

THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN*

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Abstract

The Carter administration came to power at a crucial period when the relations between the East and the West were shifting from relaxation to re-confrontation. Its policy towards Afghanistan was not only restricted by the situation of U.S.-Soviet Union relations but also exerted a direct influence on the maintenance and transformation of this situation, notably the opening of the “New Cold War” between the East and the West. With the evolution of the Carter administration’s policy towards Afghanistan as the main clue, this paper aims to study the formation background, causes of change and development logic of different US policies towards Afghanistan in this period so as to reveal the internal relationship between the change of the U.S. policy towards Afghanistan and the evolution of the Cold War situation, as well as the essence of the U.S. policy.

Keywords: Carter Administration, Soviet Union, Afghanistan, “New World Order Strategy”, “Carter Doctrine”, “New Cold War”, Evolution.

Introduction

The Carter administration was in the midst of a significant change in East-West relations, transitioning from Cold War détente to renewed confrontation. At the beginning of his presidency, Carter introduced the “New World Order Strategy”, designed to foster improved relations between the US and the Soviet Union. However, with the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan, Carter's “New World Order Strategy” was deemed a failure, resulting in the introduction of the “Carter Doctrine.” Throughout Carter's presidency, why did the US policy towards Afghanistan transform from the “New World Order Strategy” to the “Carter Doctrine”? What were the rationales behind the policy shift and what were the outcomes? These questions are all worth studying. This paper seeks to focus on the policy shift of the Carter administration toward Afghanistan to delve into the reasons for the transformation from the “New World Order Strategy” to the “Carter Doctrine”, so as to uncover the inherent link between this policy shift and the changing Cold War situation, as well as the essence of the US policy.

A review of current research on US policy towards Afghanistan reveals that studies on US-Afghan relations primarily focus on US national interests and the context of the US-Soviet Cold War. Following the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan quickly captured the attention of Western scholars, resulting in the publication of

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numerous notable works on subjects such as US policy towards¹, Soviet policy towards Afghanistan², and the impact of US policy towards South Asia on Afghanistan³, etc. However, these works generally lack in-depth analysis of the policies and underlying rationales implemented by the Carter administration in response to the outbreak of war. Although there was a brief surge of interest in the 1970s, research on Afghanistan policy both domestically and internationally has since shifted towards US policy towards Afghanistan post-September 11th attacks. Nonetheless, there remains significant potential for research on US policy towards Afghanistan during the 1970s, particularly given the ongoing declassification of US national archives.

“Balanced” policy toward Afghanistan before the Carter administration

In the wake of the Cold War, Afghanistan's unique geographical position drew the renewed interest of the US and the Soviet Union, yet the US policy towards the country remained largely subordinate to its broader South Asian policy prior to the Carter administration. The US pursued “balanced power” between India and Pakistan in South Asia during this period to curb the expansion of the Soviet Union’s communism. Regarding its policy on Afghanistan, the US strove to offset the Soviet Union’s influence in the region by upholding an equilibrium with Soviet power in the area, fighting for an equilibrium among Afghanistan and its neighboring countries, and supporting an equilibrium of political power within Afghanistan, all designed to counterbalance Soviet infiltration in the region. The US

¹ Several publications on the topic of US policy towards Afghanistan include: Mohammad Khaild Ma Aroof, *Afghanistan in World Politics: A Study in Afghan-US Relations*, Delhi (India), Gian Publishing House, 1987, 164p. Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower*, London, Casemate, 2001, 244 p. Tom Lansford, *A Bitter Harvest: US Foreign Policy and Afghanistan*, London, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003, 216p. Jacqueline Fitzgibbon, *US Politics, Propaganda and the Afghan Mujahedeen: Domestic Politics and the Afghan War*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2019, 240p. Douglas A. Borer, *Superpowers Defeated: Vietnam and Afghanistan Compared*, London, Frank Cass Publishers, 1999, 288p. Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Brookings Institution, 1994, 1206p..

