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Super Powers' Invasion and the Rise of Violent Extremism in Afghanistan

by

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Abstract

This study looked at the connection between the emergence of violent extremism and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Super Powers. The goal of the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan was to prevent Amin, the head of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, from forming a government that went against her socialist and communist views. The research also demonstrated that the American-backed Afghan independence fighters, known as the "Mujahideen," opposed the Soviet invasion of their country. Following the Soviet exit, a number of fundamentalist groups waged a civil war that culminated in the Taliban taking control of the country in 1996. According to this report, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was justified by a number of factors, including the necessity to attain zero tolerance for terrorism and the need to maintain economic and hegemonic power after the 2011 assault by Al-Qaeda. The data was collected using a content analysis strategy in conjunction with the qualitative research method. The Frustration Aggression Theory was used in the research as the theoretical foundation for analysis. The results showed that Afghans faced several difficulties during the Taliban rule, including food shortages, violence, violations of human rights, and refugee problems. This study came to the conclusion that the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan fuelled the emergence of more violent extremist organizations. These groups were able to get weapons thanks to the United States, Pakistan, and other countries' covert backing, which gave them the confidence and fortitude to take on their alleged adversaries. Among the recommendations made by this research were that the United Nations Charter be reviewed in order to include tenured membership on the Security Council and that less developed nations should be taken into account when choosing members of the rotation. Superpowers should also give up on any attempts to impose democracy and a political system oriented toward the West on other countries in order to further their own national interests. Finally, there will be a decreased likelihood of confrontation and potential conflict if superpowers abstain from directly or indirectly supporting fundamentalism.

Key words: Afghanistan, United States of America, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Invasion, Insecurity, Violent Extremism

1. Introduction

After World War II ended, a new chapter began for the countries involved. Empires began to crumble during this time, and the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) emerged as the two main powers. Through proxy forces, these superpowers indirectly supported armed battles throughout their war, employing strategies including military espionage and organizing regime transitions (Brzezinski, 1999). Countries who were unable to equal these countries' defensive capabilities or build independent economies were forced to either align with one of them or adopt a non-alignment strategy. Several nations even changed their alliances in response to changing security concerns and objectives. The increased tension led to a bloody struggle for global dominance between the two nations. This entails attempting to win over other countries to their cause and being prepared to go to war with those they consider to be their enemies. Because of this, the international order was unstable and prone to conflict during this period of bipolarity, with war seeming to be the only way to resolve disputes between the two superpowers (Rais, 1994).

The aforementioned incidents led to a rise in tension. States that sided with the Soviet Union were seen as adversaries by the US and vice versa. Due to their hostile relationship, the two superpowers were forced to use forceful methods against their alleged adversaries, particularly in cases when a neighboring nation was tipping in favor of the other side (Rais, 1994). As a result, it seemed that the two superpowers could only settle their differences by war, and throughout the bipolar period, there was unrest in the international order. During the first stages of the Cold War, Afghanistan attempted to avoid relying on the US or the USSR, but in the end, they were heavily dependent on the Soviet Union for economic assistance (Rasanayagam, 2013). Moscow and Afghanistan have had close ties ever since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. 1919 saw the establishment of diplomatic relations after the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Afghan-American relations acquired importance with the start of the Cold War, when Prime Minister Daoud Khan gave the first speech from Afghanistan to Congress in Washington, DC, in 1958. Additionally, the US began to provide financial support for the building of dams, power plants, and other types of infrastructure.

It seemed as if there was no legitimate government in place after the April 1978 Saur Revolution, in which the Afghan Communist Party toppled the establishment and assassinated the Prime Minister (Hussain, 2005). Using this as reason, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979, intending to establish a rule that suited their interests as a country. Furthermore, in order to sabotage US ties with Pakistan and the Persian Gulf countries, the Soviet Union made the most of Afghanistan's strategic location. On the other side, the Soviet invasion was resisted by the Mujahedeen, the fundamentalist freedom fighters supported by the United States. Because of this, radical and reactionary groups aimed to take over and bring about a return to the terrible and unforgiving past (Bruce, 2004). The Mujahedeen's resistance meant that the Soviet occupation was costly and time-consuming. Amnesty International claims that 8,000 Afghans were wounded and one million killed between 1980 and 1988. After attempting in vain to achieve its national goals, the Soviet Union, represented by Mikhail Gorbachev, who referred to the occupation of Afghanistan as a "bleeding wound," was forced to withdraw its forces. Even after the Soviet Union withdrew, violence continued in Afghanistan as several ethnic groups were engaged in a civil war. The Taliban, who mostly represented the Pashtun majority, fought with the Northern Alliance, which was

composed of smaller ethnic minority groups including the Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, and Turkmen. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are two violent extremist groups that sprang out of the Mujahedeen during the era of civil unrest. Mullah Omar founded the Taliban, and Osama bin Laden was the leader of Al-Qaeda. The fundamentalist forces lost the level of financial support they had previously gotten from the USA and the NATO soldiers' attempts to suppress the Taliban, so they responded against the US and its Western allies. Al-Qaeda's August 7, 1998, bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania is a clear illustration of this retaliation.

