



Russian Federation

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1 Afghanistan

To fully understand Russia's involvement in Afghanistan, one needs to start with the Soviet – Afghan war. Afghanistan and the Soviet Union had favorable relations since the October Revolution, as the Soviet Union supplied military and economic aid against the British and later against the US and China backed Pakistanis. However, the Afghan leadership was embroiled in personal conflict and in the fall of 1979, the three decision-makers in Moscow, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko; the Chairman of KGB, Yuri Andropov and the Defense Minister Marshal Dmitry Ustinov, all urged Brezhnev to intervene. "The principal reasons for the invasion were the belief in Moscow that Amin was a leader both incompetent and fanatical, who had lost control of the situation together with the belief that it was the United States via Pakistan who was sponsoring the Islamist insurgency in Afghanistan." Another common fear was that a radical Islamist regime in Kabul, invigorated by the prior radical "anti-Islamic" reforms of the socialist government, would in turn cause a radical Islamist uprising in Soviet Central Asia, thereby requiring a preemptive strike. "What was envisioned in the fall of 1979 was a short intervention under which Moscow would replace radical Khalqi Communist Amin with the moderate Parchami Communist Babrak Karmal to stabilize the situation." On 27 December 1979, 700 Soviet troops occupied major governmental, military and media buildings in Kabul, killing General Secretary Amin and by the morning of 28 December 1979 declaring that former Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Karmal had been "elected" as head of the new government. The UN General Assembly passed a resolution protesting the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan by a vote of 104–18. President Jimmy Carter placed a trade embargo against the Soviet Union on shipments of commodities such as grain, while also leading a US-led boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. China condemned the Soviet coup and its military buildup. "The presence of Soviet troops did not have the desired effect of pacifying the country. On the contrary, it exacerbated nationalistic sentiment, causing the rebellion to spread further."

The opposition to the Soviet presence was great nationally, crossing regional, ethnic, and linguistic lines. Never in Afghan history had this many people been united in opposition against an invading foreign power. In Kandahar a few days after the invasion, civilians revolted against Soviet soldiers, killing several of them, causing the soldiers to withdraw to their garrison. The Soviets occupied the cities and main axis of communication, while the Afghan Mujahideen, divided into small groups, waged a guerrilla war. "Almost 80 percent of the country was outside government control." It was planned to withdraw within a year, however the harsh Afghan terrain, together with fierce guerilla resistance supported by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, USA, UK and China, resulted in a bloody war that lasted 9 years. "By the mid-1980s, the Soviet contingent was increased to 108,800 and fighting increased, but the military and diplomatic cost of the war to the USSR was high. By mid-1987 the Soviet Union, now under reformist leader General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, announced it would start withdrawing its forces after meetings with the Afghan government." The final troop withdrawal started on 15 May 1988, and ended on 15 February 1989, leaving the government forces alone in the battle against the insurgents, which continued

until 1992, when the former Soviet-backed government collapsed.

So, what is happening now then from Russia's perspective? Well Russia's stance on the Soviet – Afghan war is two sided as on one hand it is regarded as a tragedy as many young soviets died and veterans were honoured in December 2009, however it is still portrayed as a "task to combat international terrorism and religious extremists". However, despite that and despite the Taliban being on Russia's list of terrorist and banned organizations since 2003, the group's representatives have been coming to Moscow for talks since 2018. Russia is hoping to find allies among "anti-western forces" which the Taliban most certainly are. Consequently, the former bad blood between the parties has been swept under the rug. The Russian government saw the old Afghan government as a "puppet" of the US and unlike the West has kept its diplomatic mission in Afghanistan open, claiming that it is easier to negotiate with the new rulers. Russian diplomats described the new men in town as "normal guys" and argued that the capital was safer now than before. President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that the Taliban's takeover was a reality they had to work with. Russia also aligns itself with the Taliban since 2015 in the fight against ISIS.

Russia's main concern is the security of its border and its central Asian allies, namely Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Putin said: "It's important not to allow terrorists to spill into neighbouring countries". This is especially important as Russia has the largest muslim population in Europe numbering 10 million people (7 percent) and muslim regions like Chechnya being sources of war and unrest since the collapse of the Soviet Union (although those have settled since Putin and Kadyrov came to power). Earlier this year Russia held military exercises in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, aimed at reassuring Central Asian countries and obtained Taliban assurances that any Taliban gains wouldn't threaten its regional allies and that they would continue to fight IS militants. The leaders of Pakistan and Russia have held telephone conversations to "coordinate" their position on the situation in Afghanistan, statements from both governments say, ahead of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Putin held talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Aug. 24, which resulted in the creation of a permanent bilateral channel for consultations on Afghanistan. On Sept. 8, Modi's national security advisor, Ajit Doval, met with his Russian counterpart, Nikolay Patrushev, and agreed to expand Russia-India cooperation against terrorism and drug trafficking.

2 Turkey - Greece relations:

The Kremlin's interests are geared toward enhancing dependencies on Russian gas and financial flows, cultivating governing elites, and stymieing the ability of NATO and, to a lesser extent, the EU to expand. Turkey, Greece and Cyprus all depend on Russian hydrocarbons and attract Russian tourists and investments (with Cyprus being a famous offshore nation for tax evasion). Ankara's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile system exacerbated frictions with Washington, throwing NATO into an internal crisis and leading to Turkey's expulsion from the F-35 and Patriot missile programs. Moreover,





Fig. 1: Russian Flag

Turkey and Russia cooperate in Syria, albeit not always happily, because although both leaders- Erdogan and Putin- have a good mutual understanding, both also claim supremacy over the region. Greek – Russian relationships on the other hand are tense as Russia tried to interfere with Greece’s rapprochement with North Macedonia in 2018. Russia could not come to rescue during Cyprus’ banking crisis in 2012-2013 however being the offshore financial center made Cyprus dependent on Russian cash flows. There is limited security cooperation in the form of naval port calls and Cyprus hosts a large Russian expatriate community. Russia was against the lifting of the arms embargo by the US on Cyprus. Russia has interest in the natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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