In the former, they had less restrictions and were able to enjoy the public

¹⁶⁰ Dorronsoro, pp. 254-255 and Edwards, p. 307

¹⁶¹ religious authorities and scholars

¹⁶² Giustozzi, Afghanistan: transition without end, p. 31

¹⁶³ “Amar Bil Maroof Wa Nahi An al-Munkar” (Arab language)

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, pp. 306-307

¹⁶⁵ Dorronsoro, pp. 291-292

sphere, as they could work and move freely; in the latter, women were often confined inside and they were just part of the men's private sphere.¹⁶⁶

The Taliban regime was isolated from the rest of the world, at least from the Western side, because it did not want external forces to influence or try to change its Islamic laws.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, though, it looked for international legitimacy. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as the Taliban renamed the country, was recognized by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, but no diplomatic recognition came from the West.¹⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that 90% of the Afghan territory, by the end of 1998, was administered by the Taliban, they were never able to take full control of it for two main reasons. First, the Massoud's Northern Alliance was able to defend the Panjshir Valley until the fall of the regime in 2001. In practice, the civil war between the Taliban and Massoud-lead opposition continued after 1996.¹⁶⁹ Second, the population manifested discontent, as the Taliban imposed the Pashtun interpretation of Islam, without taking into consideration the multitude of ethnicities and traditions: in this way, the Taliban lost a great part of the local support they had.

¹⁶⁶ Crews and Tarzi, pp. 118-122

¹⁶⁷ Edwards, p. 306

¹⁶⁸ Giustozzi, p. 31

¹⁶⁹ Malejacq, p. 103

Conclusion

When referring to Afghanistan between the 1980s and the 1990s, there is a tendency to address the '80s as the period of the Soviet occupation, while considering the last decade of the 20th century as the years of the Taliban rule. As this final thesis has proven, such a simplification hinders the possibility for a better understanding of the links between the Soviet and the American intervention in the region during the Cold War and the subsequent Taliban's seizure of power. The period between the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and the beginning of the Taliban rule in 1996 are key in the understanding of how Cold War influenced Afghanistan and generated such a radical Islamist force.

In the short term, the bipolar superpowers' intervention did not make Afghanistan what they hoped it would have become. The Soviet military and financial support to the PDPA did not transform the country in a lasting communist regime, while the American help to the mujahidin was not preparatory for the formation of a strong and unified national government. In the long term, their involvement and subsequent disengagement in the region proved to be breeding grounds for the most fundamentalist movement, the Taliban, who took advantage of both the great fragmentation of power among mujahidin and the popular weariness for a state of constant conflict.

One way in which the Cold War influenced the situation in Afghanistan was by sharpening the so long present factionalism, both in the PDPA holding power and in the opposition. Since the country has always been ethnically diverse as Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras populated the territory, the Soviet attempted to unify the state under the PDPA, but they only aggravated the rivalry between its ethnic groups. In fact, Khalq and Parcham (Pashtun groups) factions of the party kept on fighting against each other for the leadership. On the other hand, the Islamic opposition was also fragmented: it managed to follow unified actions as long as its objective was to defeat the PDPA–Hezb-e Watan. But when the time to lead the country came, each Islamic party, supported by different foreign actors, gained control of a portion of the territory and did not achieve a settlement on power-sharing.

What is interesting about the legacies the Cold War left to the Afghan state is that it provided the internal actors and their supporting neighboring countries with the

means to fight the civil war. However, the only power that prevailed was the Taliban movement, since it was able to exploit the resources the external intervention provided them with, especially from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and, mostly indirectly, the US. Moreover, the Taliban presented themselves as a unitary group with a clear goal: turning Afghanistan into an Islamic state. The other Islamist parties were not able to achieve such an ambitious task, because they had contrasting programs and they were harshly competing against one another.

Those two findings give an important lesson: the two superpowers should have taken into consideration the Afghan national dynamics and the roles of neighboring countries in order to make their intervention more effective. In fact, the latter were the ones who stepped in and supported the different Islamic parties and, ultimately, the Taliban. When a foreign power intervenes in external conflicts, his actions are going to unleash much more complicated consequences than expected. Finally, the findings give rise to the question of whether the West can be deemed responsible for having provided the Islamic fundamentalists with the resources to turn against the western civilization, as it happened with 9/11, or whether the terrorist attacks toward the West could find others financiers, such as Saudi Arabia or the terrorist organization of Al-Qaida.