Global peace and tranquility have been the desire and goal of United Nations, as they regulate interaction of nation states in international system (UN Charter, 1945).). The terrible experiences of the First World War and the preventable events of the Second World War made this perspective essential. However, it seems that strong industrialized nations are unaffected by penalties imposed on transgressors who undermine the aforementioned notion of world peace. The United Nations Charter states that military invasion and occupation of another country's territory are prohibited for the sake of world peace. Following the USSR's first invasion in 1979, the United States intervened to thwart the Soviet Union's effective takeover via the use of radical Mujahideen. A highly organized breakaway extremist organization known as "Al-Qaeda" was responsible for the terrorist assault on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, which prompted the second invasion, which happened in 2011. The USSR and the US occupation of Afghanistan seem to have had the same impact, even though they occurred more than 20 years apart. The Soviet Union aimed to constrain Amin's government and that of the Afghan People's Democratic Party, while the United States wished to completely remove all evidence of terrorism. Afghans vehemently rejected both invasions after learning that their nation was overtaken by armed forces and bereft of peace and stability. This led to the emergence of violent extremist organizations that either fought for national security or were used as a weapon by the superpowers to achieve their own goals. Nevertheless, despite the concerning state of affairs in Afghanistan due to the influence of extremism and its actions, the literature that has already been written has not fully caught invasion as a factor that coordinated the escalation of violent extremism in Afghanistan. Amnesty International, for example, stated that between 1980 and 1988, almost one million Afghans perished and another 8,000 were injured. Without making it explicit whether the soldiers or extremist organizations were to blame for the deaths or injuries. Furthermore, Jenkins (2017) has taken the time to document the different policy objectives and responses of previous American presidents to Afghanistan, ranging from George W. Bush to Donald Trump. This documentation includes decisions about troop levels, national interest, the high cost of the conflicts, the number of casualties and injuries reported, and so on, but it does not capture the connection between the invasion and the rise in violent extremism. The study's goal is to investigate this gap in the literature. Carefully identifying the extremist organizations that emerged and how their development received a broad spectrum of backing from both within and outside Afghanistan, giving them confidence and a lethal attitude, is a significant contribution of the research. The whole community was filled with a sense of fear and foreboding, and the subsequent violence perpetrated by these non-state actors—ranging from the terrifying Al-Qaeda to the Mujahedeen—threatened international peace. The most terrible example of this is perhaps the 9/11 attacks, in which Al-Qaeda hijacked four aircraft, two of which crashed

into the Pentagon and the North and South Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, killing 2,973 people on board.

Extremists like the Mujahideen, who had battled the Soviet Union during the invasion in 1979, were happy that a superpower had to give up. Sadly, the Afghan people had to face a great deal of suffering and destruction during the ten-year occupation, and it would take years for them to completely recover. The United Nations Charter aims to promote global peace and unity based on the ideals of sovereign equality and the prohibition of force, but the rise of violent extremism is becoming a greater threat to international peace.

The main objective of the study is to examine USSR and USA invasion and the intensification of fundamentalism in Afghanistan. The specific objectives include:

- (i) To examine how invasion of Afghanistan by USSR and USA contribute to the proliferation of violent extremist groups in the country.
- (ii) To identify the challenges posed by the activities of violent extremist groups in Afghanistan.

2. The Rise of Violent Extremism In the Study Area

There was no significant and well-established violent extremist group between the end of World War II and the Cold War era that followed until the Soviet invasion in 1979 (Ruthven, 2005).



Fig. 1: Map of Afghanistan

The Mujahideen were the first ideological organization to arise against the foreign occupation of Afghanistan; they eventually evolved into rebel groups fighting the Soviet army. A few violent extremist groups that will be covered are as follows:

(i) The Mujahideen in Afghanistan: Origin and Growth

The Afghan War began in April 1978 when President Mohammad Daoud Khan's centrist government was overthrown by left-wing military commanders led by Nur Mohammed Taraki. After it, power was shared by two Marxist-Leninist political parties with low popular support. The majority-Muslim and fiercely anticommunist public despised the new government's extensive land and social reforms, its ruthless extermination of any internal opposition, and its forging of close ties with the Soviet Union. Islam provided the uniting force behind the uprisings against the government by a variety of tribal and urban factions. The Soviet Union's decision to invade Afghanistan in December 1979 was influenced by the mujahideen's rise, internal strife, and attempted coups by Marxist-Leninist factions inside the government. About 30,000 troops were sent by the Soviet Union to topple Hafizullah Amin's short-lived government. With little weaponry at first, the Mujahideen waged the battle in a decentralized manner. They ruled much of the countryside and, typically, used horse transport instead of Soviet car transportation. Their fighting organization and weapon quality quickly improved as a result of experience and the substantial quantity of guns and other military supplies that the US and other countries delivered to the rebels via Pakistan. The Haqqani network, an essential part of this foreign assistance, was run by a prominent mujahideen leader.

In 1986, the mujahideen successfully contested Soviet air supremacy by acquiring a substantial number of US-made shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles. Arnold (1981) said that this was a major factor in the Soviet Union's early 1989 withdrawal. In the meanwhile, the Taliban, a conservative Islamic group led by Mohammad Omar, a former mujahideen commander, began methodically annexing the country and took control of Kabul in 1996.