² Several publications on the topic of Soviet policy towards Afghanistan include: Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan*, New York, Harper Perennial, 2010, 326p. Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1985, 336p. Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, Stanford, Hoover Press Publication, 1981, 126p. Anthony Arnold, *The Fateful Pebble, Afghanistan’s Role in the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, Novato, Calif, Presidio Press, 1993, 225p. Toms T. Hammod, *Red Flag Over Afghanistan: The Communist Coup, the Soviet Invasion, and the Consequences*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1984, 262p. Russian G. Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, trans. W. Lester Grau and Michael A. Gress, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2002, 392p..

³ Publications on the topic of US policy towards South Asia and its impact on Afghanistan include: A. Z. Hilali, *U.S.-Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, London, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005, 322p. Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, 448p. Hafeez Malik, *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1987, 444p.

mainly offered economic assistance to Afghanistan, coupled with a limited provision of military support, in a bid to ensure that Afghanistan maintained a non-aligned stance and a neutral position in the rivalry with the Soviet Union.

While Afghanistan held no strategic significance to the US during the Truman administration, the US provided the country with some economic aid to counter the Soviet Union. However, the Truman administration declined to extend military aid to Afghanistan, resulting in lukewarm relations between the two nations during this time. With Eisenhower assuming presidency, the focus of the Cold War shifted, with South Asia playing a more strategic role. Consequently, Afghanistan was incorporated into the South Asia strategy and began to gain more attention from the US. Nevertheless, as Afghanistan was reluctant to join the US military alliance against the Soviet Union and the US leaned towards Pakistan regarding the Pashtunistan issue, although Mohammad Daoud Khan⁴ was invited to visit the US, on the whole Afghanistan remained peripheral to the US interests in the Middle East and Southwest Asia during the time. The US strategy towards Afghanistan during this period was centered on preserving the country's neutrality and buffer state status and preventing it from falling into the arms of the Soviet Union. After Kennedy came to power, on the one hand, the US was vying with the Soviet Union for influence in South Asia, hoping to coordinate the conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan at their best and maintain robust US-Pakistan relations. On the other hand, the US put forth the Peace Corps program in response to the "non-aligned movement" burgeoning across the Third World. Afghanistan, one of the founding members of the "non-aligned" movement, became a recipient of the US Peace Corps program. The US sustained its influence in Afghanistan by providing technology and technical training, which were aimed to bolster local economic development and prosperity. Following Kennedy's assassination, Johnson assumed office and continued the Peace Corps program. However, the escalating Vietnam War dragged the US into the war, making it unable to dedicate significant attention to Afghanistan. Moreover, the US government deemed it sufficient to maintain a "neutral" stance towards Afghanistan during that period and consequently did not provide additional economic or military aid to the country. Following Nixon's ascension to the presidency, the US initiated a strategic contraction and a foreign policy of *détente* with the Soviet Union due to its defeat in the Vietnam War and the outbreak of the domestic crisis. During this period, despite dispatching leaders to visit Afghanistan, the US sent back assistance to the country. The US mainly offered limited economic and technical assistance to Afghanistan to maintain the country's independence and non-aligned policy and keep it from being overly influenced by the Soviet Union. Such a policy continued through the early years of the Carter administration.

⁴ Mohammad Daoud Khan was an Afghan statesman who served as prime minister of Afghanistan from 1953 to 1963 and, as leader of the 1973 Afghan coup d'état which overthrew the monarchy, served as the first president of Afghanistan from 1973 to 1978.