Even if this research highlighted only some of the ways in which the Cold War influenced Afghanistan in the rise of the Taliban Regime, it gives in no way a final answer to the research question. Furthermore, the reasons behind the fundamentalist group's grip on power does not lie in the sole Cold War explanations, but it can be explained through the intertwined relations between the various Afghan internal actors and the neighboring states. Further research could investigate the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, along with the reasons behind the latter's support to the former's Islamist parties and, later on, the Taliban. Another interesting research topic could explore the ties between Mullah Omar and Bin Laden, in order to understand why the Al-Qaeda leader engaged in supporting the Taliban and no other Islamic party in the context of the Afghan civil war.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

1) Original Documents

- Geneva Convention II: for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (1949)
Available: <http://www.un-documents.net/gc-2.htm>
- Geneva Accords (1988)
Available: <http://insidethecoldwar.org/sites/default/files/documents/The%20Geneva%20Accords%20on%20Afghanistan,%20April%2014,%201988.pdf>
- Peshawar Accord (1992)
Available: http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/AF_920424_PESHAWAR%20ACCORD.pdf

2) Journalistic Sources

- Grau, L. W. (2004) The Soviet–Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains. *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* [online] Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 129–151
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13518040490440692>
- Liebl, V. (2007) Report from the field. Pashtuns, Tribalism, Leadership, Islam and Taliban: A Short View. *Small Wars and Insurgencies* [online] Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 492-510
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09592310701674481>

3) Memoirs

- Wright, R. (1991) *Black Boy. American Hunger*. New York: Library of America
- Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*. (1952) Washington D. C.: Regnery Publishing Inc., p. 7

4) Political Speeches and Dialogues

- Cde. M. S. Gorbachev and General Secretary of the CC NDPA, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of DRA B. Karmal. *Memorandum Of Conversation*. Kremlin, 14 March 1985 (The Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Volkogonov Collection, Reel 17, Container 26. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya, The National Security Archive)
Available: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB272/Doc%201%20Gorbachev-Karmal%20conversation.pdf>
- US president Reagan, R. *The Agenda Is Victory*. Washington D. C., 27 Feb. 1982. Speech
Available: http://reagan2020.us/speeches/The_Agenda_is_Victory.asp

5) Newspaper Articles

- Schmemann, S. "Gorbachev says U.S. arms note is not adequate." *New York Times*, February 26, 1986
Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/02/26/world/gorbachev-says-us-arms-note-is-not-adequate.html>
- Shipler, D. K. "A Cautious U.S. Response To Plan on Afghanistan." *New York Times*, January 10, 1988
Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/10/weekinreview/a-cautious-us-response-to-plan-on-afghanistan.html>

Secondary Sources

1) Monographs

- Coll, S. (2004) *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. Penguin Books, New York
- Crews, R. D. and Tarzi, A. editors (2008) *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Dorronsoro, G. (2005) *Revolution Unending. Afghanistan, 1979 to the present*. Hurst & Company, London in association with the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Paris

- Edwards, D. B. (2002) *Before Taliban: genealogies of Afghan jihad*. London, England: University of California Press
- Kalinovsky, A. M. (2011) *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Westad, O. A. (2015) *La Guerra Fredda Globale. Gli Stati Uniti, l'Unione Sovietica e il mondo: le relazioni internazionali del XX secolo*. Milano: Il Saggiatore S. r. l. (*The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. 2007, Cambridge University Press)

2) Review Articles

- Edwards, D. B. (1993) Summoning Muslims: Print, Politics, and Religious Ideology in Afghanistan. *The Journal of Asian Studies* [online] Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 609-628
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2058856>
- Fatima, Q. (2014) The rise and the fall of Taliban regime (1994-2001) in Afghanistan: the internal dynamics. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Sciences* [online] Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 35-46
Available: <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19-issue1/Version-1/F019113546.pdf>
- Giustozzi, A. and Ullah, N. (2006) "Tribes" and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005. *Crisis States Working Papers Series no. 2* [online] Working Paper 7, pp. 1-22
Available: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationaldevelopment/research/crisisstates/download/wp/wpseries2/wp72.pdf>
- Giustozzi, A. (2008) Afghanistan: transition without end. *Crisis States Working Papers Series no. 2* [online] Working Paper 40, pp. 1-54
Available: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/download/wp/wpSeries2/wp402.pdf>
- Haas, M. L. (2007) The United States and the End of the Cold War: Reactions to Shifts in Soviet Power, Policies, or Domestic Politics? *International Organization* [online] Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 145-179
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4498140>