(ii) The Taliban in Afghanistan: Origin and Growth

The development of the Taliban was unprecedented; nobody had imagined that a tiny organization could become a powerful force in Afghanistan. Rubin (2000) reports that while Mullah Omar and his students were seated in their small madrassa (religious school or seminary) in Singesar village, Maiwand district of Kandahar province, a father of two teenage girls complained that a commander of Kandahar had kidnapped and sexually assaulted his two daughters. It is believed that this tragedy marked the start of the Taliban phenomenon and its ascent. The father called Mullah Omar and asked for help, and he and his students gathered thirty weapons, or fourteen or sixteen guns, to free the women from the camp. After then, they were called to as the "Taliban". The Taliban broke into the commander's tent, freeing the girls and hanging the commander. After many months, it had become the norm for anybody in need to go to Mullah Omar and ask for help in battling the warlords on behalf of the Taliban. Due to regional and global interests, southern Afghanistan had a serious socio-political crisis during the time of the Taliban's rise to power.

Residents of Kandahar were happy to welcome the Taliban's rise because they believed they would restore peace and order to the city (Marshal & Shah, 2016). It was

claimed that transporters, whose businesses had suffered tremendously due to warlord rivalries, provided support and assistance to the Taliban, despite the fact that they were still in their infancy and lacked financing and weaponry.

The Taliban's accomplishment in taking control of Kandahar filled the Pakistani authorities with joy. "They are our children" was how Jamiat Ulema Islam and Nasrullah Babar celebrated the victory (Rashid, 2001). The Taliban army also increased from a few hundred to between two and three thousand men in a matter of weeks. Following their successful liberation of Pakistani convoys and expulsion of warlords from Kandahar, the Taliban were able to advance into nearby areas. The second-largest city and former capital of Afghanistan, Kandahar, is home to the Taliban's traditional headquarters (Dorransoro, 2005). The first horrific crime committed by the Taliban was the violent assassination of former Afghan President Najibullah, who had taken refuge within the UN compound when the Taliban were forced from power in 1992. Diplomatic pressure was placed on Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, two nations that supported the Taliban, when the world community, and the UN in particular, decried Najibullah's killing (Giustozzi, 2019). Human rights groups also condemned Najibullah's death and criticized Pakistan for supporting the Taliban in their denunciations.

Mullah Omar claims that the primary objectives of the Taliban movement are to protect innocent Afghans from criminal warlords and to carry out the demands of the Afghan Jihad (Rashid, 2001). The creation of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan was the primary objective of the Taliban when they initially rose to power. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and even the United States of America secretly backed this ambition in order to surround Iran. But when they gained momentum and success, their goals shifted, and the encirclement of Iran became their new aim.

As the US withdrew its last remaining forces from Afghanistan in compliance with a 2020 peace pact with the enemy, they began their swift offensive. The Taliban's actions since taking back control are eerily similar to those of their bloody rule in the late 1990s, which was characterized by protests, restrictions on press freedom, and violations of human rights (Gannon, 2021).

(iii) **Al-Qaeda Network in Afghanistan: Origin, Development and Global outlook**

Al Qaeda is a violent extremist organization that has a significant impact on worldwide politics and security. The group was founded in the late 1980s by Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi businessman who was radicalized by Islamic extremist doctrine (Smith, 2005). The origin of Al Qaeda may be traced back to the 1979–1989 Afghan–Soviet War. At this point, the Soviet army moved into Afghanistan in an attempt to prop up a communist government that had replaced the previous one in a coup. When the people of Afghanistan revolted against Soviet control, a group of fighters known as the Mujahideen became the major force against the Soviet army. These fighters received financial support, training, and weapons from a number of countries, including the US, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Among those who travelled to Afghanistan to fight with the Mujahideen was Osama bin Laden, a prominent Saudi businessman who had been radicalized by the Islamic philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood (Coll, 2005). Using his resources and connections to fund and support the Mujahideen, Osama bin Laden quickly became well-known inside the movement. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Afghanistan in 1989, bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia and began focusing on other matters, most notably his growing animosity against the United States.

Building an Islamic caliphate over the globe, where all Muslims would live under a single Islamic government, was Al Qaeda's primary objective. Based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law that sees the West as an evil force that must be subdued, this objective is pursued. To achieve this, Al Qaeda has used a range of methods and plans, including recruitment, terrorism, and disinformation (Dorransoro, 2005).

According to Coll (2005), terrorism is Al Qaeda's most well-known tactic, and the group has carried out many devastating attacks all around the world. The purpose of these attacks is to intimidate the organization's enemies and demonstrate the organization's power and influence. The goal of Al Qaeda's marketing efforts is to recruit new members and spread its radical Islamic worldview. Propaganda materials produced by the group include movies, magazines, and online articles. Al Qaeda was established in the late 1980s and quickly expanded into a global network of terrorists with cells and affiliations in many different countries. One of the main factors in the group's growth was the increasing degree of globalization, which made it easier for the organization to coordinate its operations and communicate across boundaries. Another factor was the growth of the internet, which provided a powerful tool for propaganda and recruitment.

These attacks exposed the group's increasing strength and ability and spurred a global response to terrorism. In the years that followed, Al Qaeda launched attacks all across the world, such as the 2004 Madrid train bombings and the London bombings in 2005. One of the most significant historical turning points for Al Qaeda was the formation of its satellite groups, including Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Although these groups are independent of Al Qaeda's senior leadership, they adhere to the same general objectives and philosophies. The rise of these offshoot groups has heightened the threat that Al Qaeda poses on a global scale and complicated efforts to locate and destroy the group's whole network (Barnes, 2021). One of the most significant moments in Al Qaeda's history was the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011. Bin Laden had been the organization's leader since its founding, and his death was a huge loss.

3. Super Powers' invasion

(A) Union of Soviet Socialist Republic Invasion of Afghanistan

In order to reinstate a government more in line with its socialist and hegemonic aims, the USSR invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. In order to sabotage American ties with Pakistan and the surrounding Persian Gulf countries, the Soviet Union also exploited Afghanistan's strategic location. But the "Mujahedeen," or freedom fighters in Afghanistan supported by the United States, were against the Soviet invasion of their nation. The resistance of these freedom fighters prolonged hostilities, increased casualties, and halted the Soviet takeover. Amnesty International stated that over 8,000 Afghans were executed after being found guilty between 1980 and 1988, accounting for over one million deaths during this period.

The entry of Soviet military forces in Afghanistan in December 1979 "sent shock waves around the globe," according to Mitinuddin (1991). Calvocoressi (2006) said that Washington reacted differently, seeing the action as a "calculated move in Russian global strategy rather than as a response to the risky blunders of an incompetent puppet." President Carter's Defense and Energy Secretary, James R. Schlesinger, described the development as the "gravest peril since the darkest days of World War II" (Mitinuddin, 1991). When Soviet forces were stationed in Afghanistan, their influence there peaked.

According to Cordovez & Harrison (1995), the UN saw the Soviet Union's real takeover of Afghanistan as the start of a bigger strategy that would ultimately see them invade the Gulf oil-producing countries after absorbing Afghanistan. Washington forged an alliance with its foreign and regional allies to raise the costs of occupation while simultaneously impeding the Soviet push. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the publication of the Soviet Defense Ministry, released an article in the middle of 1990 that described the financial and human resources the Soviet Union needed to continue its ten-year occupation of Afghanistan. According to reports, the Kremlin lost 14454 soldiers in combat and as a result of injuries; of them, 309 are missing, over 50,000 are injured, and 600 are rendered permanently incapacitated.

According to Bradsher (1999), the cost of the Afghan war came to 60 billion roubles, or \$96 billion, at the official exchange rate of the 1980s. The other figures ranged from 76 to \$152 billion, or 5 to 10 billion roubles, every year. However, Yousaf & Adkin (1992) contended that Moscow's reckless choice to deploy troops to Afghanistan was the reason why the Soviet Union and the United States clashed in that country. Afghanistan became a battlefield as a consequence of their fight, and the US and Pakistan used Afghan mujahideen as stooges to give the Soviet Union a taste of Vietnam.

It is true that the repercussions were hardest felt by ordinary Afghans, especially those residing in rural regions. The Soviets made an effort to force people out of the rural districts where the opposition was concentrated since the Mujahideen were fueled and sheltered by the rural Afghans. As a result, the employment negatively affected them. The Soviet bombardment destroyed whole towns, crops, and irrigation systems, resulting in millions of deaths, long-term homelessness, and starvation. After years of backing the war without seeing the desired result, Mikhail Gorbachev, the head of the Soviet Union at the time, called the occupation of Afghanistan a "bleeding wound" and withdrew his soldiers. The power vacuum created by the disengagement pitted ethnic nations against one another and resulted in a civil war. The two opposing factions that may be linked to the Mujahideen movement were the Taliban, who stood for the Pashtun majority, and the Northern Alliance, which represented the Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, and Turkmen ethnic minorities.

(B) United States of America's Invasion of Afghanistan

Al-Qaeda, directed by Osama Bin Laden, utilized four commercial airplanes in the September 11, 2001 assaults on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center (Calawy, 2020). After 2,900 people died on that day, Afghanistan was invaded a few months later, with the idea being that it was Osama bin Laden's and Al-Qaeda's operational base (Smith, 2005). In 2001, as part of the War on Terror, the United States invaded Afghanistan with the support of more than 40 countries including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The United States has been using "Operation Enduring Freedom" (2001–2014) and "Operation Freedom's Sentinel" (2015–2021) as justifications for its military actions for more than two decades. These military actions have resulted in the deaths of around 100,000 civilians and 60,000 security personnel (Al Jazeera, 2019). The administration of President Bush said that one of the justifications for US involvement in Afghanistan was the threat that the attacks conducted by Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization were thought to represent to national security. Copenhagen School theorists define national security as "primarily in terms of protecting the state's components from outside threats and interference" (Buzan et al., 2008).

Another rationale for US involvement in Afghanistan was the need to establish a democratic government in order to bring peace to the region. A closer look at the need of action raises the question of whether the USA may have handled the situation differently. We have learned some clear lessons from our twenty years of military service. It seems that the whole purpose of the War on Terror was to ensure that Afghanistan could no longer function as a haven for terrorists, with 9/11 acting as the catalyst that both justified and mandated military involvement (Barnes, 2021). In order to prevent more terrorist acts, the United States and its allies used "the most commonly recognized just cause for the use of force" to defend its military engagement (Cortright, 2011). But what the US and the UK see as acts of self-defense might just as well be viewed as attacks on the Islamic identity (Misra, 2004).

Captain Diggs, an officer in the US Army Special Forces, said that "many have made the ultimate sacrifice to protect all Americans and the liberties we cherish." Self-interest was subordinated to the collective cause of liberation (Brown, 2005). Participants in Operation Enduring Freedom may have had this view, but the situation on the ground does not support it. Kaldor (2013) claims that the War on Terror was initiated with the goal of use violence to uphold American identity while presenting itself as being in the country's best interests. In a similar vein, Szeman (2011) argued that the US's self-serving actions throughout the War on Terror were in sharp contrast to its rhetoric of liberating the oppressed. Furthermore, the corruption resulting from US dealings with the Afghan warlords undermined US involvement in the region. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (2016) asserts that the United States of America was ill-prepared to own up to its part in the corruption that fuels anti-American sentiment. The United States of America chose to establish connections with questionable persons instead of prioritizing the battle against corruption. According to Barry (2017), there is a perception that the just war theories have been modified to support military actions in Afghanistan, despite US claims that it wishes to protect international ideals like democracy and counterterrorism. It seems that the USA has continuously, and without any consideration for the Afghan people, been enmeshed in a narrative that it has created. The War on Terror has undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on the moral standing of the West due to the questionable tactics used during military engagement.

4. Challenges and Impact of Violent Extremism in Afghanistan

Extremists activities in Afghanistan and even globally provide a variety of challenges. In order to appropriately handle this, the investigator will choose and examine the following:

i. Human Rights Abuses of Women under the Taliban Regime

Human rights violations were one of the problems associated with violent extremism, and this was particularly felt by women. The cruel and repressive treatment of Afghan women by the Taliban administration was denounced by the U.S. State Department, which stated:

The Taliban forced almost all women out of their jobs and closed the women's university, eliminating a vital source of expertise and information for the country. It significantly limited women's freedom of movement within the city, fiercely enforced a rigid dress code, and restricted their access to medical care.

The Taliban carried out violent crimes against women, including as forced marriage, abduction, and rape. A number of families sent their girls to Pakistan or Iran in attempt to protect them (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2002).

A detailed investigation of the position of women as victims of violence was carried out by Misra (2004). According to him, Afghan women are still "viewed" as "victims of political violence" and this is seriously harming their lives. However, despite the violent comeback in many regions, women are still actively involved in social groups. But even before Washington launched the "war on terror," international organizations were concerned about women's "submission" to social life. In Afghanistan, women's-only social clubs were founded as early as the 1970s. The "deteriorating" socioeconomic position of women was the impetus for the founding of the Revolutionary Afghan Women Association (RAWA). Groups such as RAWA vigorously advocated for "rights for women, peace, and security" and reinforced the matter of women's agency. While actively "advocating for peace" from the Pakistani refugee camps, they received a great deal of support from both the Afghans residing there and the international community (Misra, 2004).

As communist forces withdrew, violence escalated, particularly directed at women belonging to "minority" tribes and communities who dared not conform. Women were often intimidated and harassed by "tribal warlords" who did not have legal protection. To ensure their safety, women and girls were brought inside by community leaders and small tribal chiefs. In reaction to these "heinous" actions, small non-governmental organizations were established to provide women who were "hiding indoors" opportunities for education (Misra, 2004).

Fahmy (2004) looked at the representation of Afghan women in pictures from the Associated Press (AP) between 1996 and 2001, when the Taliban rule was first established. The study's conclusions indicate that when Taliban control ended, women are portrayed as being more involved, interactive, socially intimate, and symbolically equal to males. Images from the Associated Press, according to analysis, provide a more complex picture of Afghan women's freedom. It illustrates how women were treated under the Taliban. Following the fall of the Taliban, women were seen donning burqas to illustrate the complexity of a social liberation movement in a traditional culture where the practice has endured as a social norm.

Ghosh (2003) said that middle-class and aristocratic women in Afghanistan have always championed modernity and battled for their rights. You may see instances of it in the 1950s and 1960s. The bulk of Afghan women, particularly those who reside in rural areas, have been oppressed by tribal customs and regulations, notwithstanding these isolated incidents. The liberal characteristics of women are not supported by the fact that, throughout the nation's modern history, a very tiny proportion of Afghan women have been publicly visible as members of the elite or royalty. They act as role models, open doors to potential social change, and demonstrate that women from all socioeconomic backgrounds may experience transformation in their life.

According to Galea (2000), there is no independence for Afghan women. Since the Taliban came to power, people have lost their freedom because they take use of their religious beliefs to control their population. The author examined the present situation of

Afghan women in Afghanistan and described it as a catastrophe for human rights. Afghan women deal with a variety of challenges on a daily basis, some of which are gender-specific and others of personal impact. The author claims that these ladies have no other option since they are unable to leave their houses without a male family member. An Afghan lady is required under Taliban laws to cover her whole body with a burqa, leaving just a mesh aperture for breathing. In addition, women are subjected to an overwhelming amount of proclamations, which keeps them from working, going to school, or seeing their doctor. Serious consequences for breaking the announcements include public stoning, public beatings, public torture, and various types of execution. It is difficult to endure daily life in such a terrible situation since it is unfathomable to survive in such a poisonous atmosphere. As a result, women in Afghanistan were denied the same rights as males during the Taliban's rule. It was disgusting how ladies were treated.

ii. **Violent Intolerance**

Violent intolerance is the most dangerous facet of violent extremism, next to bigotry and the dehumanization of minority groups. The deliberate use of physical force, including murder and damage, to advance an extreme aim that is subjectively chosen is known as violent intolerance. This has happened in several well-known cases, such as when the Taliban and Al-Qaeda killed pro-Western Afghan officials. Numerous innocent bystanders lost their lives as a result of the September 11 strikes on the US and the bombings of the London Tube and an Egyptian hotel in July 2005 by militant Islamic organizations. There is often a correlation between religiously motivated violence and terrorism. In fact, ISI, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad—some of the deadliest terrorist organizations now active—have their theoretical roots in violent extremism. The majority of those who belong to these groups are certain that it is necessary to use violence in the service of religion. Furthermore, they think that if they die while carrying out their "holy struggle," they would be granted immediate admission to heaven. This idea eliminates the feelings of guilt and terror, which greatly simplifies the process of killing and dying.

Therefore, violent intolerance seems to be the most concerning example of violent extremism and requires thorough evaluations before the issue can be adequately addressed. The idea is that a certain set of individuals, who are seen to be specially chosen representatives of the divine order, think they are in dire danger from an evil enemy. A harsh response to the enemy, whose existence is a danger, is warranted by the "right to survival." Thus, even in situations when there isn't a valid basis to act, aggressive intolerance often manifests itself as what is commonly referred to as "anticipatory self-defense."

iii. **Refugee Crisis**

One of the problems and effects of extremism is the refugee issue. A large-scale migration from Afghanistan to a safer place has resulted from the Taliban leadership's harsh policies, which are hard to follow, and security issues marked by bombing and the loss of lives and property. During the repatriation effort in Pakistan, probably around 2002, the number of Afghan refugees living in exile was cruelly shown. However, 500,000 or so more refugees had left Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan than were first believed to be there (Kronenfeld, 2008). Even more unexpected was the realization that about the same number of individuals rejected to go back to Afghanistan as did those who did. As a result, Pakistan is home to millions more refugees each day. The shocking rise

in the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan may be attributed to a disregard for the population index.

In addition, a sizable portion of refugees had started resettling in the big cities. When Afghan refugees were counted and proof of registration cards were distributed, Pakistan should have included this in their census statistics. In addition to Pakistan, Afghans fleeing the ongoing instability in their country also go to Iran. said that while there had been friction between Tehran and Kabul, which disturbed the authorities of the area, it had little impact on the flow of refugees from Afghanistan to Iran. The rather permeable atmosphere, which makes it difficult to determine who is counted and under what category, is often linked to discrepancies in reported numbers of refugees (Kronenfeld, 2008).

According to Human Rights Watch (2013) and (2015), both Pakistan and Iran now refuse to register recently arrived refugees from Afghanistan, pushing those who cross the border into an unregistered status. This led to over 1.84 million refugees and asylum seekers in Pakistan, while approximately 3 million illegal Afghan migrants were recorded in Iran.

iv Poverty and Economic Crisis

Following the departure of US soldiers, Afghanistan suffered from a catastrophic economic collapse and widespread hardship. The humanitarian organization estimates that 20 million people suffer from acute hunger and that six million people go hungry. After a year, 59% of individuals still depend on international travel (Barfield, 2023). The World Bank reports that some advancements have been made (World Bank, 2022). Afghanistan's national budget deficit, at \$2.65 billion, is about forty billion dollars. November 2022 had a total income of 1.64 billion and an 11.1% inflation rate (Yousaf & Jabarkhail, 2022). After the Taliban took over the government, the Afghan people saw a sharp downturn in their economy. Most people in the population were unemployed and starving (Yousaf & Jabarkhail, 2022). Even when looking at pre-Taliban times, we can see that Afghanistan was near the bottom of a number of socioeconomic rankings. The government has reduced funds for development programs to bolster security (Yousaf & Jabarkhail, 2022).



Figure 2: Taliban Fighters in Kabul

Source: *New York Times 2021*

The specific punishment imposed on the Taliban leader has caused significant disruptions to the banking sector for international financial assistance. As some characteristics of Afghan currency have decreased, the cost of imports has increased. Inflation was on the rise and the expense of living was in crisis. With fewer employees, the civilian government agencies were still required to pay salaries. After the disastrous natural disaster that struck the country, things became worse. Nearly 95% of Afghans, according to the World Food Programme, do not have access to adequate food. Significant losses are being suffered by 23 million people (World Food Programme, 2022). The biggest challenge they have is starting the economy. It remains to be seen how the Taliban would respond to this difficult situation for the country.



Figure 3: U.S Taliban sign peace deal

Source: *Aljazeera.com*, 29 February 2021

5. Materials and Methods

Methods are the many techniques used in research to gather information that will serve as the basis for interpretation, inference, prediction, and explanation (Cohen and Manion, 1980). Secondary sources such as books, journals, and library materials were used to collect data, in addition to conference papers, movies, published interviews, newspapers, magazines, and the internet. The primary foundation of the data analysis is the content analysis approach. A historical and descriptive research design was used. Historical research design, according to Ndiyo (2005), is a thorough and rigorous investigation of historical events, conditions, and changes together with their contributing variables. According to Ndagi (1984), descriptive research designs also focus on examining the conditions that already exist, including customs, beliefs, attitudes, and current procedures.

6. Analysis of Research Question One:

“Did the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR and USA contribute to the proliferation of violent extremist groups in the country”?

It is apparent that nation-states have unique benefits and rights that need to be upheld in their dealings with one another under the confines of the international community. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter forbids the threat or use of force and calls on all members to preserve the political, territorial integrity, and autonomy of other countries. The principles of self-determination and equality of opportunity enshrined in the United Nations Charter provide every country the freedom to choose its own course in politics and to seek the development of its economy, society, and culture without external intervention. It is the duty of every nation to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. States have an obligation to stop third parties from using coercion to violate people's rights to freedom, independence, and self-determination.

This legal framework was known to the Mujahideen, an extreme Afghan guerrilla organization backed by the US and its allies, who staged an uprising against the persecution of their right to self-determination. In mid-1979, the Carter administration began providing non-lethal support to the Afghan resistance movement. While some academics asserted that a US-funded arms pipeline existed as early as August 1979, some CIA officials refuted the claim that an ongoing program of clandestine military assistance to the Mujahideen, which had commenced in December 1979, would be transferred to the Reagan administration, which took over after President Jimmy Carter. In the early 1980s, this support project—managed by CIA Director William Casey—became a multifaceted coalition effort to equip, train, and pay the Mujahideen resistance fighters (Ostermann, 2002). The Saudi government decided in 1980 to evenly share the costs of this effort with the United States. Within the coalition's wide sphere of influence were the intelligence services of the United States, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, and China. Milton Bearden, the former chief of the CIA station in Pakistan, said that at the height of the covert assistance campaign in 1986–1987, the coalition was providing the Afghan war with over 60,000 tons of weapons, ammunition, and communications equipment yearly (Westad, 2003).

Some schools of thought claim that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan fostered Al-Qaeda, an organization that many felt was the creation of the CIA. Chengu (2014)

claims that Osama bin Laden was created and raised by the CIA in the 1980s. The author also said that in testimony given before the House of Commons, former British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook stated that Al-Qaeda was unquestionably founded by western intelligence agencies. The author further asserts that Mr. Cook had previously clarified that Al Qaeda—an acronym for "the database" in Arabic—was initially a computer database comprising thousands of Islamist extremists who had received financial support from the Saudis and CIA training in order to overthrow the Russians in Afghanistan.

Given the degree of lawlessness that prevailed throughout the USSR's post-withdrawal era, the civil war that broke out at that time both fueled and exacerbated radicalism. Put differently, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union gave rise to the Mujahideen, an opposing force that in turn gave rise to other violent extremist organizations such as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and others.

Analysis of Research Question Two:

“Did the activities of violent extremist groups heighten generalized insecurity in Afghanistan?”

The Doha peace agreement, which the United States and the Taliban signed in 2020, was prompted by the Taliban control and the increased security threats. A date for the Coalition Forces' departure from Afghanistan was implied in the agreement. This revelation gave the Taliban more confidence to start a tactical takeover of the government and impose sharia law in opposition to the western-oriented system that the Afghan government was still adhering to far in advance of the pullout date.

Afghan women do not have independence. Galea (2000) claimed that since the Taliban came to power, people have lost their freedom since they used religion as a tool to subjugate their citizens. The author examined the present situation of Afghan women in Afghanistan and described it as a catastrophe for human rights. Afghan women deal with a variety of challenges on a daily basis, some of which are gender-specific and others of personal impact. Furthermore, women face an overwhelming amount of declarations that prohibit them from working, going to school, or appearing in public. Serious punishments, including public beatings, public torture, public stoning, or death by a variety of means, were applied to anyone who violated the pronouncements.

The cruel and repressive treatment of Afghan women by the Taliban administration was denounced by the U.S. State Department, which said:

a vital source of expertise and information for the country was removed when the Taliban closed the women's university and forced almost all of the women to quit their jobs. It strictly implemented a dress code, limited women's restricted their independence and access to medical care to go about the city. Crimes of violence against women included perpetrated by the Taliban, such as sexual assault, abduction, and forced union. To protect their daughters, a number of Families were forced to relocate the ladies to Pakistan or Iran (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour,2002).