As for the underlying reason, on the one hand, the US preferred to focus on the South Asian subcontinent and was reluctant to become overly involved in Afghanistan because “Afghanistan is of limited strategic value, given its geographic distance, complex terrain, and challenges in diplomatic communication, as well as lack of critical facilities essential for modern military operations... Instead, Pakistan is an ideal location for establishing strategic bases and intelligence-gathering” [11: 135]. On the other hand, Afghanistan had pursued a policy of neutrality since the reign of Shah Mahmud Khan⁵, while the US concentrated on building an anti-Soviet military alliance in the Middle East. After Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan became military allies of the US, Afghanistan maintained a neutral and non-aligned foreign policy. Factoring in the issue of Pashtunistan, the US was wary of offering arms to Afghanistan fearing that Afghanistan would use the weapons to fight against Pakistan instead of the Soviet Union [3: 80]. As a result, the US refused to give military assistance to Afghanistan. On October 19, 1954, a National Intelligence Estimate entitled *Afghan Prospects* pointed out: “The strategic significance of Afghanistan is as a buffer state, separating the USSR on the north from non-Communist Pakistan and India to the south, but itself dominated by neither the Communist nor the non-Communist power bloc” [4: 708]. “The US acquiesced in the special status of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, but did not want Afghanistan to fall completely under Soviet control” [16: 279]. It was evident that for a long time, the US viewed Afghanistan as a buffer state to contain the Soviet Union. As long as Afghanistan remained neutral and did not smash the bottom line of aligning with the Soviet Union, the US was reluctant to make any substantial commitments to Afghanistan. Thus, from the Truman administration to the Nixon administration Afghanistan was met with a nonchalant attitude from the US for a prolonged period and received limited assistance.

Carter administration's “New World Order Strategy” and its impact on policy towards Afghanistan

In 1977, Jimmy Carter won the election and became the 39th President of the US. At the beginning of his term, the US economy was stuck in a dire state of stagnation, grappling with severe fiscal deficits and economic stagnation, compounded by soaring unemployment and inflation rate. Worse still, following the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, the OPEC, which was established by Middle East countries, substantially hiked the price of oil to nearly 10 times the pre-1970s levels, dealing a huge blow to the US, which was heavily dependent on oil imports. The persistent rise in oil prices rippled across other products exacerbating inflation and ultimately leading to a full-blown stagflation crisis. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union not only doubled its economy during this period, further narrowing the economic gap with the US, but also rapidly built up its military power. “And the Soviet Union at this

⁵ Shah Mahmud Khan: was the Prime Minister of Afghanistan from May 1946 to 7 September 1953, under King Mohammed Zahir Shah's monarchy.

point was nearing equality in strategic weapons. The decisive American superiority, which had characterized the entire postwar period, had ended by 1967... By 1969 it was clear that the number of Soviet missiles capable of reaching the US would soon equal that of all American missiles available for retaliation against the Soviet Union, and, if Soviet building programs continued through the Seventies, would come to exceed them” [9: 165-166]. Carter was compelled to pursue a new foreign policy to counteract the Soviet Union due to the decline of the US in political, economic, and military power after he assumed office. On May 22, 1977, for the first time Carter offered a systematic presentation of his foreign policy at the University of Notre Dame and announced the introduction of the “New World Order Strategy”, which mainly included the implementation of “human rights diplomacy”, strengthening alliances with Japan and Europe, increasing attention to the Third World and pursuing a *détente* with the Soviet Union.

As the focus of Carter’s “New World Order Strategy”, “human rights diplomacy” primarily targeted the Soviet Union, with the ultimate goal of “attempting to undermine the unity and power of the Soviet bloc by supporting dissidents in the Soviet Union and the satellite states in Eastern Europe” [14: 154]. Nevertheless, motivated by interests, the US was hugely divergent in implementing Carter’s “human rights diplomacy” and did not abide by uniform standards. As for Afghanistan, the US considered the country to be of little interest to it, and thus there were no so-called “human rights” issues despite the Soviet Union’s provision of military and economic support, and there was no need to devote too much attention to the region.