- Halliday, F. and Tanin, Z. (1998) The Communist Regime in Afghanistan 1978 – 1992: Institutions and Conflicts. *Europe-Asia Studies* [online] volume 50, no. 8, pp. 1357 – 1380
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09668139808412601>
- Hess, S. (2010) Coming to terms with neopatrimonialism: Soviet and American nation-building projects in Afghanistan. *Central Asian Surveys*, [online] Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 171-187
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02634937.2010.490677>
- Herrmann, R. K. (1992) Soviet Behavior in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies, and Important Lessons. *World Politics* [online] Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 432-465
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010545>
- Hussain, S. (2012) Looking for ‘tribals’ without politics, ‘warlords’ without history: the drug economy, development and political power in Afghanistan. *Identities* [online] Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 249-267
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1070289X.2012.699877>
- Kalinovsky, A. M. (2008) Old politics, new diplomacy: the Geneva Accords and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. *Cold War History* [online] Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 381-404
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14682740802222213>
- Khalilzad, Z. (1997) Anarchy in Afghanistan. *Journal of International Affairs* [online] Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 37-56
Available: http://se5fj2qs2v.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&rft.genre=article&rft.atitle=Anarchy+in+Afghanistan&rft.jtitle=Journal+of+International+Affairs&rft.au=Zalmay+Khalilzad&rft.date=1997-07-01&rft.pub=Journal+of+International+Affairs&rft.issn=0022-197X&rft.volume=51&rft.issue=1&rft.spag=37&rft.externalDocID=23198949¶mdict=it-IT

- Kuperman, A. J. (1999) The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan. *Political Science Quarterly* [online] Vol. 114, No. 2, pp. 219-263
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2657738>
- Malejacq, R. (2016) Warlords, Intervention, and State Consolidation: A Typology of Political Orders in Weak and Failed States. *Security Studies* [online] Vol. 25, No.1, pp. 85-110
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09636412.2016.1134191>
- Maley, W. (1997) The dynamics of regime transition in Afghanistan. *Central Asian Survey* [online] Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 167-184
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02634939708400982>
- Mendelson, S. E. (1993) Internal Battles and External Wars: Politics, Learning, and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan. *World Politics*, [online] Vol. 45, No. 3 pp. 327-360
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29507222>
- Orsini, D. (2007) Walking the Tightrope, *The RUSI Journal* [online] Vol. 152, No. 5, pp. 46-50
Available: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03071840701698026>
- Reisman, W. M. (1987) The Resistance in Afghanistan Is Engaged in a War of National Liberation. *The American Journal of International Law* [online] Vol. 81, No. 4, pp. 906-909
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/220341>
- Reisman, W. M. and Silk, J. (1988) Which Law Applies to the Afghan Conflict? *The American Journal of International Law* [online] Vol. 82, No. 3, pp. 459-486
Available: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2202961>
- Rubin, B. R. (2000) The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan. *World Development* [online] Vol. 28, No. 10, pp. 1789-1803
Available: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X00000541>

- Smith, S. A. (2014) Afghanistan After The Occupation: Examining The Post-Soviet Withdrawal And The Najibullah Regime It Left Behind, 1989 – 1992. *The Historian* [online] Vol. 76, No. 2, pp. 308-343
Available: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hisn.12035/epdf>

3) Websites and Online Dictionaries

- Katz, M. N. *Commentary: Lessons form the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. Middle East Policy Council
Available: <http://www.mepc.org/articles-commentary/commentary/lessons-soviet-withdrawal-afghanistan?print> (accessed on March 31, 2016)

Tertiary sources

1) Encyclopedias

- Clements, F. A. (2003) *Conflict in Afghanistan: An Historical Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO

Riassunto

DALLA PADELLA ALLA BRACE?
L'AFGHANISTAN TRA
IL RITIRO DELLE TRUPPE SOVIETICHE
E L'ASCESA AL POTERE DEI TALEBANI,
1989 - 1996

Riassunto

Nonostante venga spesso trascurato, il periodo compreso tra il ritiro delle truppe sovietiche e la presa di potere da parte dei Talebani in Afghanistan è fondamentale, in quanto permette di comprendere i motivi che hanno portato un movimento di tale matrice estremista a conquistare quasi interamente il territorio afgano. La presente tesi di laurea triennale si basa sulla ricerca di una risposta alla seguente domanda: In che modo l'avvento al potere dei Talebani è stato causato dalle dinamiche della Guerra Fredda nella regione?