The figures surrounding the refugee crisis in Afghanistan are a little hazy, as noted by Schmeidl (2014) and Tehran Times (2014). Pakistan reports 1.84 million

refugees and asylum seekers, along with about 1 million undocumented migrants, while Iran reports 900 registered refugees and between 1.4 million and 3 million undocumented Afghan migrants. The Taliban leadership has imposed harsh regulations that are hard to follow, and the security issues marked by bombing and the loss of lives and property have caused a large-scale migration of people from Afghanistan to safer regions. According to Kronenfeld (2021), 500,000 more refugees had left Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan than were first believed. According to Yousaf and Jabarkhail (2022), Afghanistan's economy suffered greatly when the Taliban took control of the nation. Poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition were pervasive among the population. A specific punishment against the Taliban leader has caused significant disruptions to the banking sector for foreign financial assistance (Pradnyawan, 2022). As some characteristics of Afghan currency have decreased, the cost of importing has increased. Inflation was on the rise and the expense of living was in crisis. Nearly 95% of Afghans, according to World Food Programme study, do not have access to adequate food, and 23 million are suffering from severe losses (World Food Programme, 2022).

7. Results and Discussion

According to the aforementioned data, many commentators hold the opinion that the invasion sparked insecurity in Afghanistan, increased activity by the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and Mujahideen, human rights violations, the refugee problem, poverty, and the economy, and resistance to the Soviet invasion. It was established through the content of the study, that the superpowers' invasion of Afghanistan and the emergence of violent extremism are related in some way.

First, it emerged from the content how the invasions of the USSR and the USA relate to the rise of extremists' movements. While the Soviet invasion was motivated by national interest, U.S. opposition to the occupation that followed was, indirectly, motivated by the national interest of the United States too. But the dynamics of both national interests led to the emergence of a non-state actor that threatens to overthrow the USA, which had previously backed them. Tonnes of weapons, training materials, and communication equipment were sent to the Mujahideen as a result of America's plan to thwart Soviet advance in Europe and give the Soviets their own taste of the Vietnam War. It was noted that this was carried out in accordance with the long-standing Truman Doctrine, which has been directing American foreign policy choices. This viewpoint supports Ostermann's (2002) assertion that, under the direction of CIA Director William Casey, the assistance initiative evolved into a sophisticated coalition operation to train the Mujahideen resistance fighters.

Secondly, the following analysis is done in line with the contents that have an impact on the second research question: Numerous difficulties have resulted from the activity of the earlier mentioned Extremist organizations in Afghanistan. Women can no longer work, attend school, or go out on their own; in certain areas, they are even prohibited from driving without their male counterparts. To enforce these regulations, roadblocks are placed at strategic areas, and violators face harsh punishments, including whipping. The Taliban takeover has led to decreased funding of development projects, unemployment, poverty, food shortages, and other economic related crisis. This suggests that money intended for development initiatives was instead going into the military budget, and the lack of economic opportunities as a result of the crisis has left many people jobless. A typical Afghan cannot boast of three square meals each day. Under the

Taliban government, malnutrition and death rates are persistent issues. The refugee and migrant issues are grave too.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Undoubtedly, the invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent crises hindered the country's overall political, economic, and development. Many of the locals are homeless, and others are refugees in neighboring countries. Living in a wealthy, peaceful, and enjoyable environment has many advantages and is clearly something that people in Afghanistan and throughout the world want to achieve. The issue has been the provocations made in an attempt to solve a situation that always causes irritation and resentment. Even if there have been several defenses for invasion, it's crucial to remember that every state has the right to self-determination. This may have given new life to the demand that all people on the planet abstain from any action that might undermine a state's political independence, territorial integrity, or in any other manner conflict with the objectives of the United Nations. When courage is shown and a sincere desire to do so is demonstrated, there is a good chance that nations that violate international law will be held accountable. The UN Security Council's evaluation should also be the topic of frank conversation. The outcome of this kind of discussion provides a strong foundation for satisfying the requests of those advocating for the inclusion of more people from Latin America and Africa on the Security Council. Thus, in order to advance a quiet, crime-free society, nation-states that have previously supported the creation or covert funding of any extremist group must cease doing so. Only in a tranquil setting can development occur.

Based on the findings of this work, the following recommendations were made:

- i. It is necessary to rewrite the United Nations Charter to take into account the aspirations and goals of less developed countries, especially those in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, with regard to inclusivity, Security Council membership, and other issues. The UN has to think about creating a powerful enforcement body in order to reduce the number of ongoing charter breaches.
- ii. It should not be attempted to impose democracy and the establishment of a western-style state on a foreign nation without taking into account their culture and political structure. Leadership ideologies must adapt flexibly to the needs of the people.
- iii. Superpowers need to refrain from endorsing violent extremism either directly or indirectly. This will reduce the possibility of enmity and provocations.
- iv. In order to reduce the possibility that a tiny minority would gain control and continuously abuse their veto power for their own self-serving objectives, membership should also be transitory rather than permanent.

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