In developing relations with the Third World countries, the Carter administration obtained three major achievements: 1. The issue concerning the Panama Canal: Carter and General Torrijos inked the Torrijos–Carter Treaties in Washington, D.C. in September 1977. 2. The Carter administration prompted the signing of the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in September 1978, taking the two countries towards normalization of relations. 3. China and the US issued the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations on December 16, 1978, which recognized the People’s Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of China and helped normalize the relations between the two countries. It could be seen that Afghanistan was not a top priority for the Carter administration. When it came to the region, as long as Afghanistan could adhere to the “non-aligned” policy, it was that “the US need not directly structure its activities in Afghanistan on the basis of competition with the Soviet Union” [8: 9].

The Carter administration’s efforts to advance relations with Western Europe and Japan resulted in increased cooperation among NATO countries to enhance European defense and prevent Soviet Union’s expansion. Additionally, Afghanistan was offered economic assistance from Western-controlled international economic organizations, as well as Western European countries and Japan. Consequently, from the US perspective, “the Soviet Union, as the principal military supplier to Afghanistan, is less likely to destabilize the region”, and “the US should

avoid being drawn into a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, but rather react somewhat to Soviet actions, which would have a limited, marginal effect, and at the same time gradually build up our capacity to play a more active role, if that should be necessary at a later time" [6: 4]. As a result, the US adopted a hands-off approach towards Afghanistan during the period, scaling down its aid and involvement, which created an opportunity for the subsequent invasion by the Soviet Union.

It can thus be deduced that the New World Order Strategy aimed to eliminate the pessimism brought about by the decline of U.S. hegemony by emphasizing human rights, enhancing the influence of U.S. ideology around the world, improving the country's appeal across the Third World, and boosting its strategic position in the US-Soviet Union relations through limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, so as to facilitate a détente with the Soviet Union and bring about domestic political and economic restoration and development. On Afghanistan, the United States believed that it was sufficient to keep it in its "non-aligned" foreign policy and did not need to intervene too much.

Carter administration's response to the Soviet Union's attack on Afghanistan and the introduction of the Carter Doctrine

Afghanistan has been a long-standing area of interest for the Soviet Union. In modern history, Czars attempted to utilize the country as a gateway to the Indian Ocean and sought to secure an ice-free port in the Persian Gulf by establishing a land route through Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean. To this end, the Soviet Union had been infiltrating Afghanistan in the post-Second World War era. The conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan reignited in the early 1960s due to the Pashtunistan issue, resulting in a border blockade that severely damaged the Afghan economy. Afghanistan was forced to seek assistance from the Soviet Union, which presented a chance for the Soviet Union to intervene and expand its infiltration into the Afghan economy. Throughout the 1970s, Afghanistan experienced a series of regime changes, with "the April Revolution"⁶ of 1978 offering a premium opportunity to the Soviet Union to meddle in Afghan politics. Despite the absence of direct evidence of the Soviet Union's involvement in the April Revolution, the Soviet Union had been pushing for the long-term goal of establishing a communist regime in Afghanistan. Such efforts eventually led Afghanistan to lean towards the Soviet Union. As the situation in Afghanistan became more volatile and the tensions be-

⁶ "The April Revolution" also known as the "Saur Revolution" or "Sowr Revolution" or "the April Coup", was staged on 27–28 April 1978 by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and overthrew Afghan president Mohammed Daoud Khan, who had himself taken power in the 1973 Afghan coup d'état and established an autocratic one-party system in the country. Daoud and most of his family were executed at the Arg in the capital city of Kabul by PDPA-affiliated military officers, after which his supporters were also purged and killed. The successful PDPA uprising resulted in the creation of a socialist Afghan government that was closely aligned with the Soviet Union, with Nur Muhammad Taraki serving as the PDPA's General Secretary of the Revolutionary Council.