L'occupazione militare dei sovietici, finalizzata a supportare il partito comunista afgano, e lo schieramento americano a favore dell'opposizione, mostrano come l'intervento di attori esterni in conflitti regionali possa avere conseguenze inaspettate e devastanti per le popolazioni locali, specialmente se le dinamiche interne e l'influenza degli stati confinanti non vengono prese in dovuta considerazione.

L'Afghanistan ha da sempre avuto un ruolo strategico a livello internazionale: in passato ospitava la via della seta, oggi è tragitto per oleodotti. Sin dagli anni '70, vi è stato un interesse reciproco tra l'Unione Sovietica e il sopracitato paese, fondato sull'adesione di entrambi all'ideologia comunista.

Nel periodo tra il colpo di stato perpetrato dal partito comunista afgano nell'aprile 1978 e l'inizio dell'occupazione sovietica nel dicembre del 1979, l'Afghanistan si è trovato a dover fronteggiare problemi quali la frammentazione dello stato, la faziosità tra gli esponenti Khalqi e Parcham del partito e una crescente opposizione popolare. Dato lo scarso successo dei tentativi russi volti alla riconciliazione dei due gruppi interni al partito comunista, l'URSS decise di intervenire militarmente nella regione per sostituirne la direzione, rafforzarlo e per addestrare le truppe afgane nella battaglia contro l'opposizione. Per gli USA, il coinvolgimento russo in Afghanistan fu percepito come una provocazione e rientrò nelle dinamiche di scontro tra proxy della Guerra Fredda, quindi risposero ad esso con il supporto all'opposizione, i mujaheddin. Da quel momento, l'URSS si trovò impantanata in un "Vietnam Sovietico", un conflitto che non poteva essere vinto dato il vantaggio territoriale e culturale dei mujaheddin, ma che al tempo stesso non riusciva a trovare una soluzione, impiegando inoltre un'enorme quantità di sforzi militari ed economici.

I Sovietici erano intenzionati a ritirare le truppe già dal 1985, quando il nuovo leader comunista, Gorbaciov, entrò in carica, ma il ritiro vero e proprio fu possibile solo quattro anni dopo, nel 1989. Durante quegli anni, USA e URSS, coerenti con le dinamiche della Guerra Fredda, cercarono di stabilire la loro egemonia ideologica all'interno del paese. Il primo a muoversi da una strategia di contenimento ad una di détente fu la Russia: Gorbaciov era intenzionato a continuare a supportare finanziariamente e politicamente il governo comunista afgano, ma non militarmente. Egli descrisse l'intervento russo in Afghanistan come una "ferita aperta", che avrebbe continuato a sanguinare e non avrebbe fatto altro che giovare ai mujaheddin e ai loro alleati americani. L'obiettivo sovietico passò dall'instaurare un regime comunista nel paese al rafforzare l'unità del governo afgano, con o senza i leader comunisti a capo.

Nonostante Gorbaciov avesse dichiarato la volontà di ritirare le proprie truppe già tra il 1985 e il 1986, gli Stati Uniti, guidati dall'amministrazione Reagan, decisero comunque di inviare ai mujaheddin, all'inizio dell'autunno del 1986, il missile Stinger per combattere contro i raid aerei sovietici. Questo marcato interventismo fu guidato principalmente dalla paura dell'espansione del comunismo, dalla mancanza di informazioni attendibili riguardanti le intenzioni sovietiche e da interessi economici. Per poter capire i motivi di tale operazione e diffidenza nei confronti delle dichiarazioni del leader sovietico, si può fare riferimento alle teorie del costruttivismo sistemico e ideologico basate sulla teoria della pace democratica. Queste teorie dimostrano come, solamente quando l'URSS fu in grado di cambiare le proprie istituzioni ed ideologie a livello nazionale, rendendo le prime più democratiche e le seconde meno modellate sul comunismo, solo allora gli USA iniziarono a prendere più seriamente le intenzioni sovietiche nella politica estera. Infatti, il processo di democratizzazione dell'URSS, portò Reagan a percepire la Russia come più "occidentale" e ad essere disposto ad un dialogo americano-sovietico per la risoluzione del conflitto in Afghanistan. Questo però fu possibile solo tra il 1988 e il 1989, quando Gorbaciov riuscì ad implementare i suoi programmi di perestroika e glasnost. Ciò dimostra come non solo la Guerra Fredda influenzò l'Afghanistan, ma anche le vicende delle due superpotenze mondiali nella regione furono determinanti per lo svolgimento e per la conclusione della Guerra Fredda: da quegli anni, infatti, Stati Uniti e Unione Sovietica iniziarono a dare più

importanza all'instaurazione di relazioni diplomatiche tra di loro rispetto al perseguimento delle politiche di contenimento negli stati del Terzo Mondo.

Nonostante le vicende afgane abbiano contribuito positivamente alle relazioni USA – URSS, il coinvolgimento dei due stati all'interno della regione ebbe conseguenze disastrose per lo stato stesso. L'Afghanistan proviene da una storia di eterogeneità etnica, basti pensare che Pashtun, Uzbeki, Tagiki e Hazara rappresentano quattro dei tanti gruppi che lo popolano. Tuttavia, l'intervento esterno delle due superpotenze non ha fatto altro che inasprire la frammentazione del territorio e la faziosità interna sia del governo che dell'opposizione. Il partito comunista afgano rimase diviso tra le fazioni Khalqi e Parcham – la prima rappresentante il proletariato e la seconda le élites rivoluzionarie – le quali si contendevano gli aiuti inviati dai sovietici. L'opposizione, per lo più di matrice islamista, era divisa in almeno sette partiti, supportati da USA, Pakistan e Arabia Saudita e aventi diverse visioni sull'applicazione dell'Islam al futuro stato afgano. L'opposizione si dimostrò unita nel combattere il regime comunista, ma una volta al potere non seppe trovare un accordo su come dividerlo tra le varie fazioni.

Ne 1987, in vista della ritirata, i sovietici misero al potere del partito comunista e del governo afgano Najibullah, convinti che avrebbe unificato il paese sotto il programma di “Riconciliazione Nazionale”: esso era volto a integrare l'opposizione all'interno del governo sotto l'egida di una nuova costituzione. Contrariamente a quanto ambito dal programma, la faziosità all'interno dello stesso governo si acuiva sempre più, a prova di come l'intervento esterno non fosse riuscito a risolvere i problemi dell'Afghanistan.

Per porre fine alla guerra civile tra l'esercito del governo e i mujaheddin, l'ONU appoggiò gli Accordi di Ginevra dell'aprile 1988, firmati da Pakistan e Afghanistan e aventi come garanti USA e URSS. Gli Accordi erano basati sul principio di non-interferenza – gli stati esterni all'Afghanistan avrebbero dovuto interrompere il supporto ai ribelli o al governo –, i rifugiati afgani all'estero avrebbero potuto tornare in patria e i Sovietici avrebbero dovuto stabilire delle date per l'inizio e la fine della ritirata delle loro truppe.

Gorbaciov riuscì di fatto a rispettare i termini per il rimpatrio delle 100 mila unità del suo esercito, concludendo l'operazione nel febbraio del 1989: anche se fu in grado di ricucire la “ferita aperta”, lasciò un Afghanistan macchiato di sangue, tra le 1,5 milioni di morti afgane e i 40 mila soldati sovietici deceduti sul campo.

Il principio di non-interferenza non fu rispettato, nonostante gettasse le basi su cui si ergevano gli Accordi di Ginevra. Durante il processo di negoziazioni precedente ai suddetti, Gorbaciov puntava a una simmetria negativa, mentre Reagan non era disposto a rinunciare al supporto che dava a Pakistan e mujaheddin. In conclusione, gli Accordi di Ginevra non aiutarono a porre fine al conflitto interno allo stato, dato che entrambe le superpotenze continuarono ad inviare aiuti agli attori coinvolti.

Una volta che i Sovietici lasciarono l'Afghanistan, il potere di Najibullah non fu intaccato, anzi, riuscì a sopravvivere fino al 1992, dopo il crollo dell'Unione Sovietica. Il leader riuscì a mantenere la sua posizione grazie al supporto finanziario e alle risorse militari e politiche fornitegli dall'URSS e al suo programma di smantellamento dell'ideologia comunista. Inoltre, il leader riuscì a sfruttare a proprio favore la faziosità tra i gruppi di mujaheddin. Infatti, il governo ad interim che i partiti islamici avevano stabilito in Pakistan era così competitivo e frammentato da non riuscire a imporsi su Najibullah. Quest'ultimo fu capace di servirsi del sostegno russo inducendo la popolazione ed i gruppi di resistenza moderati a cooperare con il governo in cambio di ricompense: questo era il modo tradizionale che i capi delle tribù utilizzavano in Afghanistan per assicurarsi la lealtà dei propri sudditi e mantenere saldo il legame tra padrone e cliente.