tween the Soviet Union and Afghanistan intensified, the Soviet Union launched a surprise invasion of Afghanistan on December 25, 1979 to prevent the country from slipping out of its grasp. On the 27th, Hafizullah Amin⁷ was killed and the presidential palace was taken. On the 28th, Babrak Karmal⁸ was appointed the General Secretary of the PDPA replacing Amrullah following a cabinet reshuffle. This marked yet another invasion of a sovereign country after the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Despite closely monitoring the Soviet Union's preparations for an invasion of Afghanistan, the Carter administration appeared somewhat chaotic and passive after the invasion. And there was "no one used the word 'invasion' or tired to charge any violation of international law when the USSR, upon the request of its treaty partner, first sent large contingents of troops in December of 1979" [10: 141]. Till January 8, the New York Times consistently used the word "intervention" which changed to "invasion" [10: 142]. Moreover, a considerable number of officials in the Carter administration had previously believed that diplomacy had to take precedence over military action in shaping foreign policy, the administration engaged in repeated discussions and consultations regarding the specific policy as to the Soviet Union's invasion. After Raja Anwar became the new General Secretary of the APDP on December 28, Washington reckoned: "There is little prospect that the government as now constituted can win significant popular support" [5: 297]. Carter called for a meeting of the National Security Council on the same day, during which the President emphasized that the ultimate aim was to get the Soviets to withdraw. And the Secretaries of State and Defense and Dr. Brzezinski said it was to make it as costly as possible for the Soviets [5: 302]. On December 29, the US Bureau of Intelligence and Research analyzed the effect of the Soviet Union's intervention in the Afghan civil war, the surrounding regions and the Soviet Union's position, and pointed out: "In the current Afghan situation, the USSR has a bear by the tail... Given this unattractive prospect, Moscow has now begun to escalate its intervention in Afghan affairs in the hope that this will improve its chances to reduce the just mentioned negative aspects of the situation. It is trying to insure that it will gain reliable control over its client regime (which it did not have under Amin) and that Afghanistan will neither sink into anarchy (thus increasing the risk of external intervention) nor become a hostile neighbor to the USSR" [5: 328-329]. It was clear that in the early days of the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan, the Carter administration, albeit recognizing the gravity of the situation and deliberating on various policies, failed to establish a comprehensive action plan. Of

⁷ Hafizullah Amin: was an Afghan communist revolutionary, politician and teacher. He organized the Saur Revolution of 1978 and co-founded the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), ruling Afghanistan as General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party from September 1979 until his assassination in December 1979.

⁸ Babrak Karmal: was an Afghan communist revolutionary and politician who was the leader of Afghanistan, serving in the post of General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan for seven years.

course, when formulating policy towards Afghanistan, the Carter administration took into account its relationship with countries in the vicinity, such as Pakistan, Iran, and China. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Carter Administration sought the support of the Iran, Pakistan, and China. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Carter Administration sought the support of the Iran, Pakistan, and China. But, to the dismay of Washington, the response to its overtures was in the case of Iran downright hostile and in that of Pakistan and China, cautious and restrained [6: 561]. After all, in terms of the specific situation in Afghanistan, the US policy was not effectively executed and thus failed to deter the Soviet Union's actions in Afghanistan.