La catena che manteneva il potere di Najibullah saldo si spezzò quando gli aiuti da parte dei russi cessarono con il crollo dell'Unione Sovietica e, di conseguenza, il leader del governo non fu più in grado di fornire ricompense e mantenere in piedi lo stato clientelare. Quando gran parte delle fila del suo esercito, non essendo più pagate, si avvicinarono all'opposizione, Najibullah fu costretto a dare le dimissioni nell'aprile 1992. In definitiva, furono sia fattori esterni che interni a causare la conclusione dell'esperienza comunista in Afghanistan: come terminò il supporto sovietico, così cessò il regime, mentre i mujaheddin, principalmente guidati dai comandanti Dostum e Massoud, presero piede e si organizzarono per attaccare il potere di Najibullah. Entrarono in gioco anche fattori etnici, in quanto i ribelli Tagiki e Uzbeki si scontrarono con il leader di governo Pashtun.

Nello stesso mese, i leader dei diversi partiti islamisti firmarono l'Accordo di Peshawar, in cui si proclamava la Repubblica Islamica Afgana e veniva scelto un governo di transizione. Dal momento che non si trovarono soluzioni sulla distribuzione del potere, l'Afghanistan si trovò sull'orlo del fallimento statale e venne diviso in territori controllati da "signori della guerra", ex-mujaheddin che

soppiantarono i leader tribali locali con un rapporto di mera clientela con le popolazioni sottomesse. Tra questi è bene ricordare Hekmatyar, un islamista radicale, e Massoud, il principale comandante del Nord. Nello stesso periodo, la tradizionale “leadership triangolare” all’interno del gruppo Pashtun si disintegrò: non vi erano più i malik, i khan e i mullah, ma soltanto i leader religiosi, che divennero l’autorità alla quale si affidò la popolazione. Questo fenomeno contribuì all’ascesa al potere dei Talebani, in quanto i mullah abbracciarono la loro causa.

I Talebani erano un gruppo politico-militare che fondava la sua ideologia sulla creazione di uno stato islamico afgano, basato sulla legge della sharia. Essi provenivano dalle madrase, scuole coraniche situate principalmente al confine tra Afghanistan e Pakistan, quindi frequentate da rifugiati afgani di diverse etnie e tribù, che si raggruppavano sotto l’idealizzazione dell’ “identità del villaggio” ed erano grandi sostenitori di un Islam purista e fortemente tradizionalista. Non avendo provato sulla loro pelle le divisioni etniche che determinavano spesso faziosità, si presentavano come un gruppo compatto sotto l’egida dell’Islam.

Se, da una parte, le ragioni che hanno favorito l’ascesa al potere dei Talebani si può individuare nel disimpegno delle superpotenze che durante la Guerra Fredda avevano preso parte attivamente alle sorti del conflitto, dall’altra parte tale avvento può aver tratto le sue origini dall’impossibilità o dalla riluttanza della popolazione locale nell’opporvi a questa forza e all’inesistenza di un governo saldo e stabile. In sostanza, sia fattori esterni che fattori interni hanno contribuito alla creazione e al rafforzamento di un movimento estremista come quello dei Talebani. Inoltre, stati confinanti quali Pakistan e Arabia Saudita furono coinvolti sia nel finanziamento che nell’addestramento di tale gruppo. In realtà, i suddetti stati aiutavano con mezzi economici e militari anche gli altri partiti islamisti, ma questi non furono in grado di appropriarsi del potere e continuarono a combattere una sanguinosa guerra civile, senza risultati. La differenza tra questi partiti e i Talebani non risiede nel grado di assistenza esterna ricevuta dai primi o dai secondi, bensì nell’uso fatto di quest’ultima.

I Talebani furono capaci di colmare il vuoto di potere che si era formato nel Sud dell’Afghanistan, causato dall’incapacità dei signori della guerra di dominare lo stato di anarchia da una parte, e dal supporto del clero assicurato al gruppo estremista islamico dall’altra. I diversi gruppi etnici afgani vedevano nei Talebani l’unica via d’uscita da un periodo di sofferenze e abusi di potere perpetrati dalle

milizie dei leader degli altri partiti che ebbero il controllo il territorio tra il 1992 e il 1996. I Talebani infatti promettevano la restaurazione della sicurezza nazionale, si adoperavano per una pace duratura e uno stato unito. Oltre alla matrice di tipo islamico, essi erano caratterizzati da una prevalenza etnica Pashtun, e questo fattore favorì la loro espansione in territori in cui questa etnia era dominante.

La guerra civile tra i mujaheddin e i Talebani può essere divisa in due periodi: il primo tra il 1992 e il 1994, in cui i mujaheddin combattevano per mantenere il controllo di territori che avevano conquistato dopo la caduta del regime comunista; il secondo dal 1994 al 1996, quando i Talebani iniziarono a partecipare attivamente al conflitto fino alla presa di Kabul, la capitale. La prima fase può dirsi regionalizzata, mentre la seconda può venir caratterizzata da sfumature di tipo etnico, sia a livello dei partiti islamici, sia nel gruppo dei Talebani, i quali tendevano a rappresentare più la cultura Pashtun che quella delle altre etnie.

I Talebani presero piede dal 1994, con l'emblematico intervento di Mullah Omar e dei trenta studenti di una madrasa, i quali riuscirono a attaccare la base di un signore della guerra a risposta del grido d'aiuto della popolazione che non riusciva più a sopportarne i soprusi. Da quel momento in poi la quasi leggendaria figura di Mullah Omar riuscì a raggruppare un seguito sempre più ampio e a prendere il controllo di un terzo del paese in soli tre mesi. I Talebani si muovevano per l'unificazione dell'Afghanistan sotto la guida della sharia e ebbero successo, dato che durante il loro regime tra il 1996 e il 2001 controllavano il 90% del territorio. Nonostante la consolidazione del loro potere, non furono mai in grado di dominare tutto il paese, da una parte per la resistenza di Massoud e della sua Alleanza del Nord, dall'altra per l'incapacità di venire a patti con le varie élites politiche per un accordo sulla gestione del potere.

L'Afghanistan, dal momento della conquista talebana di Kabul in poi, fu dominato da una rigorosa imposizione della legge islamica. Questo si concretizzò nell'istituzione di una polizia islamica che si adoperava affinché le pratiche religiose venissero seguite con meticolosità dalla popolazione. Ciò comportò notevoli limitazioni alla libertà degli uomini, ma soprattutto a quella delle donne, che si videro costrette ad indossare il burqa, mantenere una condotta altamente morale e, soprattutto, a non potersi muovere liberamente per le strade o a non poter frequentare la scuola. A causa della rigidità delle leggi e della durezza delle

punizioni nel momento in cui queste non fossero rispettate, gran parte della popolazione perse l'entusiasmo nei confronti dei Talebani.

Per concludere, si può affermare che la Guerra Fredda ha influenzato le sorti dell'Afghanistan in svariate maniere, acuendo la faziosità sia all'interno del governo che nell'opposizione, rendendo impraticabile la via per dei negoziati sulla divisione del potere. La grande divisione dei partiti islamisti poi fornì terreno fertile per l'ascesa di un gruppo estremista come quello dei Talebani. Inoltre, da tali avvenimenti, le superpotenze dovrebbero trarre insegnamento circa le conseguenze connesse all'abbandono di un territorio che versa in condizioni di instabilità e la probabilità che gli stati confinanti ne approfittino e intervengano a favore di un movimento o di un altro, sfruttando le dinamiche interne al territorio, come hanno fatto Pakistan e Arabia Saudita supportando i Talebani. Quindi, quando uno stato interviene in uno scontro che non lo riguarda direttamente, deve essere pronto a conseguenze molto più complicate e alle volte, meno rosee, di quelle che si aspetta. Infine, la ricerca lascia aperta la questione che vede l'Occidente come coinvolto nella nascita del terrorismo fondamentalista islamico supportato dai Talebani: questo è nato come conseguenza alla Guerra Fredda, e quindi grazie alla proliferazione delle armi e la faziosità afgana post-intervento, oppure sarebbe sorto ugualmente grazie al supporto saudita, pakistano e dell'organizzazione Al-Qaeda? Non appare, allo stato degli elementi disponibili, possibile sostenere l'una o l'altra tesi, ma di certo non si può ignorare il peso degli eventi esterni sulla genesi della situazione attuale.