In a letter to President Carter on January 2, 1980, the former Afghan ambassador stated: "If the US does not act decisively and immediately, there is almost nothing to prevent the Russians from advancing into Iran, Pakistan, India and ultimately the Persian Gulf" [5: 347], if Afghanistan become another part of the Soviet block. It is this very fear of loss of identity that forced hundreds of thousands of Afghans to seek refuge in neighboring Pakistan, there to regroup and organize a counter force against the communist regime in their homeland. "But now their hopes of success against tdirect Russian army have diminished, unless they receive substantial assistance and support from the US" [5: 348]. He urged the Carter administration to take swift actions to pressure the Soviet Union into withdrawing its troops and restoring Afghanistan's territorial independence, neutrality, and integrity. The Carter Administration formulated a series of policies with the ultimate aim of forcing the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan. Carter emphasized in the State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress on January 23, 1980: "I'm determined that the US will remain the strongest of all nations, but our power will never be used to initiate a threat to the security of any nation or to the rights of any human being. We seek to be and to remain secure - a nation at peace in a stable world. But to be secure we must face the world as it is." "But now the Soviet Union has taken a radical and an aggressive new step. It's using its great military power against a relatively defenseless nation. The implications of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War." "The vast majority of nations on Earth have condemned this latest Soviet attempt to extend its colonial domination of others and have demanded the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops. The Moslem world is especially and justifiably outraged by this aggression against an Islamic people. No action of a world power has ever been so quickly and so overwhelmingly condemned. But verbal condemnation is not enough. The Soviet Union must pay a concrete price for their aggression." "Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the US of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force" [12]. Later this came to be known as the "Carter Doctrine", the new US policy towards the Persian Gulf.

Reasons for the Carter administration's policy shift toward Afghanistan

Since the Carter administration took office, there was a notable policy shift towards Afghanistan. Its foreign policy underwent a transformation from the "New World Order Strategy" centered on "human rights diplomacy" to the "Carter Doctrine", altering the hands-off approach at the beginning to a continuous hardening stance and transitioning from a defensive to an offensive approach. When the US maintained a moderate *détente* with the Soviet Union, the US policy towards Afghanistan was primarily defensive. However, with the Soviet Union's incursion into Afghanistan and the escalating bipolar tension, the US was extremely offensive in its policy towards Afghanistan. The main reasons for the change are as follows:

Change of Afghanistan's neutrality: As a key participant of the "non-aligned" movement, which was led by the Third World countries and emerged in the 1960s, Afghanistan staunchly adhered to a policy of neutrality in its foreign affairs. Afghanistan's foreign policy remained neutral from Mohammed Daoud Khan's first reign to King Zahir Shah's assumption of office, throughout Daoud's second term of the Republic of Afghanistan and prior to the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan during the April Revolution in 1978. For this reason, Afghanistan utilized its rejection of the US anti-Soviet Union military alliance in the Middle East as leverage to maintain a balance between the two superpowers during the Cold War. Thus, after Carter came to power, the US was more convinced and appreciative even than the Soviet Union of Afghanistan's non-aligned policy until the April Revolution. As a result, initially the Carter administration's stance on Afghanistan was to uphold a non-aligned foreign policy. As the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan intensified in December 1979, the Afghan government was gradually reduced to a puppet regime, putting an end to its neutral and non-aligned policy and eroding Afghanistan's status as such a nation in the eyes of the Carter administration. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan also impacted the strategic interests of the US, promoting the Carter administration to adopt a more confrontational approach towards the Soviet Union, evidenced by implementing the Carter Doctrine as the guiding foreign policy and the provision of covert assistance to Afghan insurgents to force the withdrawal of the Soviet Union's troops.

The cabinet's influence on the Carter Administration's policy toward Afghanistan: Before serving as a president, Carter was not in any major decision-making position in the federal government. After being elected, Carter's lack of political experience and indecisiveness contributed to the absence of a consistent code of conduct in the management of his cabinet, as well as internal divisions arising from indecisiveness in foreign policy formulation. Former US President Richard Nixon once described Carter as "a 'reformed eagle' that pledged to take a strong stand in one minute but made concession after concession to the Soviets the next" [15: 47].

When he took office, Carter expected Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski to help provide him with as many perspectives and options as possible in foreign policy decisions. Carter once noted: "Brzezinski's and Secretary of State Vance's respective strengths ensured that they were both competent in their positions, but they also stimulated a natural competition between the two organizations they represented... This competition was extremely beneficial to me because to formulate foreign policy it was necessary to analyze as many points of view as possible" [1: 260]. However, Vance and Brzezinski held strikingly different ideas. The moderates, or "doves", led by Vance, valued the détente between the East and West and advocated restraint and negotiations with the Soviet Union, while the hardliners, or "hawks", under the leadership of Brzezinski, perceived the increased influence of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as a threat to the US security and opposed the Soviet Union's expansion regardless of the form. Carter sometimes took the opinion of one person and adopted the suggestions of both at other times, giving rise to a fluctuating stance and lack of consistency in foreign policy at the outset of the Carter administration.

The growing divergence between Brzezinski and Vance's views on the US global strategy and relations with the Soviet Union led to an intensifying conflict over time, causing the Carter administration to be criticized for being "fragmented, unplanned, and unmanaged" [2: 277] from all sides. After the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979, the divide between Brzezinski and Vance began to gradually ease. When Vance resigned in April 1980 over disagreements on the use of force in the "Iran hostage crisis"⁹, the administration no longer had conflicting factions between "hawks" and "doves". It fully adopted Brzezinski's views on Afghanistan and showcased a tougher stance against the Soviet Union. At the same time, Carter saw an opportunity to shift the public and media perception of his administration as weak, and to create a new image of the US on the global stage.

Impact of external factors: Before the Iran hostage crisis, the US had been pursuing a "Twin Pillar Policy" in Iran by cultivating Iran and Saudi Arabia as proxies in the Persian Gulf region. Although a pillar of the US "Twin Pillar Policy", Iran was wary of US involvement in the Persian Gulf region and only cooperated with the US in curbing the Soviet Union's expansion into the region. February 1979 saw a revolution in Iran in which Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini overthrew the ruling monarchy of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and established the Islamic Republic of Iran. In relation to foreign policy, the US-Iranian alliance came to a close

⁹ The "Iran hostage crisis" was a diplomatic standoff between the United States and Iran. Fifty-two American diplomats and citizens were held hostage after a group of militarized Iranian college students belonging to the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line, who supported the Iranian Revolution, took over the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took them as hostages. The hostages were held for 444 days, from November 4, 1979 to their release on January 20, 1981.

in March when Iran declared its exit from the Central Treaty Organization drafted by the US. In the aftermath of the “Iran hostage” incident on November 4, Khomeini called on Muslims worldwide to join the fight against the infidels. The influence prompted a handful of Islamic countries to launch anti-American movements, causing significant repercussions in some pro-US countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco. Consequently, the US government had to reassess the adjustment of its Persian Gulf policy.

The Iran hostage crisis and the resulting deterioration of US-Iranian relations provided the Soviet Union with an opening to expand its reach southward. The Soviet Union had been striving to dominate Iran and move southward to secure access to a warm water port in the Indian Ocean. In February 1979, Khomeini conferred with the Soviet Union’s ambassador and acknowledged the Soviet Union’s entitlement to intervene in cases where anti-Soviet factions instigated violence against Iran under the terms of the 1921 Russo-Persian Treaty of Friendship. The Soviet Union was the first to acknowledge the new regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran following its establishment. In the wake of the Iran hostage incident, the Soviet Union not only vigorously urged the Iranian government to confront the US through radio along the border and cultivated relations with the Iranian government, but also proactively launched offensives in other areas of the Persian Gulf. The Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Iraq in 1972, establishing a strategic partnership that involved the provision of loads of advanced weapons, low-interest loans and technical assistance. The invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was a crucial part of the Soviet Union’s global strategy. By this time, the Soviet Union had constructed a substantial presence encircling the Persian Gulf, which posed a serious threat to the interests of the US and other Western countries in the region. As a result, these countries pledged to take a hardening stance against the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan and demanded its withdrawal.

Conclusion

The introduction of the Carter Doctrine on January 23, 1980 signaled a revision of the US détente with the Soviet Union since the 1970s and a renewed emphasis on military power and containment. This change in policy towards Afghanistan marked the termination of the US-Soviet détente and the beginning of the New Cold War. In retrospect, it was evident that the policy towards Afghanistan under the Carter administration, while carrying certain distinct features of the time, remained an organic part of the US global Cold War strategy and policy. Carter’s “New World Order” strategy and the “Carter Doctrine” were subordinate to the US containment strategy. Whatever the change in the policy towards Afghanistan, its goal remained secondary to the US strategic interests during the Cold War, i.e. containing the expansion of the Soviet Union.

The rollout of the Carter Doctrine marked a significant shift in the US policy towards Afghanistan, representing a revision of the Nixon-Kissinger model of bal-

ancing power via diplomacy and instead emphasizing the economic and military importance of the Middle East-Southwest Asia regions for the US. The US was more capable of managing conflicts, furnishing the country with a more coherent and potent deterrent capacity. Despite these efforts, the US was unable to fully reverse its decline until the introduction of the Reagan Doctrine after President Reagan took office, followed by a shift in US policy towards Afghanistan.

Whether the Soviet Union or the US were on the offensive or defensive in Afghanistan, their policies were centered on their respective Cold War interests, reducing Afghanistan to both a beneficiary and a victim of the competition between the two superpowers. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, the US deployed a covert operation to train and arm Muslim guerrillas who then overthrew the Najibullah regime, which was backed by the Soviet Union and founded in 1986. However, the Muslim guerrillas failed to bring stability to Afghanistan. On the contrary, a more violent civil war broke out between various factions, igniting the underlying ethnic and religious tensions that had simmered in the country. Coupled with the emergence of the Islamic revival movement in the 1980s, the political foundation was laid for the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. As the Cold War came to a close, the US celebrated victory in the Gulf War and began to draw up the "Greater Middle East" strategy. Viewing Afghanistan as a key component of the strategy, the US covertly supported the Taliban to gain a foothold in Central Asia, limit Russia's traditional sphere of influence, and counterbalance Iran's regional power. The US favoritism towards Israel led to dissatisfaction among the Taliban, which pointed the finger of blame at the US. Al Qaeda took advantage of the support to the Taliban regime to carry out terrorist attacks, and the 20-year war in Afghanistan failed to eliminate the Taliban, which instead regained control of Afghanistan following the withdrawal of the US troops, catching the US by surprise. History will tell to which extent the statement that Afghanistan is "the Graveyard of Empires" will be fulfilled in the US.

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ABBREVIATIONS

OPEC - Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PDPA - People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan

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ՔԱՐԹԵՐԻ ՎԱՐՉԱԿԱԶՄԻ ՔԱՂԱՔԱԿԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԱՖԴԱՆՍՏԱՆԻ ՆԿԱՏՄԱՄԲ

Սին Յին

Բանալի բառեր՝ Քարթերի վարչակազմ, Խորհրդային Միություն, Աֆղանստան, նոր աշխարհակարգի ռազմավարություն, Քարթերի դոկտրինա, «նոր սառը պատերազմ», զարգացում:

Քարթերի վարչակազմը իշխանության եկավ վճռորոշ ժամանակաշրջանում, երբ Արևելքի և Արևմուտքի հարաբերությունները հանգիստ վիճակից անցում էին կատարում նոր առճակատման: Աֆղանստանի նկատմամբ նրա քաղաքականությունը ոչ միայն սահմանափակված էր ԱՄՆ-Խորհրդային Միություն հարաբերությունների ընթացքով, այլև անմիջական ազդեցություն է ունեցել դրա փոխակերպման վրա՝ մասնավորապես Արևելքի և Արևմուտքի միջև «նոր սառը պատերազմի» սկզբնավորման վրա: Հոդվածում քննարկման առարկա է դարձել տվյալ ժամանակահատվածում Աֆղանստանի նկատմամբ ԱՄՆ քաղաքականության տարբեր դրսևորումները: Այդ քաղաքականության ձևավորման նախադրյալները, փոփոխությունների պատճառները և զարգացման տրամաբանությունը: