Developing Powers: Modernization, Economic Development, and Governance in Cold War Afghanistan

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy in History

94,621 Words

Timothy Alexander Nunan
Corpus Christi College
University of Oxford
Hilary Term 2013
ABSTRACT

In the last decade, scholars have recognized economic development and modernization as crucial themes in the history of the twentieth century and the ‘global Cold War.’ Yet while historians have written lucid histories of the role of the social sciences in American foreign policy in the Third World, far less is known on the Soviet Union’s ideological and material support during the same period for countries like Egypt, India, Ethiopia, Angola, or – most prominently – Afghanistan.

This dissertation argues that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is best understood as the final and most costly of a series developmental interventions staged in that country during the latter half of the twentieth century by Afghans, Soviets, Americans, Germans and others. Cold War-era Afghanistan is best understood as a laboratory for ideas about the nation-state and the idea of a ‘national economy.’ One can best understand Afghanistan during that period less through a common but ahistorical ‘graveyard of empires’ narrative, and more in terms of the history of the social sciences, the state system in South and Central Asia, and the ideological changes in ideas about the state and the economy in 20th century economic thought.

Four chapters explore this theme, looking at the history of the Soviet social sciences, developmental interventions in Afghanistan prior to 1978, a case study of Soviet advisors in eastern Afghanistan, and Soviet interventions to protect Afghan women. Making use of new materials from Soviet, German, and American archives, and dozens of interviews with former Soviet advisors, this dissertation makes a new and meaningful contribution to the historical literature on the Soviet Union, Central Asia, and international history.
EXPANDED ABSTRACT

During the Cold War, Afghanistan became an unprecedented laboratory for different visions of how states and economies were supposed to work. By the end of the global American-Soviet conflict, however, Afghanistan lay in shambles, was among the poorest countries in the world, and stood on the brink of civil war. How, then, did a country subjected to four decades of social science interventions come to epitomize the term ‘failed state’? This dissertation answers that question by using Afghanistan as a lens through which to examine the intellectual history of development during the Cold War, focusing on the Soviet Union, the largest developmental actor in Afghanistan even prior to its occupation of the country in 1979. Using Soviet, German, American, and British sources, this dissertation examines how ‘developing powers’ sought, and failed, to turn Afghanistan into a territorial state and economy.

Specifically, this dissertation argues that the history of Afghanistan during the Cold War is best understood in terms of the history of the idea of the territorial state and the ‘national economy’, and the unsuitability of these motivating images for an Afghan state. In spite of the enormous effort applied to this project by social scientists, advisors, and activists from a number of intellectual traditions, none could change the basic fact that Afghanistan’s institutional history, its economic history, or the post-1947 state system in South Asia made the country ill-suited to fulfill the vision of the territorial state that ‘developing powers’ shared in spite of their ideological differences. Implicitly, then, the dissertation argues for a different methodological focus on the history of the Cold War – one focused less on diplomacy, military conflict, or ideology, and more on how Soviets, Americans, Germans, and others sought to temper change in the Third World by changing
the fiscal and administrative character of Third World states with the ‘developing powers’
that social science offered: hence the double meaning of this dissertation’s title.

This dissertation explores these themes in an introduction, four chapters, and a
conclusion. The introduction conducts a review of the pertinent historical literatures to
which this work makes a new contribution. One is the literature on modernization and
development, which focuses on the American experience of development in the Third
World. This dissertation borrows liberally from that literature in its conception and
execution, but it also takes a new step in focusing on Soviet development in the Third
World. Another historical literature concerns the intellectual history of the Soviet Union.
This dissertation draws heavily on the theoretical contributions of anthropologists and
literary critics like Alekseĭ Yurchak, Anna Fishzon, and Andreĭ Shcherbernok, but it also
breaks new ground in treating the Soviet social sciences and area studies complex as
legitimate objects of intellectual history, and by placing those topics in a global
comparative context.

Finally, the dissertation engages with the historical literature on Afghanistan, a
body of work which remains plagued by the ‘graveyard of empires’ framework: the idea
that Afghanistan is inherently predisposed to destroying invaders in wars of attrition. I
argue that this framework is intellectually bankrupt, less because it is factually incorrect,
and more because it ascribes a ‘genetic’ coherence to the history of Afghanistan that
obscures the ‘epigenetic’ (i.e. contextual) reasons why Afghanistan descended into brutal
wars of attrition at certain times, but not at others. The country’s twentieth century history
demonstrates this best: during that time, the Royal Government of Afghanistan invited
countries like Nazi Germany, the Japanese Empire, the Soviet Union, and the United
States into Afghanistan to restructure its state and economy, not to smash those empires.
Even the PDPA regime and Soviet leadership understood themselves to be building an
Afghan state and economy rather than embarking on a mission to eviscerate the country (even if one led to the other). The real question, then, is why Afghanistan’s ‘developmental moment’ descended into chaos so swiftly and violently, and why the subsequent Soviet developmental intervention failed, too. The dissertation does so by re-framing Afghanistan within the history of the social sciences and development.

Chapter One, ‘Soviet Development Thought, the ‘Central Asian Consensus’, and Soviet Afganovedenie, c. 1917 – 1989’, begins this story with an intellectual history of the Soviet social sciences, with a special focus on Soviet Afghan Studies (Afganovedenie in Russian). Unlike their American or West German counterparts, Soviet social scientists faced the intellectual challenge of reconciling the unprecedented changes in the Third World with canonical theories of Marxism-Leninism. With the exception of China and North Korea, however, these changes in the outside world did not obviously correspond with Marx’s schema of societies how transitioned from feudalism to capitalism to socialism. As a new generation of scholars learned foreign languages and gained firsthand experience of the Third World, Soviet debates over political and economic change threw doubt on the central Soviet claim to represent a universal model for economic development. If, in the 1930s, former Tsarist Central Asian colonies had represented revolutionary models for India, Afghanistan, or Iran, by the 1970s they had become mere convention sites for Third World élites whose commitment to socialism seemed doubtful. Later attempts to redefine the Third World in terms of ‘countries of socialist orientation’ helped to clarify policy frameworks, but this new strategic vision hamstrung Moscow into sponsoring the Left in countries like Angola and Ethiopia. The Soviet commitment to a poorly-defined internationalist mission with each intervention, culminating in the invasion of Afghanistan.
Infighting and personal politics within the Soviet apparatus for the study of what academics called the *Srednyi Vostok* (‘Middle East’), including Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), also contributed to the intellectual incoherency. In theory, the Soviet Union had structural advantages over the United States in building the intellectual capital necessary to understand the mix of ethnicities and economies that constituted ‘Afghanistan.’ The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union boasted a decades-long history of scholarly, political, and military engagement with Kabul, and millions of Soviet Central Asians spoke either Persian, Uzbek, or Turkmen – all languages spoken in northern Afghanistan – as their native tongues. But the nation-building project of Tajik identity which Soviet Orientalists had championed in the 1920s backfired. Soviet scholars like Igor’ Reisner, convinced of the superiority of ‘settled’ Persianate culture to ‘tribal’ Pashtun culture, and elite Soviet Tajiks like Bobojon Ghafurov dominated the Soviet Oriental Studies academy and reinforced anti-Pashtun chauvinism that hindered the development of expertise on Pashtun culture, much less the Pashto language. Subsequent leaders in Soviet Oriental Studies like Iuri Gankovski harbored pro-Pakistani biases and hindered the advance of the few scholars in Moscow did have a deep knowledge of Pashtun tribal politics. If this lack of cultivation of expertise did not directly affect the decision to invade it contributed to Soviet myopia once Moscow committed itself to undertaking the transformation of a country dominated by … Pashtuns.

Chapter Two, ‘Afghanistan’s Developmental Moment?’, turns to Afghanistan itself to show how that country’s rulers ended up in the predicament of dependence on outside powers. From independence (1919) to the Partition of British India (1947), Afghan elites forged a state and economy based on Afghan control of transnational regional markets, a ‘light footprint’ state which collected most its taxes indirectly, and, correspondingly, modest developmental ambitions. The formation of Pakistan and a
territorial state order in South Asia in 1947, however, made this model untenable for satisfying Afghan élites’ ambitions for modernization and Pashtun self-determination. The collapse of the old model of the Afghan state, combined with new Cold War tensions, threw Afghans and foreigners into a marriage of convenience predicated on different ideas of what an Afghan state and economy should look like.

The results were less than impressive. American economists and businessmen spent a decade in Kabul trying to convince their Afghan colleagues of the need to transform Afghanistan into a centralized, tax-farming state, and sought to persuade businessmen and ministers to invest more in industry. The skylines of Kabul would never feature the belching smokestacks and steelworks that marked contemporary industrial modernity, but consultants like Arthur Paul and Bob Nathan argued that Afghanistan could thrive in the international economy by finishing its own goods – cotton, fruit, and karakul wool – and re-exporting them to global markets through Pakistan. But the politics of Pashtunistan and Soviet policy towards Afghanistan hindered such a vision. By the end of the decade, the majority of Afghanistan’s imports and exports – unprocessed fruits and cotton – went to the Soviet Union. Kabul’s structural financial problems mounted.

As teams of West German agronomists and foresters sent to Paktia Province in eastern Afghanistan would discover, moreover, even more targeted provincial developmental interventions founder. Pashtunistan already existed economically, if not politically, they discovered. Tribes in the borderlands where the German foresters worked made their living by exporting valuable Himalayan cedar wood to markets in Pakistan. Still, in order to save ‘Pashtunistan’ as a political project, the foresters would have to destroy it as an economy. Trying to re-orient local tribes towards a ‘national’ Afghan wood economy, the German advisors tried to convince tribes to use ‘best practices’ imported from Germany and Israel. The foresters were addressing a real problem:
deforestation was rampant. But by the end of the decade, they had failed in their ambitions. The woods of eastern Afghanistan grew thinner and thinner, and attempts to build an Afghan ‘national economy’ failed.

Chapter Three carries this story across the 1978-1979 divide – the years of the April Revolution and the Soviet intervention – by following Soviet VLKSM (Komsomol) advisors into the borderlands of eastern and southeastern Afghanistan. Following the April Revolution, the PDPA requested assistance from organizations like VLKSM to assist it in building up the Party infrastructure it needed to extend its control beyond just Kabul. By the spring of 1981, VLKSM dispatched its best and brightest to Afghanistan to assist the Democratic Organization of the Youth of Afghanistan (DOYA) in recruiting young Afghans for ideological indoctrination, socialization into the PDPA, and sorting into career paths. Making novel use of the reports (otchëty) that VLKSM advisors wrote to their superiors in Kabul and Moscow and oral interviews with former advisors, the chapter shows how Soviets and Afghans sought to manage the journey ‘from Pashtunwali to Communism.’

As the chapter shows, however, it was a tortuous journey indeed. The VLKSM advisors who arrived in cities like Jalalabad, Khost, and Ghazni were products of a specific administrative and economic system built around a ‘territorial-production’ principle that was only suited to territorial states and economies. Translated to Afghanistan – a country of villages without a large formal economy – the system became incoherent. Nonetheless, because Komsomol advisors were so socialized into a system of authoritative discourse and ‘reportality’ (otchëtnost’), they wrote reports that depicted the unruly Afghan countryside as if it were a fertile ground for Party organizations. Only by the end of the decade, after the changes of perestroïka, glasnost’, and the beginning of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, were VLKSM advisors able to adapt their strategy
and rhetoric to the actual situation on the ground. It all made for an ambitious developmental intervention, but one persistently plagued by the problems of ‘formalism’ and ‘bureaucratism’ that had come to define late Soviet administrative practice.

Chapter Four examines how the Soviet Union thought about development through a very different lens than the one employed in Chapter Three: the Soviet women’s movement and, more broadly, the place of women’s issues in development discourse write large. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan presented unprecedented opportunities for Soviet state-sponsored groups like the Committee for Soviet Women (KSZh) to promote the cause of women’s liberation in the world’s newest socialist state. Chapter Four examines one episode in this story, a 1982 seminar held in Moscow between representatives of KSZh and the equivalent Afghan organization, DOWA (Democratic Organization of the Women of Afghanistan), making use of a transcript of the meeting that has been preserved in former Soviet archives. The seminar seemed to affirm a convergence of interests and ambitions between the two women’s groups. KSZh representatives gloated over how the Soviet project had ‘liberated’ Central Asian women from ‘darkness’ in the late 1920s and 1930s; Moscow alone among superpowers, they implied, could offer an example to Afghan revolutionaries on how to accelerate the ‘progress’ of veiled Afghan women.

And yet the meeting also revealed tensions and fault lines within the Soviet women’s movement. Soviet feminism was predicated on the idea that state-run organizations like KSZh were the only possible representatives of women’s issues both domestically within the USSR as well as internationally, while intellectually, Soviet activists linked ‘the woman question’ with capitalist exploitation and imperialism. By the late 1970s, the emergence of the United Nations as a forum for Third World issues had given rise to norms and conventions that devolved ‘ownership’ of women’s issues to the
nation-state (as opposed to NGOs), while the vibrant state of Soviet-aligned proletarian internationalist women’s organizations suggested the ascendancy of a parallel women’s movement run out of Moscow. The discursive and institutional reforms wrought by *perestroïka*, however, gutted the myths and discursive practices that KSZh activists relied on in their outreach to Third World women’s groups. More than that, *perestroïka* destroyed the idea that state-run organizations had a monopoly on representing all women within a given country. Less than two decades after the nation-state–obsessed or proletarian internationalist versions of a women’s movement seemed ascendent, both disintegrated, soon to be replaced by the women’s rights-as-human rights discourse that dominates thinking on the subject to the present day.

The conclusion synthesizes the themes of the dissertation by exploring the fate of development after the Soviet collapse. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the role of the state and industry in development has been discredited. Fashionable in development discourse today are social entrepreneurship, micro-finance, and other trends that shift the site of development from the territorial state, and public administration, to the individual. At the same time, however, today’s conceptual vocabulary for talking about development remains oddly anchored in ideas of the state. One still speaks of ‘failed states’, blinkered in imagining other spatial forms of the organization of capital, labor, and administration. One wonders whether the discursive shifts surrounding development that have taken place since the Soviet collapse have made our thinking on the subject any clearer. Today – as during the Cold War – the failure of Afghanistan to yield to yet another developmental intervention may reveal less about that country’s unmalleability than about the impotence of social science’s ‘developing powers’.
# Table of Contents

Note on Language and Transliteration                          i

Introduction                                                   1

1. Soviet Development Thought, the ‘Central Asian Consensus’, and Soviet
Afganovedenie, c. 1917 – 1989                                 40

2. Afghanistan’s Developmental Moment? Development, Modernization,
and the Afghan State                                             82

3. From Pashtunwali to Communism? VLKSM Advisors in the Afghan
Borderlands                                                     165

4. Under a Red Veil: The Soviet Women’s Rights Project in Afghanistan
and Beyond                                                      228

Conclusion                                                     276

List of Illustrations                                           300

Bibliography                                                   303
Note on Language and Transliteration

This dissertation adheres to the standards of the American Library Association and Library of Congress for transliteration from foreign languages into English, with two exceptions. First, in the case of well-known personalities whose names are in widespread use in English, it uses the more common spelling: the name of the KGB Director and, later, General Secretary of the USSR is rendered as Yuri Andropov, but the scholar of Pakistan and Afghanistan goes as Iuri Gankovskiĭ for the sake of phonetic accuracy. Second, Central Asian names which clearly have an Islamic provenance but were originally written in the Russian language in sources have been rendered into more legible (at least for Anglophone readers) versions: ‘Muhammadjon’ or ‘Abdurrahim’, rather than ‘Mokhhammadzhon’ or ‘Abdurrakhim’.
INTRODUCTION

‘They say’, wrote the Soviet journalist Viktor Samoilenko in the mid-1980s, ‘that the Tashkent Airport, in spite of its resemblance to every other Soviet airport, leaves a stronger, longer-lasting impression on you than others.’ Samoilenko, who had won acclaim for his previous coverage of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, was headed back to Kabul. Already in Uzbekistan, however, something felt different. ‘Here, like nowhere else’, Samoilenko noticed Soviet people one saw but infrequently in Russia. ‘I met with young Heroes of the Soviet Union. And it was clear to everyone: they had won the Gold Star “there” (tam) in fulfillment of their international duty.’¹ The boarding call for his Ariana Afghan Airlines flight rang. As Samoilenko queued, a group of passengers disembarking from plane he was about to board streamed by: ‘people who had spent some time “there” – Soviet specialists returning from their trips as well as Afghan children whose parents had died at the hands of the enemy.’

Waiting in line, Samoilenko spoke with a Belarusian Komsomol worker who told Samoilenko his story. The Great Patriotic War had separated him from his parents. In the middle of the wartime chaos, the Soviet state evacuated him to Tashkent, where an Uzbek family, the Alimjanovs, raised him. For much of his childhood, he had assumed that his biological parents had perished in the Nazi onslaught. But his biological mother had, it turned out, survived. After fifteen years of searching, she found him in Uzbekistan. He considered reverting to his original Belarusian surname, yet he remained, he said, an

Alimjanov, in honor of those ‘those to whom I had an unpaid debt.’ For Samoilenko, Alimjanov embodied the virtues his own generation had drawn from the Soviet past, such as when Soviet families took in Spanish refugees during that country’s civil war. He embodied the virtue of ‘the Soviet person as a patriot and internationalist.’

The boarding call rang out again. Samoilenko and his fellow passengers – a mix of ‘geologists, construction workers, and agronomists’ – boarded the II’iushin-154 and took their seats in groups according to their profession. An unusually numerate engineer next to Samoilenko explained the world they were about to enter. ‘Now imagine’, he said,

we’re flying to a country that only recently was the 127th country in the world by level of education, 119th by level of healthcare, and 108th by national income per head – not only that, but the average life expectancy for an Afghan man is only 40 years.³

How could a country be so poor? As the plane took off, Samoilenko wondered what it would be like ‘there.’ Whenever he had flown abroad in the past, Samoilenko recalled, there was ‘a moment when they announce that the foreign skies have begun (za bortom nachalos’ chuzhoe nebo).’⁴ He and the other passengers looked out their windows: they were approaching the Amu-Darya River, the southern border of the USSR. The light for the Il’iushin’s PA system turned on, and Samoilenko perked his ears: ‘Afghanistan!’

The passengers on board Samoilenko’s flight from Tashkent to Kabul represented a group of Soviet citizens – Komsomol workers, engineers, agronomists, pedagogical experts, and architects – who were just some of the nation-builders who attempted to turn Afghanistan into a modern state and economy during the Cold War. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, experts would come to Kabul with the latest policy

---

2 Samoilenko, 12.
3 Samoilenko, 14.
4 Ibid., 15.
suggestions that the social sciences had to offer. Whether the issue was the ‘sinews of power’ of the Afghan state, political parties, Afghan women, or the rivers and forests of Afghanistan itself, social science left no area of life in the country untouched. Yet by the end of the 1980s, Afghanistan, in spite of having been the object of so many social science interventions, was poorer than ever and shattered by war. How this happened is the story of men like Samoïlenko and his colleagues on board that Ariana flight to Kabul. It is also the story of this dissertation.

No other narrative dominates Afghan history as much as that of the country as a ‘graveyard of empires’. A cursory examination of the history of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan makes clear why. The Soviet intervention, which lasted from 1979 to 1989, shattered the Afghan state, laid the groundwork for extremist Islamist groups like the Taliban, and resulted in the death, or forced migration abroad, of more than a third of the population of the country. The PDPA, the Afghan Communist Party, enacted radical policies that devastated the lives of millions. The Soviet Army, for its part, used chemical weapons on Afghans and destroyed entire villages. Perhaps most dramatically, however, the Soviet Union disintegrated shortly after withdrawing from Afghanistan after failing to achieve its core political objectives. According to the ‘graveyard of empires’ narrative, in

---

5 Christian Caryl explores this myth more in a thoughtful 2010 piece, ‘Bury the Graveyard’, *Foreign Policy*, 26 July 2010, available online at: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/26/bury_the_graveyard](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/26/bury_the_graveyard). While Caryl describes with reference to stories in prestigious major news outlets to Seth G. Jones’ 2010 book *In The Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan*, the bigger problem, arguably, is the tendency to view the country’s history through an Orientalism-inflected lens that focuses on the three Anglo-Afghan Wars and the Soviet occupation of the country, a view reinforced by the fact that with every passing year, there are simply fewer people alive who have any memory at all of Afghanistan at peace (i.e. prior to 1978). Two recent examples of this approach, both by British authors, are Rory Stewart’s 2012 documentary *Afghanistan: The Great Game – A Personal View* by Rory Stewart and William Dalrymple’s *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
other words, Afghanistan is defined by its habit of making the lives of occupying powers – if also those of its own residents – nasty, brutish and short.

This narrative has its constituents. For Afghans, it represents a source of national pride. For those on the anti-imperial Left, the idea that Afghanistan constitutes a site of permanent resistance to empire provides emotional satisfaction. For those on the anti-Communist Right, meanwhile, the ‘graveyard of empires’ narratives allows ex-Cold Warriors to look back smugly upon a ‘Soviet empire’ that appears to foundered on ‘freedom fighters’ and Stinger missiles, rather than internal contradictions outside of Washington’s control. But consider the history of twentieth-century Afghanistan more closely and several problems with this narrative should become clear. Memories of the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919 and the Soviet occupation dominate memories of Afghan history during that century. Yet for the vast majority of the century, Afghanistan was at peace, not war, with foreign powers. Indeed, for a country famous for destroying empires, twentieth century Afghanistan and its rulers were comfortable, even promiscuous, in receiving money from and outsourcing basic aspects of their country’s sovereignty to advisors from the Japanese Empire, Nazi Germany, the United States, and the Soviet Union – a murderer’s row of twentieth century empires, if there ever was one. Consider what many of these advisors were doing (indeed, what Afghanistan’s twentieth century leaders were obsessed with) – building a state, building institutions – and the cracks in the ‘graveyard of empires’ model grow wider still. Afghanistan looks more like a developmental state than empire’s sandpaper.

In short, construing Afghanistan as a ‘graveyard of empires’ leads to a fatal
misunderstanding of the central place of the social sciences and state-building in
twentieth century international history. Not only that, though: this framework leads to a
caricatured view of the Soviet Union that makes an adult understanding of twentieth
century history impossible. Such frameworks cover up the history of the USSR as a
developing power, a kind of state that thrived during the mid- to late-twentieth century by
dispatching not armies, but experts, into the Third World, in a central story of the Cold
War. Many of the people on Samoïenko’s flight represented not a sui generis attempt at
nation-building in Afghanistan, but rather the culmination of a bigger Soviet, and to some
extent, global project of guiding the Third World from empire to territorial states and
national economies. True, Moscow’s geopolitical goals stood askew from those of the
United States, West Germany, Japan, the People’s Republic of China, or other developing
powers. But it pursued the same tactics as these countries as it dispatched advisors to
countries like Indonesia, South Yemen, Ethiopia, Angola, Iraq, and Afghanistan, seeking
to create an archipelago of Third World territorial states that differed in content but not in
form from Western state- and economy-building projects.

Scholars misread this history until now for several reasons. Some were enthralled
with the ‘graveyard of empires’ narrative for the reasons listed above. Others
imaginationst were captured by methodological frameworks whose starting point was
moral (focusing on the ‘totalitarian’ character of the Soviet Union) or parochial
(enthralled with the fact that Orthodox, post-Mongol Russia features institutional
differences from Western Europe). Yet perhaps the most salient reason why historians
have overlooked this Soviet story is because the Soviet developmental vision collapsed
immediately after its apogee in Afghanistan. Under the rule of Mikhaïl Gorbachëv, Moscow drew down aid to Kabul.6 On 15 February 1989, Soviet troops departed from Afghanistan, leaving behind the Soviet diplomatic staff and a few dozen military and KGB advisors in Kabul as the Najibullah regime fought what was to become a civil war.

The USSR continued to provide military aid – around $3 million a year – to Kabul as late as 1990. But as the USSR itself began to unravel, Boris Yeltsin, then the President of the RSFSR, talked openly about deposing Najibullah in favor of an Islamic government.7 Soon, Afghans had their doubts about whether the Russians were in a position to help anyone. After the failed putsch in Moscow in August 1991, an Afghan official visiting the Soviet capital remarked: ‘We saw all these empty stores in Moscow and long queues for a loaf of bread and we thought: what can the Russians give us?’8 The answer soon became clear: nothing. On 26 December 1991, twelve years to the day after the intervention, the USSR ceased to exist. The new Yeltsin Administration cut off all military and fuel supplies to Afghanistan, and within a few months, Kabul was an icy war zone. The Russian Embassy evacuated all of its personnel, and Afghans confronted fate as the country descended into civil war.

Because the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan ended in this double collapse, the ‘graveyard of empires’ narrative seems to fit quite well.9 Yet this narrative is flawed, as I

---

9 One recent Russian work, co-written by a former Soviet journalist and KGB agent, which showcases both the achievements as well as the methodological limitations of this approach, is Vladimir Snegirev and Valerii Samunin, *Virus ‘A’: Kak my zaboleli vtorzheniem v Afghane* (*Politcheskoe rassledovaniie* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia Gazeta, 2011)).
argue, because it fails to explain why Afghanistan remained peaceful for so long before the intervention, and why the country descended into civil war when and how it did. In order to understand those questions, this dissertation explores the history of Cold War Afghanistan in a different key. Specifically, it argues that twentieth century Afghanistan must be understood as a story of the failure of Western and Soviet social science vision – and the Afghan visions of Pashtun modernization with it – to reconfigure the Afghan state and national economy to adapt to the three consecutive shocks of (1) the end of empire in South Asia, (2) the reconfiguration of the international economy in the 1970s, and (3) a revolution in Pakistani and Pashtun politics from roughly 1971 to 1978 that followed a second Partition of the Subcontinent. Afghanistan collapsed when it did not due to some inherent proclivity towards being a ‘graveyard of empires’, but because of the inability of postwar social science to forge a territorial state and ‘national economy’ out of Afghanistan in the context of the multiple political, economic, and ideological shocks that seized South and Central Asia in the latter half of the twentieth century.

But to understand the claims this dissertation makes, it is essential that we engage with the existing historical literature, particular that from three fields: the history of modernization and development; postwar Soviet history; and the history of modern Afghanistan. Because this dissertation stands at the intersection of these three domains, it is crucial to understand how these fields have developed in recent years, and how this work seeks to fill the holes in those three bodies of work.

Social Sciences and Modernization

In the past decade, scholars of international history have devoted more attention to
the role that the social sciences played in the Cold War. As colonial empires collapsed and new superpowers asserted themselves in the former domains of the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese, élites in both Washington and Moscow developed policy frameworks to engage with what became called ‘the developing world’ while avoiding the taint of colonialism. ‘Economic development’ – a baggy concept encompassing institutions, educational systems, monetary environments, ‘the rule of law’, and infrastructure – became one such approach. The turn from colonialism to development as a world order also restructured the hierarchy of knowledge within universities: Oxbridge classicists were ‘out’; economists, political scientists, and anthropologists of exotic but strategically crucial countries were ‘in’.

Because the literature on this topic is dominated by historians of the United States, any discussion of how this story played out globally must begin with the work of scholars like Michael Latham, Nils Gilman, Michael Adas, and David Ekbladh. Latham’s *Modernization as Ideology* argues that the concept of ‘modernization’, developed by political scientists and economists like Walt Rostow, became an ‘ideology’ that supported America’s global anti-Communist crusade.\(^\text{10}\) Modernization, Latham contends, bore fruit in initiatives like the Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps, and the Strategic Hamlet program in Vietnam – all attempts to ‘develop’ post-colonial societies along pro-American, or at least anti-Communist, lines. Yet in light of the Soviet experience, *Modernization as Ideology*’s core claim seems overblown: if modernization was indeed an ‘ideology’, it paled in terms of totality to Marxism-Leninism. Examined more

critically, Latham’s diagnosis looks more like just a specifically American exponent of a broader global shift that took place in the Soviet Union as well, namely the fusion of late 19th century ideas about ‘progress’ with the academic traditions and military might of mid-century empires like the USA and USSR.

Indeed, as Michael Adas shows in *Dominance by Design*, such new policy frameworks also drew from longer-standing national preoccupations. Adas argues that the idea of exceptional American ingenuity and technical superiority, alive since the days of 19th century American empire, received a second life during the Cold War.\(^{11}\) American Cold War ‘developmentalism’, Adas contends, placed American consumerism at the heart of the vision of what the United States had to offer developing countries.\(^{12}\) In Vietnam, for instance, insistence that American wealth and military hardware were guaranteed to secure victory over a ‘10th rate country’ led, ultimately, to myopia and defeat.\(^{13}\) Even following the debacle in Indochina, a confidence in American ‘technowarfare’ and refrigerators and tail fins as the ‘end of history’ underwrote hubristic foreign adventures, even as the American record of understanding (much less rebuilding) foreign societies remained mixed, to say the least. *Dominance by Design* reminds us that any account of Soviet development must, correspondingly, root Soviet interventions in a bigger history of encounters with the colonial world and attitudes at home.

As Nils Gilman shows in his contribution to this literature, *Mandarins of the Future*, the role of institutions in this history also merits attention. Gilman undertakes an

---

12 Ibid., Chapter 5; for a more recent account of this process, see Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2009).
intellectual history of American foreign policy through the history of the hothouses of modernization theory: Harvard’s Department of Social Relations, MIT’s Center for International Studies, and the Social Science Research Council. Modernization theory, he argues, reflected contemporary American hopes and anxieties. Americans who came of age in the 1950s, writes Gilman, enjoyed ‘sock hops and rock n’ roll, renewed economic vitality, graceful acceptance of social conformity and moral rectitude, optimism about the possibility for an improved world, and, above all, a smug sense of self-congratulation.’

But ‘the specter of the bomb, the scarily relentless charge of the Soviets on the one hand and McCarthy on the other, domestic racial conflicts, and international political calamities’ threatened this complacency. Modernization theory neatly captured both of these moods at once. Family planning projects, public housing, and food aid programs could do double duty in preventing the nightmare of race war at home and that of billions of angry Communist subalterns abroad. A Soviet version of this story, must, therefore, not only dissect the American myth of Communist expansionism abroad, but also show how ideas generated in Soviet institutions reflected cultural preoccupations at home.

By the end of the first decade of what some see as a post-American Century, the literature on the hundred years that preceded it has only gained in sophistication. David Ekladh’s history of the ‘great American mission’ in the Third World represents but one example of several recent works that highlight how. While still focusing on the 1960s, when ‘modernization was at the apex of its influence globally [and] framed basic

---

14 Nils Gilman, Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), ix-x.
15 Ibid., x.
elements of international life’, Ekbladh places the history of American development into a broader context than Latham, Adas, or Gilman, locating the ‘development decade’ in a larger history of ambitious attempts by the American government and foundations to reform a giant American abroad that included not just the colonial Philippines but also all of China. As the intellectual historian Inderjeet Parmar underscores, such internationalist institutions essentially dismissed the American populace as too hopeless provincial and naïve to support, much less understand, the need for such boundless American international engagement.17 By highlighting the need to fight Nazism, Japanese imperialism, and Soviet and Chinese Communism, foundations forged an élite-managed internationalist discourse that would oversee the export of New Deal institutions like the Tennessee Valley Authority to South Korea, Afghanistan, and Vietnam.18 Understanding Soviet development, Ekbladh reminds us, demands looking back upon the history of the Komsomol, collectivization, and women’s emancipation, as these institutions and experiences were re-appropriated – or re-imagined – for Third World adventures.

Doing this sensitively, as Brad Simpson’s recent work on American-Indonesian relations underscores, demands combining perspectives from the periphery with those from the White House, the Harvard Faculty Club, or the Kremlin.19 Simpson shows how American intellectuals and policymakers colluded with their Indonesian counterparts to ‘encourage and facilitate the army-led massacre of alleged PKI members’ during the

---

1965-1966 massacres, all in the name of Suharto’s ‘New Order’, which ‘held out for Indonesia a military-dominated, development-oriented regime integrated into the regional economic and bound to multilateral institutions.’

To paraphrase the international historian Ryan Irwin, Simpson’s account provides an example of how one can write the history of the twentieth century without indulging in lazy, self-satisfied, or self-pitying ‘anti-imperial counter-narratives that paradoxically silence moments of moral ambiguity and conceptual multi-directionalism – much like the narrative of Western triumphalism [they seek] to supplant.’

Nick Cullather’s recent history of American food aid in the Third World sets another example of how to write this kind of history. Cullather explores how U.S. government officials, foundation representatives, and agronomists collaborated to free ‘the hungry world’ from food crises (and, it was thought, the spectre of Communism). In southern Afghanistan, the Helmand and Arghandab Valley Authority would eliminate drought, improve agricultural yield, grant Kabul more power over its provinces, and render tribal conflicts history. In India, American Democratic administrations tried to help the Congress Party manage the threats of hunger and explosive population growth. Cullather’s work, along with that of American aviation historian Jenifer van Vleck, underscores how a focus that moves beyond infrastructure to other arenas – agriculture and air transportation in these cases – provides a more subtle history of development.

---

20 Ibid., 5, 193.
23 Cullather, The Hungry World, Chapter 4.
Still, this scholarship on the history of development and modernization, it remains ineluctably American in terms of focus and origin: odd, given that the Cold War was defined by its bipolar character. Even though much of the United States’ development efforts were explicitly aimed at countering Soviet ambitions in the Third World, the literature on Soviet development itself is scant. As one review of *Hungry World* noted,

> a more thorough analysis of Soviet programs, and those of Western European governments, would not simply have enriched our appreciation of those different models of rural development that were available to post-colonial leaders. It would also further puncture the domestic rhetoric of a communist threat that was used to justify wide-ranging American involvement in India, a rhetoric that had little or no meaning for many others who supported intervention in the Third World.\(^{25}\)

A recent literature review by the intellectual historian David Engerman has underscored this need to examine the ‘Second World’s Third World’\(^ {26}\). As of 2011, writes Engerman, [we have] ‘only dim inklings of the variety, intensity, and meanings of Soviet engagement with the Third World.’ Scholars of Soviet history, he continues, have failed to match up with the creativity of ‘scholars of U.S. foreign relations [who have examined] the flows of people and ideas internationally’.\(^ {27}\)

This dissertation picks up this gauntlet by tackling the question of Soviet development in Afghanistan – a country subjected to the single largest Soviet developmental intervention in the Union’s history. Matching the sophistication of the historical literature on the United States in the world, as this literature review has suggested, will be a challenge. Doing so, however, requires more than merely transferring the conceptual vocabulary of the American experience to the Soviet experience. It


\(^{26}\) David C. Engerman, ‘The Second World’s Third World’.

\(^{27}\) Engerman, 185-186.
demands appreciating Soviet history on its own terms. To do so, one must evaluate a
second body of historical literature – that from the emerging subfield of the Soviet Union
in the world.

_The Russians Are Coming: The USSR in the World_

If, during the Cold War itself, there reigned a consensus that Europe represented
the primary theater of the Soviet-American conflict, in the last decade, historians have
increasingly examined how the Cold War largely – perhaps even primarily – took place in
the Third World. As Odd Arne Westad argues in _The Global Cold War_, American-Soviet
competition

to a very large extent shaped both the international and the domestic frameworks within
which political, social, and cultural changes in Third World countries took place. Without
the Cold War, Africa, Asia, and possibly also Latin America would have been very
different regions today.\(^\text{28}\)

Although Westad’s work represents an essential contribution to understanding the
role of the Soviet Union in the Third World, his approach towards the USSR in the world
has at least two shortcomings. One has to do with intellectual history. The second chapter
of _The Global Cold War_ provides an overview of Russian and Soviet intellectual history,
but only up to approximately 1960. True, Westad focuses much more on the _longue durée_
of Russian ideas of progress, but at the cost of engaging with the Soviet intellectuals and
institutions who sought to build what he calls ‘the empire of justice’ abroad during the
Cold War itself. Later chapters allude to the Soviet social sciences, but only in passing.\(^\text{29}\)

A second issue concerns the book’s treatment of the intervention in Afghanistan.

\(^{28}\) Odd Arne Westad, _The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times_

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 369-370.
While Westad provides an exhaustive history of the factors that compelled Moscow to intervene, *The Global Cold War* provides little treatment of what Soviet advisors actually did in the country once there. ‘Seen in the light of the massive resistance within Afghan society to the Soviet presence’, he writes,

Moscow’s attempts at emphasizing civilian assistance to Afghanistan may seem misplaced. But the documents we now have on the war show such plans for the betterment of the Afghans – and thereby for the strengthening of the Afghan regime – to have been of major importance to the Soviet mission.\(^{30}\)

This is all true: still, *The Global Cold War* skirts deep engagement with these issues in order to focus on the buildup to the December 1979 intervention in a broader, bigger – and impressive – synthetic history of the Cold War.

Part of the reason why historians have skirted the issue of Soviet internationalism may be the lack of a conceptual apparatus to structure such a project – something along the lines of what Adas or Gilman have done for historians of the United States. What were the specific qualities of the Soviet generation that took on the Soviet internationalist mission in the Third World? What does one make of the values of ‘internationalism’ that the Soviet state claimed to instill in its citizens? The anthropologist Alekseï Yurchak explores these questions in *Everything Was Forever, Until it Was No More.*\(^ {31}\) Why, he asks, did so many people perceive the Soviet system to be eternal and yet also feel, at least in retrospect, well-prepared for its collapse? Deploying insights from semiotics and postmodernist theory, Yurchak argues that Soviet citizens found ways to creatively re-appropriate Brezhnev-era authoritative discourse. ‘Depending on the context’, he argues, Soviet citizens ‘might reject a certain meaning, norm, or value, be apathetic about

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 350.

another, continue actively subscribing to a third, creatively reinterpret a fourth, and so on.” This led to a paradox: even as few genuinely ‘believed’ in authoritative discourse, the unanimous participation of Soviet citizens in the performative reproduction of speech acts and rituals of authoritative discourse contributed to the general perception of that system’s monolithic immutability.

These re-appropriations of authoritative discourse, however, enabled diverse and unpredictable meanings and styles of living to spring up everywhere within [the discourse]. In a seeming paradoxical twist, the immutable and predictable aspects of state socialism, and its creative and unpredictable possibilities, became mutually constitutive.

*Everything was Forever* nonetheless has shortcomings apropos the themes of development and internationalism. While Yurchak’s work aspires to ‘explore the paradoxes of Soviet life during the period of “late socialism” through the eyes of the last Soviet generation’, it focuses on Soviet citizens *at home*, based on interviews that Yurchak conducted primarily in St. Petersburg in 1994 and 1995 with former party and Komsomol leaders, speechwriters, propaganda artists, rank-and-file Komsomol members, students, workers, engineers, [and] members of ‘amateur’ cultural communities.

*Everything is Forever* is, hence, perhaps less a work of Soviet history than Russian history insofar as it devotes little attention to the relationship of non-Russian Soviet citizens (roughly a third of the population of the country in the 1980s). To be fair, Yurchak conducted interviews in Russian cities beyond ‘Peter’; nonetheless, *Everything Was Forever* remains provincial in the best sense of the word – interested in themes of Soviet history through a specifically Russian lens.

Yurchak is not unaware of the problem of the Soviet abroad, of course. An entire

---

33 Ibid., Back Cover.
34 Ibid., 29.
chapter of the book focuses on ‘the peculiar combination of insularity and worldliness in Soviet culture.’\textsuperscript{35} In it, Yurchak discusses the tension between outward-looking values and the fact that few Soviet citizens were, in fact, able to travel to the West. Although many indulged in pursuits built around an exotic ‘elsewhere’, such as

foreign languages and Asian philosophy, medieval poetry and Hemingway’s novels, astronomy and science fiction, avant-garde jazz and songs about pirates, practices of hiking, mountaineering, and going on geological expeditions in the remote nature reserves of Siberia, the Far East and the North

the most exotic experience most could expect was a vacation to the Bulgarian Black Sea coast: comfortable, but hardly romantic. Capturing the problem are works like Tarkovskii’s \textit{Stalker}, in which a sealed-off ‘Zone’ ‘referred to a certain imaginary space that was simultaneously internal and external to late-socialist reality.’\textsuperscript{36} Crucial was the Zone’s paradoxical status – ‘intimate, within reach, and yet unattainable.’\textsuperscript{37} The places that the ‘Zone’ represented – Paris, London, Rome – were a ‘room of desires’ that Soviet citizens could idealize. Still, the ‘there’ often seemed so far away that people doubted its existence. One 1980s comic troupe, ‘Litsedei’, amused audiences by joking that ‘foreign tourists on the streets of Soviet cities were dressed-up professional actors, and foreign movies were shot in a studio in Kazakhstan.’ Because \textit{Everything is Forever} is so focused on domestic experiences, however, Yurchak does not couple his discussion with the experience of people who \textit{did} reach the real abroad – particularly one that was not the European West so close to the ‘window to Europe’ in which Yurchak did his work, but the Third World, as well.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 158.
\textsuperscript{37} Yurchak, \textit{Everything Was Forever}, 161.
Other works, like the edited volume *The Soviet Union and the Third World*, take up this issue of the USSR in the world in greater depth.38 The new international history of the USSR, Andreas Hilger writes, must pay attention to how the ‘East-West’ conflict structured ‘East-South’ relationships. Echoing Ryan Irwin, Hilger stresses the need to understand how the Cold War granted ‘peripheral’ countries like Taiwan, Nigeria, or Yemen an autonomy (*Eigengewicht*) and contingency that the ‘springtime of nations’ anti-colonial narrative misses. The new international Soviet history could also involve more ambitious international *cultural* histories: as Hilger writes, we need a history that understands the

East-West conflict as a competitive offering of ideologies and life plans (*Lebensentwürfen*) out to the Third World, interactions of socialist actors in the broadest sense with citizens of the Third World, corresponding images of the other and one’s self, processes of experience and attributions as well as repercussions of international connections at all levels on society, culture, and individuals of the so-called Eastern Bloc and its counterpart.39

Ragna Boden’s work on Soviet policy towards Indonesia in the 1950s and early 1960s comes up short of the latter task, but her *The Limits of Empire* nevertheless represents the most mature study yet of Soviet engagement in the Third World.40 While Indonesian authorities denied Boden access to archives in Jakarta, she makes use of Soviet state and Party archives, published sources in Russian and Bahasa, files on Indonesia from East German archives, and material on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) from Dutch archives, all in order to piece together the history of the Soviet-Indonesian relationship. She takes the reader from Stalin to Brezhnev, covering the period

---

39 Ibid., 11.
from Comintern links between the CPSU and PKI in the 1920s and 1930s to Moscow’s attempt to repair the relationship with Indonesian Communists, Sukarno, and Suharto after the 1965-1966 massacres and the *Supersemar*. As she shows, determining policy towards post-colonial powers that were nonetheless not Communist was a challenge for Moscow. ‘In its theory of liberation’, Boden writes,

the USSR was united with the Republic of Indonesia only on what Indonesia should be liberated from (from colonialism or imperialism), but not what to (towards a Soviet variant of socialism or towards a strengthening of the sovereign Indonesian state).\(^41\)

While Afghanistan obviously occupied a different, and arguably more central place, in Soviet foreign policy thinking than did Indonesia – one thinks of the shared border and the legacy of ‘the Great Game’ – Boden’s work suggests what a mature history of Soviet policy towards Afghanistan could look like.

So, too, does a recent article by Paul Robinson and Jay Dixon on Soviet aid to Kabul, based on the English-language and Russian secondary literature and Soviet press of the period.\(^42\) Soviet aid, they argue, proceeded in three stages. The first corresponded with contemporary development economics thinking on the need for ‘factor accumulation’ and was marked by intensive capital investment into infrastructure and agriculture. By the mid-1960s, however, it had become clear that Third World countries’ exports would struggle to compete in global markets. ‘References to the “international division of labor” became more and more common in Soviet literature, as a growing number of economists argued in favor of participation in world trade.’\(^43\) Hence, just as Cuba focused on sugar exports, Soviet geologists built a natural gas extraction complex

---

\(^41\) Ibid., 360.
\(^43\) Ibid., 612.
in Sheberghan in northern Afghanistan that provided the USSR with an alternative foreign source for natural gas and Kabul with 44 percent of its domestic revenues by 1982.\textsuperscript{44} But even these projects had a limited impact: the population of Afghanistan at large remained illiterate, poor, and largely still engaged in subsistence agriculture. Only by the mid-1970s did Soviet economists concede that only more investment in human capital could boost Third World economies.

Robinson and Dixon provide a clear outline of the Soviet-Afghan aid relationship; but again, their work’s methodology leaves something to be desired. As they note,

\begin{quote}
according to Valerii Ivanov, a senior Soviet economic advisor who headed the Permanent Intergovernmental Soviet-Afghan Commission on Economic Cooperation in the late 1980s, most of the relevant papers were never deposited in the state archives and were probably destroyed in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

This gets back to a methodological problem that, as we saw, Americanists have long been aware of: ‘development’ concerned more than just ‘economic cooperation’. It was about education, women’s rights, and environmental management, not just roads and grain silos. There is, moreover, a wealth of Soviet sources that touch on these issues that Robinson and Dixon they do not engage with. The two seem aware of the complexity of Soviet development thought, but they hold on to a blinkered idea of ‘development’ which imposes unnecessary methodological restrictions on their work. Nor do they attempt to engage with issues of Soviet intellectual life that sociologists like Yurchak have explored.

This all means that the methodological challenge for this dissertation is twofold. Not only must it contextualize the experience of Soviet development globally alongside its American counterpart; it also has to explain what Soviet development meant within

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 613.

\textsuperscript{45} Robinson and Dixon, Interview with Valerii Ivanov, 8 December 2008.
the domestic intellectual context, probing the lives and reflections of advisors in the same way Yurchak did for the Leningrad intelligentsia. Ideally, it would do so while also juggling the project of a more methodologically conservative international history of the kind that Westad and Boden have undertaken. But even that is not all. To be successful, our project will have to understand the meaning of development for individual countries in the Third World – which, in our case, means Afghanistan.

**Afghanistan**

The literature on the history of Afghanistan is stuck in a rut. After a flowering of works on the country in the 1960s and 1970s by scholars like Louis Dupree and Vartan Gregorian, and a small renaissance of works on the country in the late 1990s and early 2000s, writing on Afghanistan since 9/11 has too often indulged in a tendentious obsession with the ‘graveyard of empires’ narrative, or the Soviet decision to intervene. The naïve reader could be forgiven for thinking that Afghanistan’s modern history began with the Soviet invasion.46 Typically, the focus is almost entirely on Afghanistan as a place of constant warfare and rebellion, rather than an actual country that had to deal with mundane issues of governance and economic development, albeit within the charged context of the Cold War, Kabul-Islamabad tensions, and infighting within the Left.

Exceptions to this rule do exist. While initial work on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was dominated by journalistic accounts, two political scientists who worked extensively in Afghanistan during the Soviet war have written works of real substance on the period. Barnett Rubin’s *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* remains a model of

---

Rubin demonstrates how the Afghan state represents the product of the partition of territorial states out of South and Central Asia. Prior to the late 19th century, he argues, ‘Afghanistan’ was never a unitary territorial state. Only the dynamics of nineteenth century imperial conquest and the Western state system forced ‘Afghanistan’ to transform from the space of exchange it had once been to something the Western international system could grasp. Of course, Afghanistan lacked (if this is the right word) the institutions that characterized Mazzinian European states – a coherent geography, a strong central government capable of collecting tribute from landowners, a national market, ethnic homogeneity, and so forth. And the fact that Afghanistan was never colonized meant that Afghan leaders who did sign on to modernization had to improvise many of these institutions. Unlike South Korea, Kenya, or Zaire, where Japanese, British, or Belgian colonialism, respectively, left behind at least some administrative tradition legible to postwar donors and social science, Afghan élites were left to borrow wholesale from international social science traditions to build a modern state, even though they had never chosen the territorial state as their platform of choice.

Because Rubin correctly intuits the framework for understanding Afghanistan, his narrative of the country’s history under the Musahibans and, later, the PDPA remains lucid throughout. Under the Musahibans, Rubin emphasizes, leaders sought to modernize the country through sources of cash other than direct taxation, like foreign aid; ironically, Afghanistan’s rulers would exploit foreigners’ expectations an Afghan in order to fund a project of modernization that barely touched local provincial populations. ‘Rather than

try to penetrate the countryside and govern it’, Rubin explains,

the Afghan state continued to pursue a strategy of encapsulating traditional local institutions. [...] Rather than incorporating the various sectors of the population into a common national political system, the political elite acted as an ethnically stratified hierarchy of intermediaries between the foreign powers providing the resources and the groups receiving the largess of patronage.  

Instead of obsessing over the Soviet decision to invade, meanwhile, Rubin asks similar questions about the post-1979 period. He asks the right questions: how did the PDPA try to use the Afghan Army and the KhAD to coerce the population to fall in line with the new state from 1978-1979, and why did it fail? Why was the post-1979 government still forced to rely on natural gas sales and Soviet aid for such a large portion of its revenues as opposed to being able to coerce obeisance to the state? Sadly, Rubin concludes, when ‘bipolar strategic conflict ended, [...] the European imperialist map of Southwest Asia was redrawn.’ Kabul was abandoned:

foreign aid to Afghanistan from competing, Euro-Atlantic powers ceased, and along with it the century-old project of building a foreign aid-funded, Pashtun-led, centralized buffer state.  

Rubin’s synthetic approach entails never focusing on any one part of the country, but his methodological focus on state-building and finance – rather than ‘graveyard of empires’ – represents the right lens through which to understand Afghan history.

Another distinguished work that emerged in the 1990s is Antonio Giustozzi’s War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan. Based on Soviet and Afghan radio broadcasts, interviews, Soviet and East German dissertations, and secondary material, Giustozzi provides a detailed account of PDPA policy, the DRA Army, attempts towards ‘National
Reconciliation’ with the mujahedin, and the role of Afghan militias in the conflict. Giustozzi, who has written on Afghan and Pakistani politics as well as militias and insurgencies in the region, is second to none in terms of contacts. But Giustozzi’s book makes scant use Soviet archival material. It is out of touch with the contemporary historical literature, too. Granted, this fact reflects understandable professional priorities; Giustozzi established himself as an expert on Afghanistan first, and only as a political scientist and historian later. Still, these priorities hinder Giustozzi’s ability to contextualize the story of Afghanistan in a bigger narrative about modernization or the twentieth century.

Similarly erudite is the work of Michael Barry, a cosmopolitan anthropologist, archaeologist, and scholar who spent his childhood and adolescent summers in Kabul, growing up as he did in a French-American family with ties to the contemporary Afghan élite. Like Rubin, Barry worked in Afghanistan during the Soviet war; unlike either Rubin or Giustozzi, Barry’s huge erudition in the Persianate cultural tradition grants him a broader historical sweep in which to place modern Afghan history. A recent essay of his does just this as it explores Afghan history from Babur to the early 21st century. Afghanistan, Barry emphasizes, has a ‘barometric function’ in the region because of its geographical between Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, China, the (former) Soviet

Union, and the offshore balancing power of the United States.\textsuperscript{55} Any attempt to govern Afghanistan had, Barry writes, to contend with three issues: first, ‘the tribal culture of warlike poverty and parasitic economic dependence on outside imperial powers’; second, ‘the durable strategic concerns of successive imperial powers (Mughal, British, Pakistani) based in the Punjab lowlands to deny the Kabul highlands to a possible militarily dangerous regional rival’; and third, ‘the patterns of proud Afghan social resentment, resistance, and self-inflicted “human scorched-earth” tactics that have effectively opposed outside direct military control.’\textsuperscript{56}

Yet Barry loses some of his credibility when he writes of the Soviets in Afghanistan. Understandably for someone who spent years documenting Soviet atrocities for \textit{Médecins sans Frontières} in the country, he focuses on what he views as the genocidal qualities of the war. Writes Barry:

\begin{quote}
Soviet generals in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1986 enjoyed latitude for brutality unavailable even in their dreams to, say, the most extreme American official bullies under the George W. Bush Administration. Soviet strategy to subdue Central Asia to Bolshevik control in the 1920s – ‘encircle, isolate, then destroy’ – was revived to cut off Afghanistan’s central mountain massif deep within the country’s ring road, proceeding to depopulate the more thickly peopled eastern, southern and western frontier regions under carpet-bombing, so as to reduce these to a vast human desert in which no mujahideen might operate, cordoned off from Pakistan and Iran.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Elsewhere he describes how the USSR – ‘one of the twentieth century’s longest-lasting political, social and moral frauds’ – exported torture techniques to Kabul’s prisons.\textsuperscript{58} But Barry assigns the gravest responsibility for the Afghan crisis to Islamabad, which he accuses of interfering in the country as part of a grand strategy to turn Afghanistan into a ‘fifth province’ of Pakistan. Since at least the 1970s, Barry argues, Islamabad has sought

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., Introduction by Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, 4-5.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 10.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 70.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 71.
\end{itemize}
to ‘de-Pashtunize’ Afghan and Pakistani Pashtuns by promoting Saudi-inflected Islam
alien to a country formerly known for its eclectic mix of Pashtun and Sufi traditions, all
part of self-destructive Pakistani obsession with anti-Indian ‘strategic depth’.59 None of
what Barry writes here is incorrect per se. But he mistakes moral outrage for analysis –
perhaps understandable given the difficulty of serious research in Pakistani archives
today, but not in light of the availability of Soviet material. The interesting question –
how the Soviet intervention took on genocidal qualities in spite of, or perhaps because of
its developmental aims – goes unaddressed.

This predilection towards posturing over analysis also limits some of the work
produced by some Afghan historians in recent years, most notably M. Hassan Kakar’s
Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982.60 Because Kakar,
a former professor at Kabul University, had unparalleled access to interview subjects and
a wealth of personal experiences to draw on, flashes of insight sparkle through the text:
Kakar observes that ‘the Parchami government was not a government … it did not rule
over the country’, and that, ‘PDPA uluswals (heads of districts) or alaqdaran (heads of
subdistricts), where they had not been killed, had dramatically different levels of
authority from region to region.’61 But when the topic is Russians, Kakar resorts to a mix
of name-calling, tendentious polemics on Communism, and racism. He describes
Russians as ‘latecomers to the fold of civilization’ and describes Russia as a politically

59 As Barry emphasizes, both of these terms (‘strategic depth’ and ‘dependent friendly State’ to refer to
Afghanistan) were in official use in the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment from the 1980s
onward. See Barry, ‘Kabul’s Long Shadows’, 66; M.P. Bhandara, editorial in Dawn (Karachi), 29 May
60 M. Hassan Kakar, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982 (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1995).
61 Ibid., 125-126.
backwards civilization. He makes no effort to distinguish between ‘Russia’ and the Soviet Union, and argues, on the basis of no evidence, that one aim of the invasion by the ‘godless Communists’ was to annex and ‘ruthlessly suppress’ Afghans in the same way ‘the Russians’ had to ‘Muslim Bukhara.’ For this claim he provides no evidence.

Barry’s and Kakar’s claims about Soviet genocide in Afghanistan – millions killed, millions of refugees, villages obliterated, chemical weapons used against civilians – are well-documented and hard to refute. At stake, however, is not denialism or morality, but rather interpretation. Kakar’s attitude and Barry’s resentment towards Moscow prevent both historians from from asking the more disturbing questions about the Soviet experience: how was it that a state committed to ‘development’ could simultaneously commit genocide? How did the Soviet developmental mission go wrong in Afghanistan? Or was forced migration and genocide embedded into the Soviet idea of development? The pathos of authors like Barry and Kakar prevents them from beginning to ask these vital questions.

Fortunately, two recent works suggest a possible sea change in the historical literature. Rodric Braithwaite’s Afgantsy, a history of the conflict designed for a general readership, is one. 62 Braithwaite focuses on the war, but he fortunately skirts the ‘graveyard of empires’ narrative, trying instead to place the Soviet war in the context of the Soviet 1980s, a period when Braithwaite served as the British Ambassador to Moscow. Relying on interviews with both economic advisors and some VLKSM advisors, Braithwaite comes closest to meeting the challenge of situating the Soviet

intervention in a bigger global story of nation-building and development. Also helpful is Artemy Kalinovsky’s *A Long Goodbye*, which focuses on the decision-making that led to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in the 1980s. Kalinovsky examines Moscow’s withdrawal from Afghanistan while also connecting the dots with broader global trends. While he concentrates on high-level decision-making in the Politburo during the process of withdrawal, Kalinovsky highlights how Soviet policymaking towards Afghanistan took place within an intellectual paradigm according to which

aid to the Third World had become a key component of the Soviet bloc’s legitimacy as a superpower. If the USSR’s triumph over Nazism justified its posture in Europe, then the need to defend the world and post-colonial states justified its position as a guarantor for peace in the Third World.

Kalinovsky is more comfortable in the diplomatic history tradition than Yurchak-style Soviet intellectual history, but this kind of discussion represents a real step forward from Barry and Kakar. ‘For decades’, writes Kalinovsky,

the Soviet Union had been offering a version of modernization, sending its military, political and technical advisors to emerging states that were socialist or leaning that way. Soviet modernization was a challenge to colonialism and to the American model – although, as practiced in the context of counterinsurgency (for example, in Vietnam), the two models looked remarkably similar. Since the scale of the effort in Afghanistan was so grand, the potential for failure was considerably highlighted as well. The power and influence of the USSR rested on several pillars: its military might, its technological prowess, and the superiority of its political model for achieving modernization and fending off neo-colonialism.

Still, as Kalinovsky has himself emphasized in personal conversations with me, we still lack for a comprehensive developmental history of the Soviet occupation.

Having reviewed the existing literature across three fields – modernization, the USSR in the world, and Afghanistan – the interpretative challenge should now be clear. A

64 Ibid., 12.
65 Ibid., 216.
work that would fill all of the holes we brought up would have to do several things. It would have to place the experience of Soviet development both before and after 1979 into a global story of the history of the social sciences. It would have to show how the intellectual history of Soviet development and Soviet policy in Afghanistan fit into a bigger, more ambitious intellectual history of the USSR à la Yurchak. At the same time, it would do justice to Afghan history on its own terms, looking at Afghanistan not as an object to be manipulated by developing powers, nor as a brave anti-colonial force, but as a country whose élites sought to exploit the structure of the Cold War to pursue state-building, modernization, and Pashtunization on their own terms. But there is also the question of sources: how to reconcile these methodological reflections with the available sources?

Sources

This dissertation relies on archival materials, interviews, and secondary sources collected from several countries. Former Soviet archives in Moscow provide the bulk of the material, in particular the Komsomol sub-archive of the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), which provided all of the VLKSM documents used in Chapter Three, and the holdings of the Committee of Soviet Women at the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), which provide the core material for Chapter Four. Smaller sections of other chapters rely on materials from the Russian State Archive for Economics (RGAE) and the Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (RGALI) in Moscow, and, further afield in Central Asia, the Central State Archive of the Kyrgyz Republic (MAKR) and the Institute of Socio-Political Inquiries of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (ISITsKKPK). The collections of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan (O’zRMDA) would, in theory, have allowed for a more substantial at the history of the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex and other Soviet development in northern Afghanistan, since ministries at the level of the Uzbek SSR (not the all-Union level) carried out those projects. Unfortunately, while the National Library of Uzbekistan housed many books and journals on development in Afghanistan from the perspective of Tashkent, my application to O’zRMDA was turned down.

Dozens of interviews with former advisors and their translators (almost entirely ethnic Tajiks) collected during a summer and autumn 2012 field research trip to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia bolstered these conventional archival materials. Starting with the archival materials and books I had collected during a shorter trip for an M.Phil. dissertation in the autumn of 2010, the Internet, and little else, I established contact with dozens of former advisors and scholars. I then conducted semi-structured interviews, usually in Russian, but occasionally in Persian, with these individuals. Over time, certain themes took on more prominence. Almost all of the VLKSM advisors were recruited in the same way, making the story of their road to Afghanistan similar and less interesting over time. Many interviews focused on the informal deals struck with Afghan colleagues as well as the extent to which Afghanistan prompted them to reflect on the meaning of ‘socialism’ or ‘Communism’. Many of the Tajik and Uzbek translators shared anecdotes about their ethnic or religious identity as ethnically Tajik Muslims interacting with Afghan Tajiks and Pashtuns. Wherever these interviews are directly quoted in the text, I have translated the speakers’ exact words from recordings; where their thoughts or
words are paraphrased and footnoted, I have relied on notes that I made shortly (within two to three hours) after every interview. Some advisors and translators generously made their personal photographs or diaries of their time in Afghanistan available, both of which I make use of throughout.

One methodological question that may come to arise concerning interviews, especially with regards to a ‘sensitive’ topic like Afghanistan, is whether my interviewees were editing their personal stories, or holding back to a Western interviewer. There are at least two reasons why I remain confident in the truth of the information I have gleaned from the interviews. Firstly, because the Komsomol advising operations were not especially large (employing about two hundred advisors and translators from 1979-1988), by the end of my research, I had spoken with many advisors and translators who knew one another, and who often experienced or recalled the same events differently from one another. Still, in no cases did any subjects inform me that a story was completely invented. Similarly, many interviewees who came through the Soviet area studies system in the 1970s knew one another personally – there were perhaps no more than fifteen people in the entire country working seriously on Afghanistan – and so it was possible to double-check any stories that seemed too fantastic to believe.

This gets to the second, and more important, reason why we can trust the interviews: many of the former advisors wanted to talk about their experience. Many advisors felt that their contribution to the project of an Afghan state had gone under-appreciated, both by their fellow Soviet citizens at the time as well as by Western policymakers who ignored the Soviet experience of development in the mid-2000s.
Indeed, particularly since the American-led mission to rebuild Afghanistan since 2001, many of these former advisors felt eager to offer their reflections on state-building in Afghanistan as a lesson for today. True, some remained bitter about American and Pakistani support for the mujaheddin and, later, Taliban in the 1980s and 1990s. But far more often, many of my interviewees had taken the post-2001 fate of Afghanistan as an opportunity to re-commit themselves to the region, working for international NGOs or as formal advisors to the Russian government on South and Central Asian regional policy. In short, my own devices for double-checking stories, and the fact that so many of my contacts remained devoted to the future of Afghanistan – makes me inclined to believe what most of the interviews revealed, rather than to assume that they would have spent two hours lying to a foreign graduate student.

To make effective use of oral history, however, one has to be mindful not only of whether interviewees were telling the truth or not. Writing the history of the Soviet 1970s and the early 1980s, in particular, poses special challenges. The historian of this period must, when using oral evidence from interviewees, try to reconcile their statements now with their writings then across not one but two radical historical disjunctures. One came on 27 January 1987, when Soviet General Secretary Mikhaïl Gorbachëv radically shifted how Soviet citizens could talk about socialism when he deployed the concept of ‘stagnation’ (zastoï) at the 27th Plenum of the CPSU. ‘The Party’, said Gorbachëv,

is bound to see life in all of its fulness (polnote) and complexity. Any accomplishments, even the most grandiose, should eclipse neither the contradictions in the development of society nor our mistakes and omissions.

We have spoken about this, and should repeat again today: at a certain stage, the country began to lose its rate of movement (tempy dvizhenia), difficulties and unresolved problems began to accumulate (nakaplivatsia), and stagnant and other foreign
phenomena appeared.\textsuperscript{66}

For perhaps the first time in Soviet history, it became possible to criticize aspects of the ‘Soviet system’ – increasingly referred to as a ‘system’ rather than the inherent texture of the economy and public administration – on the grounds that they represented ‘stagnant and foreign phenomena’ that had accumulated within socialism, rather than an inherent part of the system itself. The second disjuncture occurred approximately five years later, when the Soviet Union disintegrated, forcing denizens of Eastern Europe and Eurasia to periodize their lives in a way that none could have anticipated beforehand. Life stories told in retrospect now had to be structured not just around education, relationships, work, or family, but world-historical events. From 1987 to 2007, for instance, the number of books with the phrase ‘Soviet era’ (Sovetskoe vremia) in their title jumped sixfold.\textsuperscript{67}

This all poses a problem for the historian wishing to make use of oral history sources. The temptation of interview subjects to style themselves as dissidents \textit{avant la lettre} in conversations with a naïve graduate student should be obvious. The more subtle question, however, concerns the way that people who were \textit{not} dissidents – the majority of Soviet citizens and almost the entirety of interview subjects for this project – felt comfortable voicing their concerns with problems of administration and management at a time when criticism on these topics was restricted to professional discourses that sought to \textit{reform} socialism rather than dismantle it.\textsuperscript{68} What one has to do – and what this

\textsuperscript{66} Mikhail Gorbachëv, ‘O perestroïke I kadrovoi politike partii’, available online at: \url{http://sovieticus5.narod.ru/88/od1987.htm}

\textsuperscript{67} Data from search for ‘Соціальне віршування’ in Google Ngram search. Graph available online at: \url{http://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=%D0%A1%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B5+%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BC%D1%8F&year_start=1917&year_end=2010&corpus=25&smoothing=3&share=}

\textsuperscript{68} For more on such professional communities, see Archie Brown, ‘Institutional Amphibiousness or Civil Society? The Origins and Development of Perestroika’, in Ibid., \textit{Seven Years That Changed the World}:
dissertation attempts to do, if at times imperfectly – is to recapture the possibilities and limits for re-thinking socialism present before the shifts of 1987 and 1991, even while relying on some sources produced after those discursive shifts.69

Still, the story that this dissertation tells is not just a Soviet one; it is an international one whose sources go beyond former Soviet archives and the interviews in Eurasia. In the United States, the journals of Arthur Paul and Robert Nathan, held at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and Cornell University, respectively, provided an in-depth look into how two American development professionals approached the problem of economic development in Afghanistan. In West Germany, materials from the archives of the West German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz provided great detail on West German economic assistance to Afghanistan in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, which in turn led to the opportunity to interview Christoph Häselbarth, the former director of the West German-led Paktia Project in southeastern Afghanistan. I am also grateful to Mr. Häselbarth for making available his large collection of photographs, several of which appear in Chapter Two.

What, then, of native Afghan sources? Unfortunately, security conditions in Afghanistan ruled out a research trip to Kabul or provincial Afghanistan. This is aggravating, but because I focus largely on the Soviet approach to Afghanistan, the Soviet documents and, above all, former advisors were more important than what sources might have turned up in Kabul. More than that, while the archives in Kabul were miraculously left intact by the civil war, many of the holdings at the National Archive in Kabul are not

69 Jacob Feygin and Adam Leeds, graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania and Christopher Miller, a graduate student at Yale, are examining this problem through intellectual history projects on the economics profession in the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s.
catalogued, making even the most modest of archival runs time-consuming and expensive at best, and dangerous at worst. Still, in-depth PDPA material is potentially there, once Kabul becomes more stable than at the time of writing.⁷⁰ Provincial archives, meanwhile, are either non-existent, destroyed, or closed in Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i Sharif, and Jalalabad. Several of these cities are unsafe in any event. One must hope that one day it will be possible to challenge and overturn some of the arguments made in this dissertation on the basis of more indigenous sources.

Still, I argue, there are several routes around this problem. One involves a more thoughtful reading of the non-Afghan documents we do have. Bob Nathan and Arthur Paul took notes on their interactions and audiences with Afghan ministers, while the archives of the Soviet Embassy in Kabul (held at the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation in Moscow) contain extracts from RGA newspapers and government communiqués that provide insight into the minds of Zahir Shah, Daoud, and key officials in the Afghan governments of the period. Secondly, however, rather than taking the insecurity of Kabul as an excuse to write a conservative diplomatic history written purely from the point of view of Washington or Moscow, this dissertation takes the opposite approach, using the German and Soviet holdings tell a history of precisely those regions of Afghanistan, like the tribal zones, where archives are lacking in the best of events and on-the-ground research would have definitely been unwise. Ironically, because places like Paktia were so difficult to manage for the RGA or, later, the PDPA, one can perhaps write the histories of these regions, at least today, more easily from archives in suburban

⁷⁰ This information comes to me from James Pickett, a graduate student at Princeton who made a short trip to Kabul in 2011.
Koblenz or Moscow than from Kabul itself.

\textit{A Look Ahead}

This dissertation consists of four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One, ‘Soviet Development Thought, the “Central Asian Consensus”, and Soviet \textit{Afganovedenie}, c. 1917-1979’, traces the intellectual history of development economics, area studies, and Afghan Studies in particular in the postwar Soviet Union. Throughout that period, intellectuals at academic institutions in Moscow challenged and modified the basic concepts through which Soviet policy élites would approach the developing world. Within Afghan Studies, meanwhile, an idiosyncratic pro-Tajik slant crystallized within Soviet institutions in a way that made academics and policy analysts less attentive than they might have been towards crucial developments in Afghanistan. But by 1979, in spite of these intellectual sparks throughout Soviet academia, top decision makers ignored the entire policy advising complex they had created when they decided to execute a coup against Hafizullah Amin and invade the country.

The invasion would bring with it new, ambitious schemes to restructure Afghan politics and society. In order to contextualize some of those changes, Chapter Two, ‘Afghanistan’s Developmental Moment? Modernization, Development, and the Afghan State’, explores the history of development in Afghanistan from independence to the mid-1970s. Both Afghans, and, especially after the 1950s, foreigners would attempt to reconfigure the way the Afghan state interacted with its own populace, the environment, and the international economy. Following a number of cases of American, Soviet, and West German foreign advisors in the country, the chapter shows how Afghanistan became
a hothouse for ideas about the territorial state and the ‘national economy’, focusing on both advisors in Kabul who dealt with truly national policy questions – trade, fiscality, administrative reform – as well as on advisors who worked on the provincial level, in Paktia Province in eastern Afghanistan.

Chapter Three, ‘From Pashtunwali to Communism? VLKSM Advisors in the Afghan Borderlands’, explores Soviet development from the ground in Afghanistan. Komsomol (also known as VLKSM), the youth wing of the CPSU, sent hundreds of advisors to provincial Afghanistan from 1979-1988 to work with the provincial leadership of DOYA, the youth wing of the PDPA, to construct a Communist Party apparatus from the ground up. I examine the experience of the Soviet advisors and translators sent to eastern Afghanistan to examine how they tried to build institutions in regions that had historically eluded central control. Yet these Soviet advisors soon found that the crisis surrounding them demanded solutions that their Komsomol background had not equipped them to provide. The VLKSM advisors’ attempt at Soviet-style development ended up only compounding the political, ecological, and theological crisis that had gripped the borderlands since the early 1970s.

Chapter Four, ‘Under A Red Veil: The Soviet Women’s Movement in Afghanistan and Beyond’, examines one of the many arenas for development where the USSR would intensify its engagement with Afghanistan following the invasion, namely ‘the woman question’. The history of women and women’s movements in twentieth century Afghanistan was complicated, with a variety of groups seeking to find a line on women’s issues for a conservative country that nonetheless saw more and more university-
educated women. By the early 1980s, however, DOWA, the women’s wing of the PDPA, was in the midst of expanding its activity across the country. Soon, Soviet activists from KSZh, the official Soviet women’s organization, advised their Afghan colleagues on their mission. But their outreach to their Afghan colleagues was complicated by the way in which Soviet socialism had frozen Soviet feminist rhetoric into an ‘authoritative discourse’ much at odds with the reality on the ground, not to mention the ways the winds were blowing with regards to the women’s movement globally. A brief conclusion then distills some of the main themes of the dissertation in a short history of development since the Soviet collapse.

What we have here, then, is a history not only of the Afghan state during the Cold War, but also of the ideas and experts deployed there: men like the VLKSM advisors; women like the Soviet Russians and Kazakhs who sought to improve the lot of Afghan women; agronomists who wanted to make the cedar forests of Pashtunistan bloom; people like those who boarded Viktor Samoïlenko’s flight from Tashkent to Kabul. Sitting aboard the Il’iushin, Samoïlenko peered out the window as the plane entered Afghan airspace ‘What threw itself into our eyes?’, he wrote.

Well-groomed land with fields and woodlands, lakes and canals, roads and villages leading up to the Amu-Darya, as though they were stumbling towards an insurmountable barrier. The banks of river ended, yielding their place to the uniform grey background upon which could be seen the bright brown hills with vague outlines of scalloped dunes reminding one of light ripples on water. Occasionally something resembling a settlement became visible – flat, grey like the land around it, and hence unexpected in the landscape. A few aquatic plants floated in the spindly ponds down below, but once soon they disappeared from view, and there was nothing below to stop or even hold one’s gaze.

It was, Samoïlenko implied, a hard country. A Soviet engineer and technician who had worked in Afghanistan before turned to Samoïlenko. ‘You and I have been thrown a couple of years back in time – maybe 150 years into the past’, he said. ‘It’s time to land.’
Even if one arrived armed with the developing powers that social science offered, transforming this country promised to be no mean task. But for over four decades, generations of Soviets, Americans, Germans, Afghans, and others would try. Over the last three years, I traveled widely to read these people’s diaries. I read the reports they wrote to their supervisors. I tracked them down in small towns in Germany and cities in the former Soviet Union, watched them share their stories with me over tea, and spoke to some who were in their last days over the phone. They shared with me the how they had come to Afghanistan with what they thought were the ideas and frameworks that could transform the country, the state, and its economy, but many of them instead ended up presiding over Afghanistan’s collapse. This dissertation is their story. The visions of modernization, economic development, and governance that they brought with them may have proved abortive. But it is only by engaging with their lives that we can understand the place of the social sciences, the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan in twentieth-century history, as well as where, if anywhere, the latter country may be headed today.
CHAPTER ONE:
Soviet Development Thought, the ‘Central Asian Consensus’, and Soviet Afganovedenie, c. 1917-1989

The historical process of development, to say nothing of the construction of a new socialist society, isn’t a stroll down the Nevskiï Prospect of Petrograd, nor is it as straight and as flat a road as Nevskiï Prospect.71

On Tuesday, 24 August 1971, a group of foreigners entered the grounds of the Kyrgyz SSR’s VDNKh72 in Frunze.73 The guests, the first visitors to a new exhibit, wandered into eleven exhibition pavilions with several themes: ‘Construction’ (photographs and dioramas of experimental housing in Frunze) and ‘Science, Culture, and Healthcare’ (materials from the ‘Decade of Kyrgyz Literature’ recently promoted in Uzbekistan).74 The guests were floored by the speed of the republic’s economic development. Kyrgyzstan produced as much in two days in 1971, one noted in the exhibit’s guestbook, as it did in an entire year prior to the October Revolution.75

Foreigners were not unknown at VDNKh; delegates from Croatia, Syria, Afghanistan and France had visited it before in the 1950s and 1960s.76 But this group represented something new. They were delegates to a conference, ‘The Experience of Agrarian Transformations and its Meaning For Liberated Countries’, where they, along

72 Vystavka dostizhenii narodnogo khoziâistva, Exhibition of the Achievements of the National Economy.
74 Mamlektik Arkhiv Kyrgyzstana Respublikasi / Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kirgizskoi Respubliki (MAKR/TsGAKR), Fond 2705 (VDNKh), Opis’ 1, Delo 300, ‘Tematiko–ekspositzionnyi plan fotovystavki “Sotsialisticheskaiia Kirgizia” na 1971 god’, List 1, 2, 5.
76 ‘Kniga Otvyzov’, MAKR f. 2705, op. 1, d. 45, 93, 136, 137, 138.
with Soviet academics, Party officials, and experts, discussed the relevance of Central Asia’s past to the Third World’s future. Delegates like I.A. Adalemo, a professor from Nigeria’s Lagos State University, Arnes Roberto, a writer from the Bolivian journal *Problemas del mundo y socialismo*, and Gogul Parthasarathi, a professor at Nehru University in Andhra Pradesh, India, listened to presentations on land and water reform in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the 1920s and the economic history of Chechnya, Tuva, and Chuvashia.77

The idea that Soviet economic development had not only succeeded in Central Asia but could also be relevant for the Third World was not lost on the participants. Parthasarathi noted that ‘the Indian peasant can still only dream of such a level of mechanization as yours. In this regard, Kyrgyzstan can be considered a guide for the developing countries of Asia and Africa.’78 Others were impressed by a map showing all of the countries to which the Kyrgyz SSR exported goods; at a time when many were preoccupied by the idea of a New Economic International Order, Central Asia, it seemed could provide a road map both for developing countries’ internal development and for their trade policy.79 The Somali delegate, Djama Robile, had stronger words. ‘We can’, she said, ‘truly call this international seminar that took place in Kyrgyzstan a school for our new life. In today’s Central Asia I see the future of my country […] We should develop the same way you have.’80

This encounter between a Somali economic planner and stagnation-era prosperity in a Central Asian capital may seem bizarre. But the fact that both sides of the encounter

79 MAKR, f. 2705, op. 1, d. 300, l. 88.
80 Ibid.
felt like they had much to learn from one another prompts two questions: how did the Soviet Union come to think about economic development in the Third World, and during the Brezhnev era in particular? And what role did Central Asia play in the Soviet imagination about the USSR’s relationship to the developing world? A close examination of this aspect of Soviet institutional and intellectual life yields a picture of perhaps surprising change and dynamism. Both Soviet development thought as well as what one might call ‘Central Asian Consensus’ – the idea that Central Asia was deeply relevant to Third World development – formed two sides of the same coin in Soviet intellectual life: the search for conceptual tools to translate the unprecedented change in a post-colonial Asia and Africa into the language of a non-capitalist economic ideology; and, conversely, to render the idiosyncratic conditions of Brezhnev-era Soviet socialism into terms understandable by Third World élites. In this sense, Soviet development thought and the ‘Central Asian Consensus’ for development can be seen as one instantiation of a problem that the social scientists of other Cold War powers faced.

Soviet development thought was more than just a social science, however. It constituted an extension of the Marxist-Leninist intellectual tradition. Unlike the United States’ promotion of development abroad in tandem with ideas of American exceptionalism at home, the Soviet developmental experience was thought to represent only the first moment of a universal, global unfolding wave of historical development that Marxist-Leninist theory had predicted. This made Soviet development thought a complicated enterprise. The Soviet social sciences, based in Marxist-Leninist methodology as they were, were supposed to analyze extra-Soviet reality. But attempts to
refine the analysis, or add flexibility to Marxist concepts, might undermine the USSR’s claim to offer universally applicable advice to countries moving along the ‘objective’ road to development. What if the Soviet experience were indeed exceptional or, worse, irrelevant, to the unique conditions of decolonization? Soviet development thought hence constituted a strange sort of knowledge in the Brezhnev era. It was held to produce knowledge of an unpredictable world. But the more scholars of, for example, China, Africa, or South Asia tried to create new non-capitalist conceptual frameworks to explain events in those parts of the world, the more these non-capitalist frameworks threatened to undercut more specific Marxist-Leninist claims about Moscow’s mission as the world’s first socialist state. Convincing the Third World how, and on whose timetable, to develop, was going to prove rather more complicated than a stroll down Nevski Prospect, indeed.

_Origins_

Soviet development though had its origins in Marxist-Leninist debates from the 1920s and 1930s. Marxism offered a guide to historical development: societies followed a linear path through five discrete ‘formations’ (формация), namely from communalism to slaveholding to feudalism to capitalism and (after a transitional stage of socialism) to communism. But Marx also emphasized that Asian societies did not follow this five-stage (пятилетняя) path through history. There, an ‘Asian mode of production’ (asiatische Produktionsweise) dominated: ‘land in Asian peasant society was owned by the state or the peasant commune rather than by landlords.”81

This ‘Asian mode of production’ thesis raised policy questions for a Communist

81 V.N. Nikoforov, _Sovetskie istoriki o problemakh Kitaia_ (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 204.
power like the Soviet Union whose legitimacy rested in large part on promoting revolution abroad, not only in Europe but also in Asia, and in China in particular. From 1923-1927, the Soviet Union sent several advisors to China to support the Kuomintang-CCP alliance seeking to unify China. By early April 1927, however, the KMT had violently suppressed Communist organizations, purged the CPC from government, and rejected Soviet aid. This raised a quandary: was China ‘objectively’ prepared for revolution to warrant supporting the CPC against Chiang Kai-Shek? Those who thought that the ‘Asian mode of production’ existed in China argued in favor of overthrowing Chiang. Because China had no landlords, the argument went, Chiang Kai-Shek had no strong class base and thus would be easy to depose.\footnote{Jerry F. Hough, The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1986), 40; Richard C. Thornton, The Comintern and the Chinese Communists 1928-1931 (University of Washington Press, 1969), 3-29.} If one thought, however, that the five-stage model applied everywhere then China, still by and large an agrarian country, was far from socialist revolution, and any revolution would prove abortive. The basis for a split between Soviet Marxism-Leninism and Maoism was already brewing. Still, Stalin’s strategic mandates of achieving ‘socialism in one country’ and avoiding British-Polish-Japanese encirclement demanded caution. The USSR resisted from intervening.

Back in the Soviet Union – as campaigns for collectivization and total mobilization now got underway – some scholars began to question whether Stalin’s Soviet Union was not itself becoming an ‘Asiatic’, bureaucratic state in which exploitation existed sans private property. In 1931, Vasilii Struve, an Egyptologist, proposed that the old five-stage model be applied to developing societies, including China. As Stalin exerted ideological control, the ‘Asiatic mode of production’ thesis
disappeared from textbooks in the 1930s. By 1938, Stalin insisted that the essence of feudalism was landlord ownership, and that Asia had therefore already gone through feudalism. Debates among historians of Russia on the timing of feudalism aside – ‘which meant, in practice, discussing criteria for defining the nature of feudalism and the nature of the transition both into it and away from it’ – the piatichlenaia model, with its claim to universal applicability, became orthodoxy.

Not that this ideological clampdown curtailed Soviet outreach to the colonial world. For it was precisely in these years that the notion of Central Asia as a developmental model for non-Soviet countries became Soviet canon. For a country that prided itself on its anti-colonialism, the USSR’s record in modernizing the former hinterlands of the Russian Empire would indeed prove crucial. If two decades of Soviet rule in places like Turkmenistan could not not make them more economically dynamic than Algeria or the Punjab, for example then the Soviet project lacked legitimacy when compared to the alternative paradigms of the day. Formerly peripheral Central Asia was soon re-imagined as a potential launchpad for a global anti-colonial revolution. Stalin proclaimed in 1925 that Tajikistan stood ‘at the gates of Hindustan’ and wished it success in becoming ‘a model republic of the Eastern countries.’ Even after the Musahiban royal family had restored order in Afghanistan after the 1928 uprising, one Soviet scholar could mention, in passing, that ‘it is well known (izvestno) that Afghanistan [finds] itself on the path away from India and towards Soviet Central Asia.’

84 Jerry Hough notes that ‘almost every issue of the major historical journal, Voprosy istorii, carried at least one article on this subject from November 1949 through February 1951.’ See Hough, The Struggle for the Third World, 44.
85 Joseph Stalin, 25 March 1925.
86 P. Alekseenkov, Agrarnyi vopros v afganskom Turkeostane (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi agrarnyi institut,
vision for non-capitalist, non-racist, development to the colonial world.

Yet the unique dynamics of this interwar conjuncture made playing an anti-colonial Great Game complicated. Communist activists succeeded in transforming Central Asia during the 1920s and 1930s precisely because they had a monopoly on the region’s government, economy, and culture, and they were willing to use the tools of a ‘mobilizational state’ to remake, resettle, or liquidate Soviet citizens.\(^7\) The argument for Central Asia’s relevance to places where a Communist Party did not similarly own the politics, economy, and culture was weak, since Central Asian development had occurred under idiosyncratic circumstances of total mobilization. During the interwar conjuncture, when this *idée fixe* of a ‘Central Asian Consensus’ emerged, this contradiction mattered little. Decolonization – which would challenge Moscow’s claim to moral superiority over Western powers – seemed unlikely. It was easy not only for Bolsheviks but also for such Western intellectuals as Joshua Kunitz, Arthur Koestler, or Langston Hughes to claim that the Central Asian model might be duplicated in future anti-colonial revolutions, without worrying too much about concrete details. With the Soviet Union as the world’s only socialist state, moreover, this Soviet model *was* socialism; there were no other models for Leftist modernization available at the time.

*Post-Colonial Transformations*

Still, when colonialism *did* end, and with surprising speed, Soviet development thought and the Central Asian Consensus had to adapt quickly. A ‘wind of change’ blew

through both Africa as well as Asia, leaving behind an archipelago of independent nation-states. Power and influence depended less on revolution than on hard-won relationships with the newly ‘self-liberated’ (osvobodivshikhsia) states. The USSR learned how to become a developmental power – but one with a difference. It belonged to the United Nations and contributed to internationalist, multilateral development efforts like the UNDP, UNICEF, World Health Organization, and the Food and Agriculture Organization. But the USSR never subscribed to the major internationalist institutions founded at the Bretton Woods Conference – the IBRD and the IMF – and instead presented itself as the center of an alternative, socialist, world economic system. Nor did it abandon its mission of socialist internationalism. Most famously, the USSR provided significant financial, military, and technical assistance to the People’s Republic of China. Starting in the late 1950s, the USSR signed foreign aid deals of $100 million each with Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Argentina, and Cuba in order to support Soviet-style development in those countries, askew but not opposed to its commitments within international institutions and as a partner of Maoist China.88

This internationalist shift posed novel challenges for the Soviet social sciences. One was logistical: how to create the new institutions, career trajectories, and incentives to build a cadres of experts? In 1950, IV AN SSSR’s main operations were moved from Leningrad (which conceived of itself as a hub for traditional philologically-minded Orientalism) to Moscow.89 In 1956, IMEMO, the reincarnation of an earlier institute of international politics and economics institute founded by Eugen Varga, was reborn in the

89 Author Interview, Anna Matveeva, London, United Kingdom, 18 April 2012.
capital. MGIMO, founded as the professional school for the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1944, opened an Oriental Section in 1954 in the wake of IV AN SSSR moving to Moscow. And in 1958, an Institute of Foreign Trade was grafted on to MGIMO, moved over from Leningrad.

Still, putting new signs on buildings was one thing; encouraging new scholarly traditions was another. If European imperialists had centuries of experience in the study of Asia and Africa, the USSR had to build its scholarly establishment from more humble beginnings. Not that rich traditions were totally lacking. Tsarist-era authors like Andrei Snesarev had written distinguished works on Afghanistan and India, and academic centers like Kazan’ University promoted broader a broader Eurasian erudition.\(^\text{90}\) Polish orientalists like Józef Kowalewski could engage with the study of Mongolia and Tibetan Buddhism as they mingled in the same city wither Tatar hajjis and Ottoman merchants returned from journeys to Mecca or Istanbul.\(^\text{91}\) Still, for all of the erudition of such traditions, the study of South Asia or Tataria could not mask for a lack of in-depth knowledge on Cuba, Indonesia, or Ghana, for example. Likewise, the destruction of many of Eastern Europe’s universities and the destruction of its intelligentsia – much of the latter carried out by the NKVD – meant that the engagement between centers of scholarship in Moscow, Leningrad, Kazan’, Warsaw, Sofia, and Berlin, so productive in a lost world of empire, would have to be carried out on reimagined terms. Scholars had to quickly put on new hats, not all of them well-fitting. In 1961, for example, when Karen

\(^\text{90}\) For more on this tradition, see David Schmmpennick van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Catherine the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
Brutents was asked to join a newly-formed Africa section of the International Department of the Central Committee, the man heading it was a scholar of Greece and Albania who knew no African languages, much less English, French, or Portuguese.92

A second challenge was ideological: what were the most appropriate conceptual frameworks to understand the developing world? Already starting in 1953, the year of Stalin’s death, both established scholars like Eugene Varga (who had founded ImKhIMP93 in the 1920s and had been suppressed in the late 1940s for arguing that capitalism was not imminently doomed) as well as younger scholars like the Sinologist Leonid Vasil’ev mounted an attack on the five-stage consensus. This assault took on new forms as younger scholars learned Chinese, Korean, Persian, Arabic, and African languages, traveled abroad, and researched and wrote dissertations. Within Soviet Sinology, scholars like Vasil’ev and the younger Aleksei Levkovskiǐ (of whom more later) asserted the existence of a bureaucratic, despotic tradition of economics and governance in China – a criticism that could be read as a veiled attack on the Soviet system itself.94 Others worried that the Chinese might perceive assertions of a ‘despotic’ tradition in Chinese history as a suggestion that ‘Mao’s regime was not socialist but was rather an oriental despotism rooted in Chinese history’.95 In the Afghanistan Sector of the Center for the Study of the Countries of the Near and Middle East at IV AN SSSR, a new generation of scholars like

93 Institut mirovogo khoziaistva I mirovoi politiki, The Institute for the World Economy and World Politics, an economics institute that existed from 1927 to 1947 (the beginning of a period of major shake-ups in Soviet social sciences and economics).
Aleksandr Davydov and Naum Gurevich, both students of the eminent Afghanistan expert Igor Rešner, modified their mentor’s *piatichlennaia* view of Afghan history, in the meantime. Gurevich argued in his works and seminars that Afghanistan was permanently stuck in the feudal stage of history, while Davydov, conducting painstaking research into Afghanistan’s bazaar economy, argued that the country was moving slowly in the direction of capitalism.  

By the mid-1960s, Soviet area studies had become more intellectually interesting and professional than before, and yet engagement with the Third World raised questions about the universal applicability of Marxism-Leninism.

These new organizational and intellectual shifts also had profound effects on the way Soviet area studies understood both Afghanistan and South and Central Asia. Understanding how and why requires us to recall the focus of the first generation of Soviet scholars of Afghanistan. Like other Soviet specialists on Central Asia at the time, such as Aleksandr Semënov, Rešner emphasized the contributions of Persian culture, and ‘Tajiks’ in particular, to the development of civilization in those territories that then comprised the Uzbek SSR, the Tajik SSR, and northern Afghanistan.  

There were good reasons for this Tajikophila, too. When the Tajik ASSR was carved out of the Uzbek SSR in 1924, and later turned into a full-fledged SSR in 1929, scholars like Semënov devoted themselves to inventing traditions for the new Soviet republic, and not infrequently with an eye toward showing Tajiks in northern Afghanistan how the USSR honored self-determination. (This was complicated by the fact that most of the cities considered to be

---

96 Author Interview, Viktor Korgun, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 October 2012. For Rešner, see *Razvitie feodalizma i obrazovanie gosudarstva u afgantsev* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1954). For a critical review of Rešner’s work precisely on the basis that it was too dependent on *piatichlennaia* concepts, see A.Z. Arabadzhian’s review in *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie* 6 (1956), 146.

97 Author Interview, Vasilii Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 November 2012.
hub of Tajik civilization, like Samarkand and Bukhara, lay outside the borders of the ‘Tajik’ SSR.) There were other reasons why a Tajik ‘tilt’ developed in Soviet academia: Persian boasted greater cultural prestige than Turkic languages. Scholars like Reişner and Semênov could while away years in Stalinabad in a way they could not in, for example, Pashto-, Balochi-, or Punjabi-speaking regions of South and Central Asia. The rise to prominence of Soviet Tajiks like Bobojon Ghafurov, who became the Director of IV AN SSSR in 1956, only further institutionalized a preoccupation with Tajik culture.

This Tajikophilia might seem trivial, but when institutionalized within the broader context of decolonization, it created blind spots with respect to how one understood South and Central Asia. One issue, particularly after 1947, concerned the lack of attention devoted to Pashtuns, one of the largest ethnic groups in the region, outnumbering Tajiks by perhaps two to one. While MGIMO provided Pashto language instruction, the more prestigious IV AN SSSR provided instruction in only Persian and Hindustani. 98 Since Tajikophile professors like Reişner (who oversaw all supervision and approved all dissertations written on India or Central Asia) and Tajik rectors like Ghafurov dominated at IV AN SSSR, young scholars wishing to write dissertations on Pashtuns or Pashtunistan were marginalized. Even if Ghafurov or Reişner fell short of being Tajik chauvinists, the idea of Pashtun Studies represented an affront to the idea that Persianization and a Tajik bureaucratic state represented progress in the region. Scholars who knew Pashto, like Davydov, worked in terms of ‘the Afghan peasantry’, rather than

---

98 It bears underscoring that the language instruction situation had changed by the late 1970s. KGB academies began teaching Pashto by at least 1979, while IV AN SSSR began to teach Pashto in the late 1970s as well. The point here, however, is that the generation of graduate students and scholars who would come to deal with the Afghanistan crisis from 1978 onwards were themselves poorly equipped in terms of languages, much less in terms of cultural knowledge, to deal intelligently with problems of nationalism in Afghanistan after 1978-1979.
in terms of Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Uzbeks.\textsuperscript{99} Indeed, by the 1960s at IV AN SSSR, ‘the’ question occupying most scholars concerned economic development, not nationalism.

Yet perhaps \textit{the} core methodological problem that would crystallize with respect to the place of Afghan Studies had less to do with Central Asia than with Pakistan. For older Soviet specialists on the region, like Reisner or Rostislav Ul’ianovskii (the latter a Soviet Indologist who went on to chair the section of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU that dealt with developing countries), the formation of Pakistan in 1947 posed an intellectual quandary: should Soviet scholarship, or the foreign policy apparatus of which it was a part, support the self-determination of post-colonial \textit{countries}, or that of \textit{peoples}? If the former, Pakistan could be viewed as a progressive part of the global struggle against imperialism. But if the latter, the unresolved status of Pashtuns or Balochis – dominated numerically in Pakistan by Bengalis and politically by Punjabis – smacked of internal colonialism. If one took national self-determination seriously the idea that Pashtuns or Balochis ought to submit to a state for Muslims and receive their education not in Pashto or Balochi, but in Urdu, could seem like colonialism with a Pakistani face. Still, men like Ul’ianovskii, indifferent towards the Pashtun or Balochi cause (if unimpressed by Two-Nation Theory or claims of Pakistan as a ‘Muslim Zion’), took the former stance. As a result, while the USSR lavished aid on India and Afghanistan, it never heaped scorn on Karachi (later Islamabad after 1967) as a ‘reactionary’ government, much less a ‘Punjabi dictatorship’, ‘military corporation’, or the ‘biggest political mistake of the twentieth century’, as later Soviet critics of Pakistan

\textsuperscript{99} Davydov literally devoted a decade, the best years of his career, to these questions. See A.D. Davydov, \textit{Razvitie kapitalisticheskikh otmoshenii v zemledelii Afganistana} (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo vostochnoi literature, 1962); \textit{Agrarnyj stroi Afganistana: osnovnye etapy razvitija} (Moscow: Nauka, 1967); \textit{Afganskaja derevniia. Sel’skaja obshchina I rassloenie krest’ianstva} (Moscow: Nauka, 1969).
would describe Pakistan.¹⁰⁰

Still, after 1958 – the year of the first military coup in Pakistan’s history – events within the Soviet area studies establishment took on a conspiratorial bent. After the sixty-year-old Reišner died under mysterious circumstances in Tajikistan that year, one of his students, the forty-year-old Iuriï Gankovskiï,¹⁰¹ took over his mentor’s chair.¹⁰² Gankovskiï cemented his reputation as one of the leading lights of Soviet Orientology with an impressive political and economic history of the Durrani Empire in the year of his appointment before turning to focus on the history of Pakistan for the remainder of his career.¹⁰³ Yet the Pashtunists at MGIMO and, later, the KGB, would begin to harbor doubts about Gankovskiï’s loyalty. Not that any one professor bore great influence on foreign policy at this point: after Pakistan permitted the launch of Gary Powers’ U-2 spy plane from Peshawar in 1960, USSR-Pakistan relations plummeted to their nadir, one reason why the Kremlin was keen to supply India with arms in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War en route to becoming New Delhi’s major weapons supplier. Still, partly as a result of IV AN SSSR’s and the MO’s orientation, Moscow saw the region in terms of an India-Pakistan dynamic, rather than a Punjabi-Pashtun one. When Gankovskiï became the chair of a newly-formed ‘Friends of Pakistan’ association in 1966, funded by Islamabad, some had their doubts as to the propriety of the country’s leading regional expert leaning so

¹⁰⁰Author Interview, Vasiliï Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 November 2012.
¹⁰¹Gankovskiï remains a perplexing personality; born in 1921 in Kharkov, he went on to serve in the Red Army before being sentenced unjustly to seven years in a GULAG camp in Kazakhstan for intervening to prevent the execution of a man in his unit accused of a political crime. Following his release in 1954 and his rehabilitation two years later, he went on immediately to study at IV AN SSSR, where he learned Persian and Urdu and quickly established himself as one of the top Orientologists of his generation.
¹⁰²Author Interview, Vasiliï Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 November 2012.
openly towards Rawalpindi. 104 ‘If you want to ask me as someone from the KGB’, said Vasili Krvstov, ‘factually, [the Friends of Pakistan Society] was [Pakistan’s] secret service. (bylo ikh priamaia agentura). 105

Ironically, if the Indo-Pakistani labyrinth had created questions for one niche of the Soviet foreign policy apparatus, it created opportunities for others. In the late 1950s and 1960s Party leaders worked overtime ‘to present Tashkent as an important international center […] a “model” Asian city and an example of how socialism could be adapted beyond its original European roots to assist “less developed” or even “backward” societies in advancing out of poverty and colonialism. 106 Soon, Soviet Central Asia was making a global role for itself, but not within circumstances of its own choosing. If Tajikistan had stood ‘at the gates of Hindustan’ in 1925, forty-one years later (the year of the 10-11 January 1966, Tashkent Declaration) Tashkent had become a ‘Gate to Asia’ (Khrushchëv) where the Indo-Pakistani war could be settled within the framework of the UN with the USSR as a player in the regional concert. 107 This tension became clear not only in policy but also on the level of ideas. When an earthquake flattened the Uzbek capital months after the Indo-Pakistani negotiations, the reconstruction of Tashkent offered opportunities to re-imagine Central Asia as a template for Third World urban development. Between 1967 and 1972, Baku, Alma-Ata, Frunze, and Tashkent all hosted junkets on international development, offering Soviet academics and intellectuals the

104 V.V. Krvstov, Introduction to V.V. Basov, National’noe I plemennoe v Afganistane. K ponimaniu nevoennykh istokov afganskogo krizisa, ed. V.V. Krvstov (Moscow: NIF FSKN Rossii, 2011), 9.
105 Author Interview, Vasili Krvstov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 November 2012.
chance to meet with foreign representatives to discuss the relevance of the Central Asian experience to the Third World.\textsuperscript{108}

And yet the elephant in the room, present since the 1920s, had not disappeared. Many of the solutions that Central Asian history actually furnished for economic development, like the need for comprehensive land reform, depended on the existence of a Communist political monopoly. But Central Asia no longer looked out onto a world of shattering empires. Its world was now one of hundreds of independent nation-states, most of whose sovereignty and legitimacy the Soviet Union respected. There may have been generic lessons to drawn from the Central Asia’s experience of, for example, water management or demographics, for instance; but China, the United States, or international institutions could also furnish technocratic best practices. Did one really need socialism to have an intelligent education, agricultural, or industrial policy? The USSR’s basic acceptance of the internationalist order, and the attempt to turn Tashkent and Central Asia writ large into a symbol for the USSR’s internationalist ambitions, rendered the revolutionary vision that Central Asia formerly represented impotent. By the 1970s, one could argue that the most creative Soviet thinking on the region was coming not from the Frunze conference with which this chapter began, but from the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs: in the early 1970s, Soviet diplomats managed to reach a major strategic agreement with India in 1971 while also managing good relations with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s Pakistan, a balancing act that no government in Moscow has managed to achieve since.

The apparent achievement in South Asia, however, masked the agonizing problem

\textsuperscript{108} Friedman, ‘Reviving Revolution’, 238.
of the Sino-Soviet relationship. Since the late 1950s, Mao had positioned China as the legitimate socialist power, offering a vision of development that criticized the Soviet Union from the Left.¹⁰⁹ Instead of following the Soviet model of bureaucratic socialism, during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the Mao sent his bureaucrats and administrators down to the countryside for ‘re-education’ in factories and the fields. This heady mix of anti-intellectualism and a demonic faith in the peasantry led to disaster for the Chinese people, but at the time it represented a heady alternative to Soviet bureaucratic socialism. The Maoist challenge threatened to undermine Soviet ideological hegemony in the Third World. Leaders like Siad Barre of Somalia and Enver Hoxha in Albania supported Mao, not Brezhnev, as the legitimate inheritor of the Marxist tradition. Even in those countries where the Left was out of power – Iran or Afghanistan, for instance – the Sino-Soviet Split fractured Communist movements into Soviet and Maoist wings. Rather than focusing its energies on toppling despots like the Shah or Daoud, the Left in such countries frequently indulged in unproductive infighting about whether the USSR, the PRC, or the relative pipsqueak Albania represented ‘authentic’ anti-imperialist socialism.¹¹⁰

In any event, ideology had foreign policy consequences for Mao and Zhou. As early as the late 1950s, even China (which was internationally isolated and not a member of the United Nations until 1971) began to reach out to Third World countries where the

---


USSR had a vested interest, like Egypt and Algeria, to seek bilateral recognition. Over the winter of 1963-1964, Zhou made a major foreign policy trip to ten African countries, Burma, and Pakistan, presenting China as an alternative source of foreign aid for newly-independent Asian and African governments. Soon, Beijing developed a close relationship with Islamabad and was building a major railway project in Tanzania to connect copper-rich Zambia with the Indian Ocean port of Dar es Salaam. By the late 1960s, the USSR found itself having to choose between two trajectories: ‘either continue the path of peaceful coexistence and hope to win the battle with capitalism through economic competition both within the Soviet Union itself and through the example of its protégés in the developing world or reinforce its rear against the Chinese challenge, risking relations with the West in order to promote a more militant brand of revolution.’ From the point of view of the Soviet area studies complex, there was, of course, a third option. Why not discredit the Chinese not by outflanking them on the Left but, so to speak, on the West – by demonstrating that Mao’s so-called Communist China was an atavistic return to Chinese ‘Asiatic’ despotism, foreign to Africans and non-Chinese Asians? By the early 1960s scholars had resurrected the idea of an ‘Asiatic mode of production’, both to criticize the PRC as well as to understand Asian and African societies on more sophisticated terms than the five-stage model allowed.

114 Friedman, 143.
Still, this move demanded exquisite intellectual balance. How was it that only *China* was doomed to permanent despotism while the rest of the Third World was free to move, if haltingly, towards socialism? Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Soviet Sinologists like Vasil’ev and economists like Ivan Ivanov attempted to answer this question, reforging five-stage theory into new concepts.\(^\text{115}\) Some, like Vasil’ev, began to insist that transformations in superstructure – governance and the state – drove changes in economic structure, and not the other way around: precisely *because* China had such an enduring tradition of a centralized state and bureaucracy, even Mao’s transformations could not alter the enduring structure of a reactionary Chinese despot ruling over a subdued peasantry.\(^\text{116}\) But perhaps the best example of the conceptual shifts of the 1960s was *mnogoukladnost* (‘multi-structurality’). The old Stalinist five-stage consensus had classified societies based on their mode of production. As Stalin asserted in a 1926 essay, ‘in the primitive-communal system exists one mode of production, in slavery exists another mode of production, in feudalism a third mode of production.’\(^\text{117}\) But the truth was more complicated. ‘Even during the Stalin era’, writes Jerry Hough,

\begin{quote}

scholars recognized that societies could be complex in periods of transition. Capitalist modes of production began developing in feudal society well before they led to the revolution that brought the bourgeoisie to power. After the bourgeois revolution, remnants of the feudal system continued to exist for a long time. This means that a society could have several modes of production: the dominant one that defined the character of society and one or two subordinate ones associated with a rising or declining class.\(^\text{118}\)
\end{quote}

These subordinate modes of production and the social structures they produced

\(^{115}\) Ivan Ivanov (1934-2012) was a Soviet economist and policymaker who specialized in problems of foreign trade.


\(^{117}\) I.V. Stalin, ‘O dialekticheskom i istoricheskom materializme’, in *Voprosy leninizma* (Moscow: 1926), vol. 11.

became known as *uklady* (structures). Lenin had written in 1918 of Soviet Russia as a ‘multi-structural’ (*mnogoukladnyi*) society that featured nomadic, private capitalist, and state capitalist economies existing side by side, but since then few had written about Africa or Asian countries – much less capitalist societies – as ‘multi-structural’. Only starting in the mid-1950s did scholars like Rostislav Ul’ianovskii begin to use the concept in works both on Russian history as well as on the Third World.\(^{119}\) Hence why otherwise hardline socialists felt comfortable with providing aid to Pakistan, beyond just pragmatic geopolitics: one could accept the coexistence of feudal relations in Punjab with tribal societies in the NWFP as part of a gradual process of national development; the arc of the economic universe was long, so to speak, but it bended towards socialism. As a seminal 1962 article by R. Mirskiĭ in IMEMO’s top journal argued,

> the class structures of society in the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are extraordinarily complex, for they bear the imprint of different epochs … many of these countries did not have a developed slaveholding system or a developed feudal system, let alone a high degree of development of capitalist relationships … As a result, socioeconomic relationships that are different in their historical significance and essence formed layer upon layer on each other, ‘coexisting’ together for centuries and only slowly being subjected to change.\(^{120}\)

Prudence demanded not reckless revolution (whether in the form of Maoism or Pashtun nationalism), but rather competent management of a Third World which would eventually tilt towards a Soviet-aligned Left. Leaders like Daoud in Afghanistan or Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia may not have been true socialists themselves, but if the USSR held out and supported these ‘national democrats’, it could grind down Washington and China

---


in the Third World.

One plausible reading of this new framework, however, portended a sea change in the Soviet position on Third World development. If African and Asian societies were indeed multi-structural and lacked a leading substructure, it was nearly impossible to determine if and when they were ready for revolution. This claim already already tested the orthodoxy of men like Ul’ianovskiĭ. By the 1970s, Levkovskiĭ went even further. After writing and editing a series of books in the 1970s that emphasized the multiple economies of developing countries (small-scale local business, state capital investments, foreign capital investments, etc.), Levkovskiĭ implied ‘that a society without a dominant class could not have a government that was subordinated to a dominant class.’\textsuperscript{121} In other words, if one really believed that countries like Afghanistan, Egypt, or Chile were indeed composed of many heterogenous socio-economic groups existing side-by-side, there was no legitimate way to midwife a workers’ and peasants’ government into the Third World. The problem was less that any such government would be a minority, and more that it could not ‘objectively’ represent a vanguard party.

Far from an isolated intellectual moment, this turn from away from a belief in linear progress was a key motif of the period. Even at the time, Soviet intellectuals characterized the age as one not of ‘stagnation’ (a term first popularized in the late 1980s) but of ‘timelessness’ (bezvremen’e). ‘The Stalinist past’, Anna Fishzon writes,

\begin{quote}
was unspeakable and the future postponed or foreclosed. In response to this limited horizon – the loss of narrative coherence and futurity, the never-to-arrive communist promise -- an eternal present rich in possibility and feeling was depicted and brought into being [...] providing a revitalizing time and space where one could desire again.\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{121} Hough, \textit{The Struggle for the Third World}, 59.
\textsuperscript{122} Anna Fishzon, ‘Re-Animating Stagnation: The Magical Times and Spaces of Late-Soviet Children’s Culture’, Conference Paper, ‘Reconsidering Stagnation’ Workshop, April 2012, paper available upon
Indeed, the period was an age of reconfigurations of time and space. The space program had launched the first space station and sent probes to Mars and Venus before the United States, demonstrating the ability of the socialist system to imagine a future beyond the bounds of the planet Earth. Things had never been more dynamic or interesting in the social sciences, too. In 1975, for example, the Soviet political scientist Vladislav Tikhomirov founded PNILSAMO (*Problemnaia nauchno-isleuvodatel’skaia laboratorii sistennogo analiza mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii*, the Scientific-Research Laboratory for the Systems Analysis of International Relations, or *Problemka* for short), a conflict studies center. There, scholars combined cybernetics and computer modeling to identify, analyze, and ‘manage’ risk across the world in a more nuanced way than either multi-structurality project, or orthodox Marxism-Leninism allowed. By modeling societies as complex systems (borrowing tools and concepts from thermodynamics and chaos theory), they argued, one might better manage change.123 As one scholar said in a 2006 interview:

There are concepts of paradigmatic evolution of the sciences (*nauka*) as a whole. The sciences went through three stages: the mechanical, the energetic, the informatic, and now they are at the stage of the organizational paradigm. Marxism was a mechanical stage (a theoretical approach to capitalist reality [*real nosti*]. Until that time there was on the whole a universal philosophical approach – the philosophy of history. But now we are witnessing the integration of scientific knowledge and the initiative in this process belongs to the natural rather than the social sciences. The mechanical approach is that of mechanics, the energetic approach that of thermodynamics (synergetics, for example), the informatic approach that of cybernetics. But the reconciliation of the systems approach is the realization of the organizational paradigm. As long as the next paradigm isn’t there yet, things remain optimistic.124

Abstruse it was, but this new cybernetics methodology led to interesting political

---

science work. In 1979, for example, *Problemka* used this kind of complex systems analysis to gauge whether the new regime in Tehran was likely to collapse, and whether the USSR should provoke the new ‘regime of mullahs’ on account of its repression of Tudeh, while a year later *Problemka* conducted similar exercises to predict the actions of European states at the CSCE’s Madrid Conference.

Still, this cybernetic turn in the social sciences, like the multi-structurality project, failed to provide any *linear* narrative to the direction of political transition. It was almost impossible to model the future direction of complex political events on computers. Hence, cybernetics failed to create any kind of intellectual hegemony within how Soviet élites, much less global élites, globally saw the world. Soviet scholars vented their jealousy of how American political science’s ‘endless stream of publications is aimed at the support of of a lattice [of scientific coordinates], the production of a picture of the world that they constructed but we internalized. It’s only proceeding from this picture of the world that we make our own decisions. And if you drop out from this picture, then it turns out, as a rule, that you’re in a difficult position: they don’t even perceive you.’

The initial thrill of the 1970s quickly proved hollow. As the Russian cultural historian Andrei Shchebrenok has written, a sallow tone suffuses the film and photography, a fact that the production standards of Soviet film studios only partly explains. Films from the decade seem to take place predominantly during drizzly autumns, and even when films explicitly take place in the early part of the season, such as in *Vacation in September* (*Otpusk v sentiabre*), it rains incessantly: this is a different

---

125 Khrustaliev, ‘Dve vetvi TMO v Rossii.’
world from the perpetual sunniness of Stalinist cinema.127 Shchebernok’s analysis of the 1983 film, *Flights In Dreams and Into Reality (Polyoty vo sne i naivu)*, eloquently captures the zeitgeist. In the film, the middle-aged Oleg comes to his office expecting that his co-workers will congratulate him on his birthday. But no one at his office has remembered the birthday or even seems to care.128 After appealing to his office manager that a good socialist manager should care for his workers, Oleg looks out the window into the streets of the city under the slate autumn sky. He stares upon a child on roller skates who skates aimlessly in circles, perpetually moving but never breaking out of the repetitive cycle. The scene cuts to Oleg speeding down the street in his car, having told his coworkers he needs to retrieve his mother from the train station to celebrate his birthday with her, but he is actually en route to a rendezvous with a prostitute in order to mark the occasion. Time still passes, but this is a society in which it has become near-impossible to break out of the sense of circularity and timelessness.

This sense of ‘timelessness’ (*bezvremen’e*) suffused Soviet development thought. The emergence of *mnogoukladnost*’ and conflict management at Soviet institutes during this period testified to the increasing sophistication of the social sciences. But the search for nuance and scientific objectivity itself testified to a loss of confidence in ‘objective’ stages of history down which the Soviet Union had an special obligation to guide other countries. This lack of faith in objective stages of history afforded development theorists and area studies experts rich speculations on how, for example, African or Asian societies were developing. Still, new conceptual frameworks suggested that developing societies

---

were, like Oleg in *Flights From Dreams and Reality*, stuck in time – characterized by ‘sub-structures’ and classes, yet never moving to socialism or communism.

It is with this context in mind that one can better understand why critics attacked proponents of multi-structurality. Nodari Simonia, a colleague of Levkovskii’s at IV AN SSSR, criticized his friend for focusing too much on the *existence* of multi-structurality in developing societies rather than on the *direction* of change in multi-structural societies. Writing in 1975, Simonia observed that

only the singling out of the leading trend will provide the key to understanding the internal contents of the socioeconomic and political development of this or that liberated country and make it possible to group them scientifically by corresponding types and variants.\(^ {129}\)

Sergei Trapeznikov, the head of the Science Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU at the time, was even harsher. He attacked multi-structurality in a 1972 article, referring to ‘apologists of capitalism’ who were seeking to undermine the Marxist concept of stages of history.\(^ {130}\) One year later, Rostislav Ul’ianovskii, now one of the deputy heads for the Third World in the MO CC CPSU, wrote an article under a pseudonym, attacking Levkovskii ‘with the charge that he was replacing the concept of class with that of substructure.’\(^ {131}\) He was right.

Given the attacks on established scholars like Levkovskii, it should come as no surprise that rising stars like Simonia were subject to criticism, too.\(^ {132}\) Born in Tbilisi in

---

130 Sergei Trapeznikov, ‘Sovetskaia istoricheskaia nauka i perspektivy ee razvitiiia’, *Kommunist* 11 (July 1973), 83.
1932, Simonia had come in the 1950s to Moscow, where he enjoyed a steady rise as a Southeast Asianist at IV AN SSSR.\(^\text{133}\) But in 1975, just as Simonia was about to defend his *doctor nauk* dissertation, Party élites intervened.\(^\text{134}\) Karen Brutents, then the Deputy of MO CC CPSU, which had often employed Simonia and other academics at IV AN SSSR to write reports on the Third World, called Simonia into his office. In a professorial atmosphere ‘over tea and *bubliks*’, Brutents demanded that Simonia cut eleven pages of nonconformist thought from his dissertation of approximately 380 pages and informed him that his viva would be closed to the public – an unusual step.\(^\text{135}\) Ideology mattered, in other words, but élites could manage disputes informally.

What made the situation more dangerous for young academics was less often ideology, however, than the way it mixed with the petty politics and jealousy endemic to not only Soviet faculty lounges. After agreeing to Brutents’ cuts and passing the closed viva, Simonia prepared to publish the *doktor nauk* dissertation as a book, the logical next step in his career. But Rostislav Ul’ianovskii attacked Simonia, publishing an eighty-page single-spaced destruction of the dissertation in the prestigious journal *Novaia i Noveishaia istoriia (Modern and Contemporary History)*. Part of the reason for Ul’ianovskii’s aggressive behavior may have had to do with his resentment of ‘out of touch’ academics opining on development theory, as the precocious Simonia had attempted to do before Brutents preventing him from hanging himself with his own rope. But Ul’ianovskii’s intellectual insecurity also stemmed from a long-standing rivalry with

\(^{133}\) N.A. Simonia, *Naselenie kitaiskoĭ natsional’nosti v stranakh iugo-vostochnoi Azii* (Moscow, 1959); Ibid., *Burzhuaziia i formirovanie natsii v Indoneziii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964).

\(^{134}\) The dissertation in question became *Strany Vostoka: puti razvitiia.*

\(^{135}\) *Bubliks* are sweet, dense baked goods often eaten with coffee or tea in Russia, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe.
Bobojon Ghafurov, who had pushed Ul’ianovskii out of IV AN SSSR in an administrative power play years earlier. Ruining the career of one of Ghafurov’s prodigies was one way to exact revenge. Simoniiia was understandable crushed after having had his first major work obliterated in the pages of one of the country’s top journals by a leading figure. But more important than his self-esteem was whether it would be possible for him to find a job at all given the politics involved. ‘I sat around the kitchen with my wife and discussed how we would survive if I was kicked out of my work’, Simoniiia later recalled.

But the crafty Ghafurov managed to broker a deal. One of Ul’ianovskii’s colleagues, Sergeï Trapeznikov, was intellectually insecure and longed for the title of akademik (the highest title within the Soviet academic system) in the Division of History of AN SSSR. Ghafurov happened to hold crucial voting rights on the nominating committee for that sub-faculty. Both sides reached a deal: ease off on Simoniiia, and Trapeznikov could have his title. Simoniiia went on to a brilliant career that peaked with his tenure as the rector of IMEMO. Still, the fact that so much seemed to depend on this mix of ideology and arbitrary antagonism gave him cause to reflect years later. ‘I don’t think’, he said,

that Soviet power even had ‘ideological patrons’ [during the Brezhnev period]. In the 1970s, they couldn’t – and they didn’t even want to, it seems – organize a public hounding of some poor soul in such a way as was common under Stalin. Within the upper echelon of Party leadership there existed a pluralism of opinions, but the orthodox were relatively successful at suppressing progressive opinions within the upper reaches of the Party.

Breakdown

136 ‘Moï marksizm – eto ne marksizm sovetskikh uchebnikov …’
137 Ibid.
138 ‘Moï marksizm – eto ne marksizm sovetskikh uchebnikov …’
It bears recalling, of course, that men like Brutents, Ul’ianovskii, or Trapeznikov valued did not value orthodoxy for orthodoxy’s sake. They just could not trust any framework treating the Third World as a chaotic jigsaw of states as the paradigm through which the Soviet Union might win the Cold War. Societies might be moving from one set of economic relations to another, true. But as a superpower with global ambitions, Moscow had to make policy choices. And the basic claim of the multi-structurality theorists – that the developing world was complicated, neither capitalist nor socialist but just … complicated – was nigh-useless when it came to picking allies.

Hence, at the same time as the debates over multi-structurality, CPSU élites promoted an alternative framework of ‘countries of socialist orientation’ (strany sotsialisticheskoi orientatsii); the term first appeared at the 24th CPSU Party Congress in 1971 and soon spread in scholarly literature.\(^{139}\) The new concept smacked of a more policy-relevant reworking of multi-structurality: even if the Third World was not developing in the way five-stage theory had predicted, the USSR still had both the moral obligation and a strategic rationale for pursuing closer ties with those countries already in ‘close cooperation with the world socialist system and the unification of all “patriotic, anti-imperialist forces”, in particular in the form of cooperation between communists and so-called “national democrats.”\(^{140}\) This meant alliances with a smaller, select group of countries – South Yemen, Cambodia, Angola, the People’s Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Somalia (until 1977), Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan.

This new approach, however, led Moscow down the road of supporting morally

\(^{139}\) Friedman, ‘Reviving Revolution’, 271-272.
\(^{140}\) Ibid., 272.
and, soon, financially bankrupt tinpot dictatorships. Many of the practices that ‘national democrats’ and their Soviet patrons endorsed in the early 1970s led to disaster. Consider some of the policies championed at a 1972 conference at Patrice Lumumba University for African and Asian graduate students about to return home. One author celebrated Tanzania’s 1967 Arusha Declaration as the model for developing countries: ‘all foreign banks, large companies and firms, insurance societies, as well as an entire range of industrial enterprises were nationalized.’

Egypt was another model, since there ‘85 percent of the industrial potential and 30 percent of agricultural production were concentrated in the public sector.’ A private sector employed a million people, was subordinated to the government. The Egyptian economy prospered without ‘capitalist exploitation’, since Soviet-built enterprises like the Helwan Metallurgical Complex, transferred to the Egyptian government upon completion, employed tens of thousands of Egyptian workers.

These proposals gave way to the worst years of economic performance in history for many Third World countries. In Tanzania, the principles of ujama promulgated by Nyerere improved some social indicators, but ‘African socialism’ foundered on the mid-1970s commodities collapse, lack of foreign investment, and corruption. In Egypt, Anwar Sadat would begin to move away from Soviet-style policies by 1973-1975, moving under his intifah (‘openness’) policy to liberalize the economy, accept loans from the World Bank and IMF, and accept more American military aid than any other country in the world: hardly a success story. By the late 1970s, the USSR resembled nothing more than

142 Ibid., 136.
143 Ibid., 137-138.
a giant petroleum company that sold oil and gas to capitalists in order to subsidize
Yemenis, Poles, Czechs, Afghans, and Vietnamese – even providing some of them with a
higher standard of living than what Soviet citizens enjoyed. The USSR was exporting
energy, security, and capital from its Petro-core, but why?

As Karen Brutents writes, by the late 1970s the problem may have had less to do
with conceptual clarity than the fact that Soviet leadership was asleep at the wheel – often
literally so. Even if IV AN SSSR’s and other institutions’ scholars were producing
insightful work on the politics of Pashtunistan or Angolan decolonization, the Politburo
was too old, too stupid, and too beholden to the Soviet military-industrial complex to
adopt sensible policies. While the post-1957 minutes of the International Section remain
closed to researchers, Brutents cites an April 27, 1978 meeting that illustrates his point.
At the meeting, formally devoted to discussing American Secretary of State Cyrus
Vance’s recent visit to Moscow, top decision-makers like Mikhail Suslov and Dmitrii
Ustinov had nothing substantial to say, only congratulating Brezhnev on his success at the
meeting.144 Representatives of the military-industrial complex like Ustinov did not
understand that some conflicts required a political, and not a military, solution.

Brutents’ hopes were lifted in the summer of 1983, when Iuriǐ Andropov invited
him to prepare a memorandum on the USSR’s strategy for the Third World. Brutents
threw himself into the task and made several suggestions, like a special Politburo
commission on the Third World, and a major summit between socialist countries to agree
on a ‘division of labor’ in Third World foreign policy. Brutents hurried to finish the report
before Andropov left Moscow for the Crimea for his end-of-summer vacation, passing it

144 Karen Brutents, Tridsat’let na staroi ploschadi (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1998), 305.
on just in time. Within only a few weeks, thought Brutents, when he visited the General Secretary in the Crimea, he could finally reform the USSR’s Third World policy. When Brutents did visit Andropov, however, the former KGB chief had not only not read the report, but had also forgotten that he had requested it in the first place. Andropov, who had already undergone renal failure that previous winter, entered the Central Clinical Hospital in suburban Moscow on a permanent basis shortly after his vacation and died in February of the following year. Then man who succeeded him, Konstantin Chernenko, was permanently confined to a bed at the Central Clinical Hospital, too, by the end of that summer, before his own demise in March 1985.

This breakdown in communication, trust, and a shared intellectual vocabulary between institutions like IV AN SSSR, the International Department, and the Politburo paved the way for the invasion of Afghanistan. None of the leading Soviet scholars of Afghanistan, like Nikolaï Dvoriankov (who died in the summer of 1979), Gankovskii, or Davydov had indulged in the abstruseness of multi-structurality to the extent of a Levkovskii, but their voices were nonetheless marginalized during the build-up to the invasion. As the scholar Viktor Korgun, then a graduate student at IV AN SSSR, recalls, in the summer of 1979, the MO requested that he and several other Afghanistan experts at IV AN SSSR outline possible positive and negative outcomes if the USSR intervened in Afghanistan.145 The group offered four possible positive results and sixteen negative ones. Once the report had been submitted, however, none of the academics ever heard back from the MO. After more than forty years of investment into expert cadre comprised of people like Korgun, the Soviet policy-making apparatus willfully chose to ignore the

145 Author Interview, Viktor Korgun, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 October 2012.
expert knowledge on hand in IV AN SSSR, no more than a fifteen-minute walk from the Central Committee buildings around Staraia Square. The one figure at IV AN SSSR with the combination of personal prestige and deep knowledge of Central Asia who could have perhaps moderated or halted an intervention, Ghafurov, had died in 1977, leaving the area studies community without strong leadership.  

By the crucial days of the decision to invade, in the autumn of 1979, no one consulted the Soviet Afghan Studies community. Anna Matveeva, then a graduate student studying under the philologist Grigorii Girs, recalled IV AN SSSR faculty meetings at the time ‘where it became clear that no one really knew what was going on.’ But at the same time, she emphasizes, neither the Politburo nor the International Committee wanted advice. Simoniia was even more critical. ‘In all’, he said in a 1989 interview, ‘I think among our academicians and specialists not more than five or six persons understood what had really happened at the time.’ The scholars at IV AN SSSR had devoted careers to theorizing about political transition, Simoniia said, but they had misjudged the situation in Kabul. During an IV AN SSSR faculty meeting in early 1980 that several Central Committee members attended, Simoniia insisted that he had

used this occasion of our Party meeting at the Institute where five hundred people were in attendance to speak out against what had happened. I had often argued when we spoke and described theoretical modes of development in traditional or semi-traditional countries that these are often adventurous attempts to seize power which reflect superficial and not substantial political movements. [...] I argued that the seizure of power in Afghanistan was not a substantial moment. Power had been seized at a superficial level. I said what had happened in Afghanistan was not a true revolutionary regime based upon a deep social movement.

Looking back, Simoniia reflects, there were two crucial problems that led to the

---

146 Author Interview, Mamadsho Davlatov, Khujand, Tajikistan, 6 September 2012.
147 Author Interview, Anna Matveeva, London, United Kingdom, 18 April 2012.
148 Lawrence Lifschultz, Interview with Nodari Simoniia, Economic and Political Weekly, 23-30 December 1989, Arthur Paul Collection, University of Nebraska-Omaha.
intervention. One, he said, was the opaque nature of the decision to invade made by ‘the General Secretary and two or three members of the Politburo.’ Those in the Politburo, Simoniaia argued, erred in thinking that ‘whenever a particular leader anywhere said anything positive about our country, then we classified him as our friend and perhaps even called him ‘progressive.’” In doing so, these elites hollowed out the meaning of socialism. ‘What kind of ‘revolutionary democrat’ is a man who kills thousands of his own people every year and introduces a totalitarian regime?”, Simoniaia asks.

It is not our job to praise this type of leader or that type of regime merely because they are praising the Soviet Union. This idea was a foolish idea. It had nothing to do with socialism.

But the academics also bore responsibility. The turn towards labeling ‘countries of socialist orientation’ had, Simoniaia offers, had led to catastrophe:

The impression [created by the concept] among the Soviet people as a whole was that there is a ‘world revolution’ going on and today two or three additional countries have joined the socialist camp. [...] This year a few countries have joined our camp and in coming years more and more countries will join.

But this was wishful thinking. As early as 1968, Simoniaia underscores, he had argued that ‘in the majority of countries normal capitalist development was occurring and in most instances it was proceeding through the earliest stages of this form of development.”

But scholars at IV AN SSSR insisted that socialism really was on the upswing. Viewed through this lens, Simoniaia ruefully recalls, events in Afghanistan in 1978 looked like a socialist revolution, not a coup. ‘Everyone’, he remembers,

had an idea that in three days everything will be solved. Some people thought it will be not three days but three months. Then, one year. And then, as two or three years passed and more of the dead returned to their families, everything understood that something difficult was happening in Afghanistan.

149 Simoniaia was referring to his Ob osobennostiakh natsional’no-osvoboditel’nykh revoliutsii (Moscow: Nauka, 1968).
The failure of Soviet Afghan Studies to prevent an intervention now took on absurd dimensions. One anecdote of Viktor Korgun’s ties together many of these threads here.\textsuperscript{150} In 1983, Gankovskii called his pupil into his office, where he informed Korgun that the Central Committee had sent him a request to conduct scenario modeling (similar to the exercises at PNLSAMO) on the situation in Iran: if Khomeini were assassinated or overthrown in a coup, what would happen? Korgun accepted the assignment, but soon a new idea occurred to him. He went to the offices of Evgenii Primakov, Ghafurov’s successor as the Director of IV AN SSSR, asking if he could scrap the Iran project and instead conduct a cybernetics exercise on the possible consequences of a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Primakov was outraged and called in Gankovskii, who reprimanded Korgun and noted that it would be unfortunate if the career of such a bright, promising young scholar were to be derailed due to political misjudgment. After decades of training professors, graduate students, and funding research – to say nothing of the cybernetic phantasmagoria of PNLSAMO – Soviet development thought found itself at a political dead end.

Anna Matveeva, meanwhile, was assigned to a propaganda unit during the latter half of her first year at IV AN SSSR in the spring of 1980. ‘You very quickly got a sense that they had no idea what they were doing’, she observes.

\textit{It was as if these people did not understand the fact that 95 percent of people in Afghanistan were illiterate, and so there was no point in producing all of this printed material that they were going to distribute to the population.}\textsuperscript{151}

Matveeva nonetheless complied with producing the Pashto-language propaganda materials that her supervisors requested, but it became clear to her that the Americans and

\textsuperscript{150} Author Interview, Viktor Korgun, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 October 2012.
\textsuperscript{151} Author Interview, Anna Matveeva, London, United Kingdom, 18 April 2012.
Pakistanis understood the media situation in Afghanistan far better than they did; one effective American-produced cartoon which then impressed the propaganda unit depicted Brezhnev as a kangaroo with Babrak Karmal riding inside of the General Secretary’s pouch. The Soviet radio producers remained bounded by the rules of Marxist-Leninist authoritative discourse, while the Americans manipulated Afghan public opinion through both form and content. ‘The Americans had this tactic’, she recalls,
of playing the standard world news on the radio for several minutes, and everyone would gather around and listen. Only after several minutes would the American radio pause completely, go completely silent for ten or fifteen seconds, so that everyone would think there had been an attack – and then they would launch the most aggressive propaganda material.

As Matveeva transitioned to part-time graduate studies by the mid-1980s, more substantial opportunities for contributing to the war effort emerged. While pursuing her kandidat nauk degree half-time, she started a job at Progress Publishing House (Izdatel’stvo ‘Progress’), where she worked with teams of Afghans to translate Soviet literature into Dari and Pashto. Matveeva worked beside an Afghan poet who was supposed to back-translate Engels from Russian into his own native Pashto. ‘He barely acknowledged me since I was a woman, of course’, says Matveeva. But when the time came to translate Engels’ 1884 The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, which argues that the institution of the family only emerged after a period of matrilineal clans (and widespread extramarital sex), the poet refused to translate such ‘pornography’. He insisted the text was a forgery since no thinker on the level of Engels could have written such smut. The editors at Progress called in scholars from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism to haul in the original German-language primary sources. Even faced with this evidence, however, the poet insisted that the materials were forged. Only after
scrambling the few other graduate Soviet graduate students scholars who knew Pashto could the project move along.

While Korgun and Matveeva despaired, intellectuals elsewhere in the establishment sought to change the course of events. As Vasiliĭ Kravtsov, a Pashto language specialist and a KGB trainer for agents headed to Afghanistan, recalls, he and other agents in the Lubyanka realized that with Gankovskii and Primakov occupying top positions at IV AN SSSR and figures like Ul’ianovskii and Genrikh Poliakov in the CC CPSU protecting them, any Soviet support for national reconciliation, and Pashtun nationalism as a force against the Pakistani-sponsored *jihad* was impossible. But by 1987, however, they found their opportunity: KGB operatives confirmed that Gankovskii had been leaking documents (specifically the logistics of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan) to Pakistani informants. The Lubyanka located Gankovskii in a larger circle of intrigue. The Pakistani civilians who had received the files from Gankovskii had handed them over to the ISI, which then had passed them on to *mujahedden* commanders. Once KGB agents in the field captured and interrogated *mujahedden* commanders, they possessed evidence that one of the country’s top scholars was leaking classified military information. Because of Gankovskii’s patrons in the MO, prosecuting him for treason was not feasible. Still, the KGB secured Gankovskii’s removal from the Directorship of the Institute for the Near and Middle East at IV AN SSSR.

But as the leaked documents suggested, by this point, Moscow’s primary concern had shifted away from how to enter Afghanistan to how to leave it. At the same time that the KGB ousted Gankovskii, Afghanistan experts like Matveeva finally began to perform

---

152 Author Interview, Vasiliĭ Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 November 2012.
the sort of analysis that Korgun had demanded in 1983 – but only after thousands of Soviet, and hundreds of thousands of Afghan, deaths. Following her work at Progress, Matveeva obtained a job at Problemka. ‘[Problemka was] interested in me’, she recalls, because that was the time of Soviet withdrawal, and Pakistan, and the Northwest Frontier. And they were supposed to be doing some kind of modeling of what was going to happen: scenario planning, some kind of negotiation process around that area. So I was taken because of that.

Finally, the methodological innovations were brought to bear on serious policy problems.

At that time people started to learn what the West was doing, and it came out that the Americans were doing these kinds of things: systems analysis, content analysis, event analysis. Analyzing multiple pieces of information. I was one of the few people who could read English fluent and quickly, and write up summaries. It was not rocket science – you were given some information, or find it yourself, and write it up. There were some discussions but it was learning by doing. It was all modeled on American thinking – at that time it all seemed to be cutting edge. We were writing these policy papers and short briefs for the Foreign Ministry, and they were supposed to be going to the TsK. Whether they were read or made any impact, that I don’t know. But everything had to be looking scientific. I had to act as if there was some objective knowledge out there that could be modeled scientifically.

But Soviet conflict studies was soon to fall victim to its own shortcomings. The period from 1988-1989 saw not just the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, but also the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Following limited reforms under Gorbachëv, the Regional Soviet of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast’ (an Armenian enclave inside the Azerbaijan SSR) voted on 20 February 1988 for independence and accession to the Armenian SSR. The independence vote coincided with ethnic pogroms throughout in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in January 1990, pogroms against Armenians in Baku and attempts by Azeris to tear down the Soviet-Iranian border fence prompted Moscow to declare a state of emergency and send in special MVD teams, and, later, 26,000 troops, to crush the insurrection.

What was going on in the Caucasus? Finding out the answer to that question
became Matveeva’s new job as her Afghan duties ended. ‘I was in the sector which was to deal with conflicts – there were other sectors – but my sector was conflict. The conflict inside the Soviet Union started to break out: Karabakh, definitely, the Caucasus.’ Matveeva and her colleagues turned to content analysis. ‘In Afghanistan’, she said, we [had] analyzed various events and various factors: the drug traffic, the tribal map – which tribe was where and how they were connected. In Karabakh, there was also a lot of attention to content analysis: what Armenian leaders said, what Azeri leaders were saying. Language, we could read it, it was open, etc. There was also some idea that by analyzing speech, you can get the hidden messages. What people don’t want to hide something … they’re still thinking about it. I don’t want to tell you that I’m going to invade Iraq, but if I’ve made the decision in my heart that I’m going to strike it, I may train myself in some way to express it.

Finally, the Soviet Union succeeded at deploying its talent to analyze conflict and change; the only problem was that these conflicts were now taking place within the USSR. By 1990-1991, it became clear that Soviet conflict studies had a limited future. ‘The whole thing started to unravel’, recalls Matveeva. ‘There was no money, no audience.’

The Foreign Ministry itself was in crisis. People were trying to make money … you have to have your state machine for this whole thing to make sense. If the state is totally dysfunctional, and you’re trying to run some conflict management course … well, it doesn’t make any sense, does it?

By the summer and fall of 1991, Problemka’s doors had closed and the entire logic of Soviet social sciences disappeared. ‘You are trained to be a part of this superpower foreign policy machine’, reflected Matveeva, ‘and so when it’s there no longer …’

Western social scientists soon turned to explaining the one scenario their Soviet counterparts had never contemplated: how, and why, had the Soviet system collapsed?

Concluding Thoughts

Soviet development thought had undergone an exhilarating, if in the end dismal,
journey since its origins in the 1920s, much less the days of the exhibition at the VDNKh in Frunze. Writing in 1967 to a Communist Party Research Institute in the Kyrgyz capital, M. Iangulatov, an ethnic Kyrgyz CPSU member, described his life in terms that underscored what the point of the development thought project had been at first. ‘In the pre-revolutionary years’, he wrote, ‘many of us worked for hire for landowners. A significant number of us began our working lives at a young age, doing different jobs for different private businesses.’ Life was difficult, Iangulatov recalled:

Our masters always repeated to us: ‘never forget that you have your piece of bread thanks to me. It’s me that’s feeding that to you. Without us, the wealthy ones, many of you would have long dropped dead of hunger. Look around you at how many people work for different wealthy masters – and thanks to that everyone has their piece of bread. Thank God that he built the world this way and created wealthy people.’\(^{153}\)

Within years, however, those wealthy landowners were gone, murdered, and their land seized by peasants and later collectivized. For much of Iangulatov’s early life, these experiences could be reconciled within a five-stage model of history. Further, there was no need to explain how events which had taken place within the specific context of Semirechye might repeat themselves in other parts of the globe. But the project of explaining the Russian Imperial revolutionary experience in a Marxist-Leninist paradigm turned into a different project, one of interpreting change and implementing social science interventions in the Third World. The new array of institutions, like IMEMO and IV AN SSSR, that arose in Moscow in the 1950s provided institutional space to scholars of real sophistication, as well as – particularly as regards Afghanistan – a tradition of scholarship which remains largely untranslated and unread.

\(^{153}\) M. Iangulatov, ‘Rozhdenie Kirigzskoî Avtonomnoî Oblasti’, Tsentr’nyî Gosudarstvennyî Arkhiv Politicheskoi Dokumentatsii Respubliki Kirgizii, f. 391 (Institut sotsial’no-politicheskikh issledovanii TsK KP Kyrgyzstana), op. 523 (Iangulatov Mustafâ Abdullaevich), l. 32.
But to paraphrase another letter writer to the Kyrgyz committee, the fate of Soviet
development thought proved rather more crooked than Nevskiǐ Prospect. The Soviet
social sciences complex produced reams of scholarship and granted people like Matveeva
the lusted-after prestige of ‘international work’, but it also became politicized and
problematically entwined with the Central Committee-MID-KGB apparatus it was
designed to inform in the first place. Institutional biases and cultures crystallized without
anybody stepping forward to reform, much less acknowledge, them. In some cases, as in
the alliance between Gankovskiǐ and Ul’anovskiǐ and the marginalization of Pashtun
Studies, elements of the policy apparatus suppressed entire methodological approaches.
Fatally, crucial policy decisions – namely, the invasion of Afghanistan – were made by
figures like Brezhnev, Gromyko, Suslov, and Ustinov, without consultation or advice.

Some of these features of the Soviet development thought and area studies
complex were hardly unique, of course. Western scholars today frequently observe, for
instance, that the surge in named chairs funded by Saudi donors over-emphasizes the
study of ‘Islamic’ (rather than national) and ‘Arab’ (rather than Turkish, Iranian, South
Asian, or Indonesian) history within universities. Before the American invasion of Iraq in
2003, senior policymakers in the Department of Defense not only ignored but also hid the
results of the State Department’s ‘The Future of Iraq’ study group from the Pentagon’s
own chief of post-invasion planning, Jay Garner.154 Maybe if all unhappy area studies
complexes are all unhappy in the same way.

Yet what made the Soviet iteration of this pattern unique was, as Matveeva noted,

154 The National Security Archive, ‘New State Department Releases on the ”Future of Iraq” Project’,
available online at: http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/index.htm
the way ‘objective’ expert knowledge evolved in a climate of pervasive cynicism. Asked about the differences between her work in NGOs today and her earlier career, she said:

Western NGOs and places like that … well, if you take aside people who are just there for a bureaucratic career, are full of believers. Of different degree, you know — some people are very romantic minds. Some people are more sober. But generally, this is a community who believes, people who work in USAID and DFID.

In contrast to this, the

Soviet world was purely cynical. To explain to them that there are people who are doing something, who are idealistic, for altruistic reasons, is almost impossible. Even though, when I try to explain to them why Western NGOs, or Brussels does this sort of thing, they think that I am fooling them — there must be some hidden meaning which I am missing. And that was — well, I cannot even explain some things to my mother, because of that kind of cynical pragmatism made people all the time to look for some pragmatic reason behind it. They want oil, they want this land. The idea that people can actually start wars for reasons of pure ideology – Kosovo, for example – is almost incomprehensible to people who made their careers in this system.

The failure, Matveeva suggests, was one of discourse. ‘It is a very difficult thing to explain to people’, she notes.

the Soviet system was so much based on people not believing what they were saying that the idea that people would actually believe what they were saying is almost incomprehensible.’

The problem was less that Soviet area studies experts had failed to communicate their expertise, than that the epistemic closure in the Soviet system discounted the idea of expertise itself. In a world in which policy advice had to possess secret motivations, no ‘expert’ could be trusted. The idea of expertise melted into thin air: there was only the komanda (‘team’) of those occupying crucial positions at the top of the CPSU pyramid, and everyone else. The USSR had devoted the better part of six decades to learn how to see the developing world and reach out to it. And as this chapter has shown, it could be proud of some of the diplomatic and scholarly accomplishments of this exercise. In the crucial days of the autumn of 1979, however, it was that other, unintended Soviet intellectual invention – the pervasive atmosphere of doublespeak, the search for hidden
motivations, the invention of CPSU enclaves-as-government – that doomed Moscow to ignore this legacy and launch a catastrophic invasion of Afghanistan.

Still, to understand the dynamics that led up to the USSR’s intervention in Afghanistan, it is essential we examine this story from the point of view of not only Moscow, but also Afghanistan itself. In order to understand Soviet development in occupied Afghanistan, we need to return to the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when Moscow was just one of many powers in the country. For it was during those years, Afghanistan became an arena for competing social science visions. Advisors came to Kabul, dispensing advice on how everything from the country’s institutions to its infrastructure to its geography and ecology itself could be modified to plant the seeds for sustained economic growth. Chapter Two examines this era, exploring how not only the USSR but also other developing powers like the United States and West Germany engaged with Kabul during Afghanistan’s developmental moment.
CHAPTER TWO:
Afghanistan’s Developmental Moment?
Development, Modernization, and the Afghan State

Studies designed to enlist social science in the diagnosis and treatment of social maladies did not provide an appropriate forum in which to express reservations about social science. Such studies had to observe rigorous standards of measurement, to lay out the evidence in the form of charts and tables, to remind the reader at every opportunity that the problem was fearfully complex (though by no means insoluble), and thus to justify the claim that experts alone knew how to solve it.155

Sometime in the late 1950s, Stanisław Miarkowski, a Polish civil engineer, sat on board an Aeroflot flight from Termez to Kabul, where he was headed on a work assignment. Next to him sat two Afghan students headed home after finishing their studies in Tashkent. One student ordered a glass of water for the two Afghan women seated next to a alim across the aisle from them, then turned to Miarkowski to practice his Russian. How, he asked, did Miarkowski like Afghanistan? ‘Judging by the clouds and what I can make out beneath them’, answered Miarkowski, ‘it seems like it should be beautiful.’ It was a pleasant, if awkward, conversation. But as Miarkowski began to ask about the alim – ‘the same thing as a bishop where you’re from’, explained the student – his conversation went sour. Miarkowski was a married man, but he could not take his eyes off the two women across the aisle. ‘At first I thought that they were monks’, said Miarkowski of the burqa-clad women,

although, true, one of them was the mother of a charming two-year old boy that resembled a gypsy. Both of them wore very dark clothing which resembled something between a capuchin hood and a bridal veil. But their large, underlined eyes and colored lips contrasted with their clothing. Even more different were their elegant snakeskin shoes, which were the latest fashion in Poland at the time.156

---

156 Stanisław Miarkowski, Na dorogakh Afganistana (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 5.
Miarkowski had to know more. ‘Are they his assistants?’ he asked. The student blushed. ‘They’re his wives’, he said. The air went out of the conversation. ‘That’, Miarkowski later wrote, ‘was my first encounter with the East.’

Encounters like Miarkowski’s were just one of thousands that took place across Afghanistan during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, a period when Afghanistan became a hothouse for competing Cold War social science visions of states and national economies. Unlike Germany or Korea, where heavily guarded borders kept socialist and market economies cordoned off from one another, Afghanistan was an ‘economic Korea’ unto itself, where the Soviet Union, the United States, West Germany, and other countries sent their social scientists and engineers to determine the character of the Afghan state and economy.¹⁵⁷ This period of social science competition was not the first, nor would it be the last moment when Afghan élites conspired with outsiders to realize a particular vision of the Afghan state. But if one is to place the later experience of Soviet development in occupied Afghanistan into its proper context, one first must understand the structural difficulties that always confronted those seeking to build territorial states and national economies in the space known as ‘Afghanistan’.

Figure 1: Percentage of total government spending among selected Asian nations broken down by purpose, c. 1950 and c. 1960. Afghanistan devoted a significantly greater percentage of its public sector spending towards development than any other country in its region. Source: Economic Bulletin for Asia and the Far East 3 (1962), 33.

Figure 2: International Aid to Afghanistan, c. 1955 – early 1970s. ‘PL 480’ refers to American food aid programs, as distinct from cash grants or loans. Source: Maxwell J. Fry, The Afghan Economy: Money, Finance and the Constraints to Economic Development (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

This chapter examines this story of Afghan state- and economy-building from 1919, when Afghanistan gained its formal independence from the British Empire (and,
more importantly, saw British subsidies cut), to the mid-1970s. The chapter is divided into three sections that follow one another chronologically but also each correspond to the themes of this dissertation: Afghanistan’s place in the South and Central Asian arena; Cold War competition over the character of the state and the national economy; and the quest to integrate the Pashtun territories of South Asia into a territorial state system. After 1919, this chapter will show, Afghan élites succeeded at carving out a niche for the Afghan state and Afghan mercantile houses in interwar South Asia. But after 1947, the formation of Pakistan and the hardening of a system of territorial states forced Afghan élites to change their strategy. By the mid-1950s, the Pashtun Question and Kabul’s rapidly growing debts forced leaders to turn to the superpowers to conceptualize and finance the project of the Afghan state and economy. If their goal was to secure as much money and advice as possible, it worked. But as the international economy and Islamabad’s outlook towards its own borderlands changed in the early 1970s, it became unclear whether the political project of a territorial Afghan state and national economy was, in fact, viable. The failure of this project fueled a political and ideological crisis within Afghanistan that, when combined with regional shifts in the late 1970s, threw Afghanistan into a crisis as the country itself became a theater for larger regional and global conflicts outside of its control.

Methodological Approaches

This account of Afghanistan’s history differs methodologically from the framework one finds in much of the recent historical literature. Since 9/11, personalities from the ‘security studies’ complex have written books on what they call, inaccurately,
the military history of Afghanistan. Oddly, most overlook what was historically an ineluctable part of military history, namely the connection between war, on the one hand, and fiscal and administrative history, on the other. The failure of authors to address this link is bizarre indeed; historians of other times and countries have long taken for granted the link between war and states’ financial-administrative machinery. ‘The sinews of War are infinite money’, famously wrote Cicero, underscoring the importance of public finance to war. Scholars of early modern Europe, meanwhile, have explored how the emergence of England over France had less to do with ‘those saturnine and English qualities of doggedness, tight-lipped determination and obduracy’, and more to do with the (relatively) high standards of London’s administrative and financial institutions. The English political crisis of 1688, argues one leading scholar, unintentionally facilitated the rise of the modern financial-administrative state, characterized by

the overweening power of the Treasury, a highly centralized financial system, a standing parliament, heavy taxation, an administrative class of gifted amateurs lacking training in the science of government but with a strong sense of public duty, government deficits and a thriving market in public securities.

Look, however, at the literature on Afghanistan, and one finds the preoccupation with national character, as opposed to institutions, that would appear hopelessly parochial

160 Ibid., 250.
to historians of Europe. Indeed, for most of the twentieth century, Kabul was more concerned with bureaucracy and trade than blood and treasure. Understanding how and why crisis gripped Afghanistan in the late 1970s demands understanding these earlier attempts to reform the Afghan state in terms of administration and finance. Following the life and death of that fiscal-administrative project thus forms one of the major preoccupations of this chapter.

Such a focus relates to an ongoing conversation among scholars of international history today about the state in the twentieth century. As scholars like Odd Arne Westad, Charles Maier, and Ryan Irwin have emphasized, perhaps the central preoccupation of national élites in the twentieth century was territoriality – the idea that states and economies were defined by a central capital issuing orders over a clearly-demarcated territorial space.\(^\text{161}\) Throughout much of the century, Maier writes,

> the territorial premise of collective life remained fundamental: namely, that a nation’s ‘identity space’ was coterminous with ‘decision space,’ that the territories to which ordinary men and women tended to ascribe their most meaningful public loyalties (superseding competing supranational religious or social class affiliations) also provided the locus of resources for assuring their physical and economic security.\(^\text{162}\)

There was good reason why the idea of the territorial state and economy captured national élites’ imagination. In an age of restrictions on international capital flows, Cold War development competition, and billions of Chinese and Indian peasants locked out of the ‘global labor market’ (a term that only appeared in the late 1970s), territorial states and economies offered leaders an ideal platform within which to promote semi-autarkic industrial policies or raise tariffs without suffering the wrath of the IMF or Wall Street.


Policy norms would change, at least outside of Pyongyang, Rangoon, and Harare, during the 1970s in most capitalist countries and in the late 1980s in the socialist bloc. During much of Afghanistan’s developmental moment, however, there reigned a consensus as to the desirability of the territorial state and economy as the premier platform for national development and security.

This vision represented a radical break with tradition for Afghanistan, however. Prior to 1947, few would have expected Afghanistan to function like any of the mid-twentieth century states par excellence, such as East Germany, South Korea, or, arguably, Israel or Pakistan. The territory that comprised ‘Afghanistan’ had historically thrived as an ‘inside-out’ entity that connected markets in Persia, Turkestan, and the Punjab. The combination of the Durand Line, Afghan independence, and Partition, however, led to the unintended result of a territorial Afghan state. Élites may have never accepted this arrangement as legitimate, but they nonetheless had to work within it, even as their real ambition continued to have more to do with Pashtunization and the dream of Pashtunistan. As a result, when foreign experts arrived, Afghanistan was a walking contradiction. It had never wanted to be a territorial state, yet it had hired on outside expertise to help it conform to precisely that model.

This gets to a second methodological disclaimer. As the introduction to this dissertation noted, phrases like ‘economic development’ frequently call forth images of large capital-intensive projects: dams, ring roads, grain silos. Perhaps for this reason, the existing literature on development in Afghanistan has focused on precisely these infrastructure projects. Projects like the Sarobi Dam or the Helmand Valley Project may

have left an indelible mark on historical memory, but this chapter seeks to do something different. One might well catalogue the full list of projects built in Afghanistan during this period, but perhaps more telling is how the courtship between Afghan élites and experts changed what social scientists today dub institutions: rules, norms, beliefs, and organizations. Rather than cataloguing the heady accomplishments of enlightened modernizers, then, one must devote attention to the kind of state, economy, and institutions that Afghans and foreigners built together, as well as the *stories* they told one another to make such projects happen. For as scholars like Thomas Barfield and Arne Westad have noted, the single most important skill that Afghanistan’s ‘professional rulers’ had to possess during this period was the ability to tell a good story: to translate their own ambitions for Afghan, or Pashtun, modernization, into a story that could ‘sell’ in Moscow, Washington, or Bonn.¹⁶⁴ Stories mattered.

This is more than a boutique point. Because we live in a world whose land mass is almost entirely covered by territorial states, or at least reformed empires (China, Russia) and multi-national countries (United States, Canada, Indonesia, India, Pakistan) that posture as states with a monolithic national identity, it can be difficult to appreciate the contingencies of today’s forms of political organization. Words like ‘country’ or ‘state’, which apply equally to China, Israel, or Nauru, cover up vast differences. As James Ferguson observes, the development paradigm that dominates today ‘insists on taking the country as the basic unit of analysis.’¹⁶⁵ Ferguson illustrates the point through a telling

---
anecdote from his fieldwork in southern Africa.

‘What should they do?’ an earnest ‘development’ expert in Maseru once asked me as we discussed my experience in rural Lesotho. ‘What should who do?’ I wanted to know. ‘Lesotho,’ he replied. ‘Do you mean the government?’ I asked. The man looked confused for an instant, then said, more emphatically, as if I had not heard him the first time, ‘Lesotho.’

In Afghanistan of the 1950s and 1960s as in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s, development experts and economists from the West and the Soviet Union would think in terms of a ‘country’, Afghanistan, with a ‘national economy.’ It was a framework that avoided the formulation of any issue, problem, or program for action based on entities other than the state, effectively excluding from the field of view both conflicts within the nation and forces which transcend it.166

This approach, however, would soon prove deeply problematic. Even as Afghan élites learned to speak the language of the state to outside experts, they frequently thought of their ambitions not in terms of a territorial Afghan state, but in terms of the quest for Pashtunistan – whether as a sovereign state separate from Afghanistan and Pakistan, or as part of a Greater Afghanistan. Even when the development projects they craved, moreover, fit into such regional ambitions, it would be impolitic for them to explain that at stake was not ‘efficiency’ or ‘development’, but identity and recognition. The language of the territorial state and national economy was in vogue, but because Afghanistan’s ‘professional rulers’ had to learn how tell their story in such terms, Afghans and outsiders would risk becoming two parties divided by a common language.

\[\textit{From Independence to Dependence}\]

Because the world has been so dominated by territorial states since the 1960s, it

---

166 Ibid., 62.
can be difficult to think of the planet in terms other than those suggested by the reassuringly contrasting shades and solid lines of political maps. Yet South and Central Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was most clearly understood in terms of regional trade flows and corridors. Contemporaries, especially prior to 1893, considered ‘Afghanistan’ less a concrete space and more a zone of exchange between markets in the Punjab, Kashmir, Sindh, Khorasan, and Turkestan. Indeed, much of the region’s history may be seen as a struggle between interests in the Punjab, Iran, Turkestan, and ‘Afghanistan’ itself for control over trade routes and transit rents in this space. Most dominant in the nineteenth century were Indian concerns in Shikarpur who financed the movement of goods across the region. The expansion of the British and Russian Empires and Western financiers’ partnerships with trading houses in Shikarpur and Bukhara, however, added a dynamic to the regional trade war. By the 1920s, German merchants had penetrated Central Asia’s and Afghanistan’s karakul trade, too, exporting goods to Leipzig and thence to European markets. As one Soviet commercial journal recounted in 1925, neither Afghan Pashtun nor Soviet merchants could compete in Mazar-i Sharif with formidable Peshawari Anglo-Indian firms that dominated the north’s trade. Securing advances on inbound Afghan karakul lambskins and then using that capital to buy Indian tea for export to Afghanistan, four Indian firms (David Sassoon,

167 Khorasan is a historic region in present-day northern Afghanistan, northeastern Iran, and southern Central Asia, comprising trade centers like Balkh, Herat, Ghazni, Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, and Nishapur.
169 Wolfgang Holzwarth (Halle) gave a presentation on this topic at Oxford University on February 14, 2011, entitled ‘Russian Railways and Eurasian Lambskin and Meat Markets in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.’
170 Torgovlia Rossii s Vostokom 5-7 (1925), 4.
Fazl Ilahi, Karim Bahche, and Ilahi Bahche) prevented others from playing a significant role in the regional trade. Such firms discriminated against Afghan merchants, too, extending loans to Afghan traders only on the condition that they purchase goods in Indian territory.\(^{171}\)

As long as Afghanistan remained a place of transit, rather than a territorial state, the merchants inhabiting the poorer territories between Persia and the Punjab had little to do but to accommodate their future views and designs to the mediocrity of their circumstances. If the proximate reason for their weakness was their lack of capital relative to foreign competitors, however, then the ultimate problem was the inability of a weak Afghan state to foster mercantilist institutions that would promote a ‘national interest’. But the Third Anglo-Afghan War, which ended in full independence for Kabul in exchange for the withdrawal of British subsidies, provided just such a spur to do so. Rather than relying on modest handouts from the outside world to fund modernization, now, Afghan élites could enact institutional reform to dominate the regional trade and secure the funds they needed to transform their country.

It is in this context that a reformer like Amanullah has to be understood. Amanullah may be best remembered for his ‘modernizing’ reforms (a new constitution, European schools for young men and women, relaxed dress codes for women, if only in Kabul), but the real point is that Amanullah linked this project of cultural reform with more meaningful fiscal, trade, and monetary reform that would provide Kabul with cash. In 1919, for instance, Amanullah ended the policy of official discrimination against Indian merchants, proclaiming Afghanistan a haven for those seeking to escape British

\(^{171}\) *Biulleten’ pressy Srednego Vostoka* 8 (1929), 122.
rule (1919 also saw the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar), and inviting non-Muslim Indians into the Afghan civil service. Over 19,000 Indian Muslims moved to Afghanistan, many of whom possessed connections in the Sindhi and Punjabi markets where Afghan merchants had historically been weak, moved to Afghanistan as a result. But Amanullah also benefitted from events outside of his control. The October Revolution had made it impossible to export Afghan goods northwards on Tsarist railways, but it also created such a backlog of goods in Bukhara that Afghanistan’s transit trade saw a short-term boom. Ties between northern Afghan and Turkestan trading houses grew stronger, too. Far from defeating Western empires in wars of attrition combat, Afghanistan was learning how to thrive commercially in a world of empire.

Most importantly, Amanullah linked the fortunes of the nascent Afghan state with powerful Herati and Kabuli merchants. In the mid-1920s, trying to take advantage of European and American markets’ demand for karakul (the Bukhara-Leipzig route was still closed, which drove up prices), Amanullah cancelled the royal monopoly on karakul and granted Afghan merchants greater scope in regional markets. The newfound institutional imagination of the Afghan state gave merchants space to take advantage of shifting outside imperial markets. Anglo-Indian firms still dominated the export of Afghan goods to Shikarpur, Karachi, and Bombay; but as the situation in the Soviet Union stabilized by the middle of the decade, rising Soviet demand for Afghan goods expanded the fortunes of Herati merchants like Ghulam Muhammed, Khalif Sher Ahmed, Ghulam Heydar and Ghulam Nakshabad. Part of this success may have owed to

---

172 N.M. Gurevich, *Vneshniaia torgovlia Afganistana* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo vostochnoi literature, 1959), 158.
Moscow’s wishes to burnish the its credentials in the eyes of its southern neighbor. Not only was Moscow the first country to recognize the independence of Afghanistan; more than that, while Delhi and London tried to shutter Afghan merchants operating in Sindh or the Punjab, the Moscow tolerated and even encouraged major Afghan merchants to open trade representations in Ashgabat, Tashkent, Nizhnyï Novgorod, and Moscow.173

Figure 3: The Turko-Persian arena: a largely unpopulated space that nonetheless hosted competition between the merchant élites of centers like Herat, Mashhad, Qandahar, Shikarpur, Kabul, Bukhara, and Peshawar.

This strategy of promoting national trade (while never recognizing the legitimacy of the Durand Line) and the willingness of commercial élites to participate in this political project spurred further experimentation. After ending the karakul monopoly, Amanullah authorized the formation of sherkats (Persian for ‘company’), small corporations granted a monopoly on the import and export of certain goods (the goal

173 Gurevich, Vneshniaia torgovlia Afganistana, 165-166.
being to promote Afghan commerce and expel foreign merchants). Their mandate was predictable: one sherkat, Baradaran-i Afghan, was granted a trade monopoly with British India in order to attempt to tame the most formidable market facing Kabul. The statutes of another sherkat, Tashiq-i Afghan, specified that the sum of Afghan capital and the number of Afghan investors into the company had to exceed the sum of foreign capital and the number of foreign investors. Lady Butler may not have lived long enough to paint tableaus of the fiscal and administrative expansion apace in Kabul to embed these developments in Western memories of Afghanistan, but all the same, Afghans were proving successful in their pursuit of a mercantilist policy to realize their ambitions.

It is in this context, again, that one has to understand Amanullah’s full significance in Afghan history, one that goes beyond an inchoate commitment to ‘Westernization’ that too often enthralls popular understandings of the Emir. Visiting Leipzig on his grand tour in 1928, the Emir announced that he wished to see more direct German-Afghan trade without going through Anglo-Indian intermediaries. A number of Afghan trade offices in Europe followed. By the end of the decade, Afghanistan seemed to have carved out a comfortable niche for itself in regional and global trade. In the 1927-1928 trading year, when the Emir’s court kept track of customs duties paid by the largest merchants (domestic and foreign, including sherkats) operating in Kabul, indigenous merchants controlled a majority of the market and were not stronger only because Anglo-Indian houses still dominated the karakul trade. One Herati merchant estimated that foreign merchants still controlled some sixty percent of the total foreign trade, but in

---

174 Ibid., 166-167.
175 Aman-i Afghan, 18 June 1928. See also Biuletelen’pressy Srednego Vostoka 4-5 (1928), 142-143.
176 Biuletelen’pressy Srednego Vostoka 2 (1928), 125.
177 Gurevich, Vnesniaia torgovlia Afganistana, 169-171.
Herat itself, the largest Afghan merchants like Dost Muhammed had managed to marginalize their rival Anglo-Indian firms or Persian trading houses like that of Ali Askerov, based in Mashhad.  

![Figure 4: Percentage of total customs duties recorded by Royal Court in Kabul, 1927-1928 trading year. Source: N.M. Gurevich, *Vneshniaia torgovlia Afganistana* (Moscow: 1959).](image)

One weakness still plagued the Afghan state, however. The RGA had never instituted a central bank, much less created the regulation needed to set up commercial banks. This was no small problem, either. ‘All of the financial operations [in Herat]’, wrote a foreign correspondent for the Soviet newspaper *Bolshevik* in 1929,

> ...are carried out by the money changers and *sarafis*, most of whom are Hindus who finance the enterprises, make investments, and engage in usury (*zanimalutsia rostovichestvom*). The personal deposits of the majority of the *sarafis* are held in Anglo-Indian banks.

Even as Nadir Shah, the Emir of Afghanistan from 1929 onwards, annulled most of Amanullah’s cultural reforms, the drive for financial-administrative reform continued. Abdul Majid Zabuli, a prominent Afghan Tajik banker, recalled an August 1932

---

178 Ibid., 171.
179 *Bolshevik* 3 (1929), 59.
conversation with the Emir in which he enthusiastically supported some institution that would free Afghanistan from dependence on Anglo-Indian traders for foreign currency.  

By exporting more karakul (thanks to the foreign representations Amanullah had established) and concentrating national capital in a national bank, Nadir envisioned, he could ‘improve the work of the nation and unite the rural and mountainous regions around the cities and centers.’ Dramatic changes in government from Amanullah to Nadir masked consensus over the need to forge an Afghan fiscal-administrative state.

In August 1932, Nadir and Zabuli were able, in consultation with leading Herati and Kabuli merchants, to found the Bank-i Melli, the Afghan National Bank (ANB).  

The bank could be seen as a machine to turn karakul into capital that could help realize Afghan élites’ modernizing ambitions. The RGA granted ANB a monopoly on the export of karakul, while its major shareholders, out of a total capitalization of 7.3 million afghans, were the RGA (2.1 million afghans) and Zabuli himself (at least two million afghans). To ensure the support of regional merchant élites, Nadir and Zabuli granted other trading monopolies to various sherkats and invested some of ANB’s capital into these corporations. The fall and winter of 1933 saw, for instance, the founding of Petrol, a sherkat with a monopoly on benzene and controlled by Abdul Majid Zabuli and other Herati merchants, and Pushtun, a Kandahari sherkat with a monopoly on the export and import of fruits, benzene, and sugar in and out of southern Afghanistan.

---

180 Islah, 28 June 1947.
181 Ibid.
182 Gurevich, Ocherk istorii torgovogo kapitala v Afganistane (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), 43.
183 Islah, 28 June 1947.
184 Salnameh-yi Kabul 1319, 409.
185 I.A. Shah, Trade with Afghanistan (Kabul: 1946), 67.
186 Islah, 14 September 1933; Ittesad 61 (1933).
Sometimes, ANB was a direct investor in these new corporations, as with ‘Petrol’; at other times, as in the case of ‘Pushtun’, the RGA had no stake in the company even though it had granted the trade monopoly.\textsuperscript{187} True, even as the number of \textit{sherkats} expanded across the country, most still engaged in trade rather than value-adding industrial operations. (One prominent exception was the Spinzar Cotton Company in Kunduz, the expansion of which would draw in Pashtuns like Ghulam Qader, the father of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, to historically non-Pashtun regions.\textsuperscript{188}) Still, Indian merchants drooped in influence.\textsuperscript{189}

It bears underscoring, still, that the state that Nadir and Zabuli had built was far from an iron cage. While annual government revenues grew from around 50 million Kabul rupees in 1914 to 174 million afghanis for the 1938-1939 fiscal year, prices in the same period had risen some five- or sixfold.\textsuperscript{190} Tensions grew between Durrani Pashtun government élites and the Tajik Zabuli, as the latter became the Minister of the National Economy in 1936 and created Afghanistan’s first Five-Year Plan in 1939-1940.\textsuperscript{191} Part of this owed to Pashtun chauvinism and suspicions of the outsider’s real political ambitions, but Zabuli’s corruption was cause for concern, too. In 1938, ANB was stripped of several monopolies after a scandal exposed how several ANB-owned \textit{sherkats} had hidden profits from the RGA while paying their merchant shareholders large dividends. ANB paid back its initial capital investment of 2.1 million afghanis, the unreported dividends of 2.6

\textsuperscript{187} Gurevich, \textit{Ocherk istorii torgovogo kapitala v Afganistane}, 47.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 49. In a footnote, Gurevich notes that by the beginning of 1934, ‘in Kabul there remained only two private currency exchange agencies. Several large \textit{sarafis} in Herat became coworkers of the exchange and loan division of Afghan National Bank, working for commissions.’
\textsuperscript{190} Gurevich, \textit{Ekonomicheskoе razvitie Afganistana}, 135; \textit{Da Afganistan kalany} 1336, 407.
\textsuperscript{191} Sadat, ‘The Life of a 102 year-old Afghan Entrepreneur: an Economic Perspective.’
million afghanis, and a fine of 20.5 million afghanis, but the scandal convinced Pashtun government élites of the need to found a purely state-owned bank.\textsuperscript{192} Indeed, if one saw Afghan political economy through the lens of struggle between a Tajik merchant class and a Pashtun military and bureaucratic class, these concerns seemed more legitimate still. Zabuli had, in effect, shifted the RGA’s revenue streams away from income taxes to customs duties, enhancing the power of Tajik-dominated concerns and rendering the Pashtun state and army precariously dependent on non-Pashtuns. Sending tax collectors into the Afghan provinces may have been unfeasible, but any future modernization would have to be more Pashtun-led and dirigiste than Zabuli had in mind.

Or so Zabuli’s opponents thought. Indeed, Zabuli’s Musahiban élite opponents had their work cut out for them, if only because the Herati Tajik was so effective at exploiting the geopolitical moment. In the summer of 1941, when trade with the USSR dropped to almost null and Afghanistan’s trading position in global markets was threatened, Zabuli left for Berlin to bolster Kabul’s ties with German firms. It worked: Afghanistan’s balance of trade payments with Germany increased by 65 percent during the war years as ANB opened a branch office in Berlin. At the same time, Zabuli, conducting private diplomacy, hinted to German State Secretary Ernst von Weiszsäcker that Kabul would look favorably on Berlin brokering a postwar South Asian settlement that would extend the Afghan-Indian border to the Indus River.\textsuperscript{193} Had Germany won the war, Zabuli might have been able to square the circle of Afghan political economy by bringing ‘Pashtunistan’ into reality, but also using Afghan revisionism as a means to

\textsuperscript{192} Salnameh-yi Kabul 1319, 409.
expand the influence of Tajik traders as far east as Lahore. The defeat of the Third Reich, however, turned Zabuli into a much more ambiguous figure. The role, true, of foreign capital in the Afghan import-export market had, true, been greatly reduced, but the RGA was precariously dependent on ANB – not a comfortable position for the Muhammadowiélites jockeying for position among themselves in any event.

Had the British Raj remained intact, élites in Kabul might have been able to broker a deal on how to manage the country’s modernization going ahead. But the specific way in which the Raj did crumble posed an existential threat to Afghanistan’s strategic position. The lands that comprised the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Tribal Areas of British India were predominantly populated by Pashtun tribes with longstanding ties to Afghan Pashtuns living on the other side of the Durand Line. But when Clement Atlee announced on 20 February 1947 that London intended ‘to transfer full power to Indian hands’, he had little to say about how either London, Delhi, or Karachi (the new capital of Pakistan) would handle claims for Pashtun self-determination. Articles published in Afghan government-run newspapers in the spring and summer of 1947 protested the lack of clarity, arguing that

Afghanistan does not seek expansion and the return of its former lands. What we want is that our brothers, the Pashtuns living in the regions lying between the Durand Line and the Indus River, be given the opportunity of freely expressing their view.194

British authorities announced a referendum to be held between 7 and 16 July 1947 in NWFP, with loya jirgas determining the vote in the Tribal Areas. But voters were only given the choice of whether to join India or Pakistan, not whether they wanted an independent ‘Pashtunistan’. Boycotts by the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and others

194 Islah, 21 May 1947.
limited turnout to around 50 percent.195 Among those who did vote, however, the results were decisive: ninety-nine percent for Pakistan, one percent for India. But the RGA rejected the results as illegitimate. Government newspapers declared that

until such time as the Afghans living between the Durand Line and the Indus River obtain the right to vote freely, we shall recognize no referendum as legal.196

Disputes over ‘Pashtunistan’ soon plagued Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. In June 1949, the Afghan National Assembly unanimously approved an RGA policy of attempting ‘to ensure all Afghans on the other side of the Durand Line independence and prosperity, and to grant them the right to decide their destiny themselves.’197 Government papers in Kabul ran articles supporting efforts in the Pakistani Tribal Areas to establish local governments as a step ‘toward the establishment of a single government and an independent Pashtun state.’198 Pakistan responded in 1949 by launching a campaign to encourage Western powers to declare a trade embargo on Afghanistan.

These events had grave implications for Afghanistan’s economic development strategy. What had began as a quest to remove the influence of foreign traders from Afghan markets had turned into a domestic power struggle between Zabuli’s ANB clique and élite Pashtun circles. The attempt to eject Anglo-Indian merchants from Afghanistan had succeeded, but it coincided with the emergence of a new sovereign, internationally recognized Pakistan that could blockade Afghanistan’s foreign trade at will. Further, the existence of a South Asian state that identified itself as ‘Muslim Zion’ for all South Asian Muslims, Pashtuns included, mooted the old Afghan strategy of presenting itself as a
congenial home for South Asian Muslims in opposition to the Raj. Northbound trade had stagnated after 1941 due to the destruction of Soviet infrastructure in the war, and while Iran lay to the west, only dirt roads connected Herat to Mashhad, the nearest major Iranian city.

Zabuli, who returned to Afghanistan in 1946, tried to respond decisively. One published report from the Ministry of the National Economy in September 1947 described some of his vision for domestic reforms: Afghanistan had to expand its domestic agricultural production, expand its textile, cement, and leather industries (areas where it could plausibly finance its own industrialization and substitute for imports), and convince outsiders to invest in its gold and natural gas extraction industries. Correspondingly, in 1946, the RGA signed a five-year contract with the American engineering firm Morrison-Knudsen to build a series of canals, dams, and roads in southern Afghanistan, the total cost of which ($20 million) was to be funded by the RGA from the savings it had hoarded from karakul and fruit exports during the war years.

The fact that the Helmand Valley Project, as it was called, would provide additional economic clout to Durrani Pashtuns and resettled Pashtuns from elsewhere in Afghanistan related to the second prong of Zabuli’s economic strategy, an attempt at rapprochement with Pakistan. While not backing down on Pashtunistan, Zabuli sought an economic *modus vivendi* between Karachi and Kabul. In late 1947, for instance, both the Afghan minister Mohammad Naim Khan (Muhammad Daoud’s brother and Zahir Shah’s

200 ‘Predloženie ministerstva narodnogo khoziaistva I utverzhdenie ego’, translated from *Islah*, 15-17 September 1947, in AVP RF, f. 71 (Referentury po Afganistanu), op. 35, p. 53, d.10, l. 7
brother) and Muhammad Yakub Khan, a director at ANB, visited Karachi to try to impress the need for a coordinated economic policy on Pakistani leadership.202 In the summer of 1948, meanwhile, during a stopover in London en route to Washington, Zabuli also raised the need for greater economic cooperation, noting that Afghanistan (as opposed to more developed Pakistan) intended to focus only on artisanal industries and food processing, and that Kabul would look favorably on a USSR-Afghanistan-Pakistan trade transit agreement.203 Rather than pursuing a policy that could be seen as promoting Tajik interests, Zabuli now sought to pursue a strategy of economic development within the framework of a double rapprochement, internally in Kabul with Musahiban Pashtun élites and externally with Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan.

It was a clever strategy – perhaps too clever, even for a figure as crafty as Zabuli. In Helmand Province, Morrison-Knudsen had gone over budget and suffered delays in implementing the Helmand Valley Project, prompting Zabuli over the course of late 1949 to negotiate a $21 million loan at 3.5% annual interest with the U.S. Import-Export Bank to continue financing the project.204 Since the project had initially supposed to be financed by Kabul alone – but also since Washington had extended tens of billions of interest-free dollars to former Axis countries and Pakistan – the optics of the deal were brutal for both Zabuli and Washington. America seemed to be bending over backwards to help former genocidaires and Punjabi Rajput oppressors rebuild their industry at the same time that it imposed abusive loans on tiny, poor, Afghanistan, which had been

202 ‘Rabota Ministerstva natsional’noi ekonomiki’, AVP RF f. 159 (Referentura po Afganistanu), op. 37A, folder 72 (Informatsia o vnutropoliticheskom polozhenii v strane) [1948], d. 1, ll.11-37.
203 Dawn, 4 July 1948, in AVP RF f. 159, op. 37A, folder 72 [1948], d. 1, ll. 2-3.
neutral during World War II. Worse, a Tajik like Zabuli had humiliated Afghanistan by bending over prostrate to imperialists for even this lousy deal. More than that, Karachi’s threats to impose a blockade on Afghanistan at once threatened to choke Afghanistan’s economy and emboldened more full-throated Pashtun nationalists to assert themselves in domestic Afghan politics. In 1950, while considering a renegotiation of the contract with Morrison-Knudsen, a number of government élites around Prime Minister Shah Mahmud Khan (the uncle of both Zahir Shah and Daoud), seeing a chance to remove Zabuli.205

It was the beginning of the end. Zabuli resigned from Shah Mahmud Khan’s cabinet in 1951 and moved his activities first to Switzerland, and later to New York City and Hamburg: fitting destinations for a man who, more than anyone else, had sought to build an Afghan state and economy capable of competing in American and European markets. Not long after Zabuli was removed from office, the RGA stripped ANB of its monopolies and organized an Administration of Government Monopolies, an organization owned wholly by the RGA that was itself granted several trade monopolies.206 True, ANB remained the largest commercial bank in the country and still controlled several important export markets that boomed during the Korean War (1950-1953). But the rise to power of the new Prime Minister, Mohammed Daoud Khan, in September 1953, led to the more dirigiste concept of a ‘guided economy’, led by a Pashtun nationalist-dominated RGA and an empowered Da Afghanistan Bank (the new Afghan state bank, but which also engaged in commercial loans). These reforms, plus Daoud’s policies of raising import duties on luxury goods and granting the Finance

Ministry the right to audit ANB, marked the end of the Zabuli era in Afghanistan.  

Under Daoud, Kabul moved to re-frame what had been a post-Partition issue into part of the anti-colonial struggle. Throughout 1954-1955, RGA papers wrote of how the countries all over the world which to this day are oppressed by aliens are conducting a struggle against them … the spirited Pashtuns too are firmly and resolutely fighting for their freedom.

Even after Pakistan mobilized an economic blockade in 1955, a _loya jirga_ held in Kabul in November 1955 declared that

> it does not in any way regard the areas of Pashtunistan as part of the territory of Pakistan, unless and until the people of Pashtunistan desire it and consent thereto.

Ridding Afghan politics of Zabuli and taking a stand on Pashtunistan was emotionally satisfying, but neither did anything to raise money, a problem that Afghan élites were keenly aware of. One much earlier April 1948 report by an unnamed official at the Zabuli-era Ministry for the National Economy had been characteristically frank about the problems facing Kabul. ‘If we take into account’, the report noted,

> the fact that our country is an agrarian country and all of its needs must be satisfied through imports from without, as well as the fact that [Afghanistan] is located a great distance away from maritime routes, then it is clear that at the present moment we will have to pay 3-4 times as much for industrial goods and their import than we paid for them in the pre-war period. One must also add the agricultural position of our country has dramatically worsened as a result of the recent years.

Having noted this changed situation, the report faced the core problem:

> It is sufficient to mention (_dostatochno ukazat_’) that India represented the most important export and import market for us; but after 15 August of the previous year trade links and rail connections were cut between India and Pakistan. As a result, over the course of the last eight months the scale of our county’s import and export trade sharply declined.

---

208 _Hiwad_, 22 September 1954.
209 _Islah_, 21 November 1955.
210 ‘Rabota Ministerstva natcional’noi ekonomiki’, AVP RF f. 159 (Referentura po Afganistanu), op. 37A, folder 72 (Informatsiya o vnutropoliticheskom polozhenii v strane) [1948], d. 1, II.11-37.
211 Throughout the late 1940s, a series of poor harvests and outbreaks of epizootic disease devastated both farmers as well as karakul herders.
The old model of the Afghan state – export trade and customs duties helping to fund the state – was officially dead given the momentous changes in the region. The Zabuli model of Tajik-led trade and securing revenues through customs duties was incompatible with a world that included Pakistan, or at least a Pakistan that viewed transit trade with India as a threat to its own national security. And if there was simply not enough capital in all of Afghanistan for a strategy of primitive accumulation and Pashtun-focused development, Kabul had only known one other model in recent history, namely the pre-1919 arrangement of accepting subsidies and aid from the British Empire. But as Afghans now stared into a post-colonial world, the British were not coming back to help. Who, then, could help them underwrite the old political project of the Afghan state and economy?

*Soviet-American Competition and the Afghanistan-Pakistan Labyrinth*

‘Before you flies the state flag of Afghanistan, our southern neighbor and friend’, begins the 1957 Soviet film *Afghanistan*, one of a slew of movies concerning Afghanistan that Moscow studios churned out in the late 1950s and early 1960s.\(^{212}\) ‘The black band’, the narrator continues, ‘recalls the foreign yoke, the red band blood spilled for the cause of freedom, while the green promises the fulfillment of [the country’s proud hopes.]’ Cue a wipe cut to a map of Afghanistan, where we learn that

The mountainous spine of the Hindu Kush covers four-fifths of Afghanistan with its spurs. Like a wall with jagged towers, the mountains have separated the country from the rest of the world for centuries.

As another film, the 1960 *N.S. Khrushchëv in Afghanistan*, emphasized, however, formerly isolated Afghanistan had come into its own thanks to Soviet aid. ‘Everywhere

---

\(^{212}\) Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury I Iskusstva, f. 2487, op. 1, d. 138 (‘Afghanistan.’ Literaturnyi tsnearii F.I. Kisleeva, diktorskii tekst O.G. Savicha, dogovora na ikh napisaniie I drugie materialy fil’mа’), l.5.
signs of change [predmety novogo] can be seen’, assured the film in its opening shots.

You can find them in these dams which stand over wild rivers, in the power lines which climb farther and farther up the slopes of the mountains, in the first furnaces of the young industry [molodoi promyslenosti] which the country had never known earlier. For many long years, the Afghan people struggled against foreign conquers. Having secured their freedom forty years ago, they now enjoy a period of renewal [obnovlenia].

An Il’iushin-18 plane hovered over the Hindu Kush in the next shot – headed, continued the film, from Calcutta to Kabul, carrying on board the ‘head of the Soviet government’, Nikita Khrushchëv. Afghanistan remained backwards, the film implied, but thanks to Soviet help, Afghans, too, could build the territorial, industrial state – power lines, blast furnaces, sovereignty – that represented modernity.

Of course, the story that Soviet filmmakers told domestic and Afghan audiences involved some creative readings of Afghan history. As the previous section of this chapter showed, early Afghan modernizers like Amanullah, Nadir Shah, and Zabuli had designs of their own for how to transform their homeland that went beyond the territorial state. The Soviet Union, moreover, had a history of engagement in Afghanistan that long preceded its mid-1950s Third World outreach. As Soviet representatives never tired of mentioning, the USSR was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Afghanistan in 1919, and Moscow and Kabul had agreed on a non-aggression pact two years later. When Amanullah and Queen Soraya began their European tour in the summer of 1928, they began it with a May visit with a visit to Moscow, Kabul’s closest ally. Then as now, Moscow was concerned with an unstable Tajik polity divided only by the Amu-Darya from chaotic Afghanistan. Hundreds of thousands of Soviet Tajiks had fled the

213 RGALI, f. 2487, op. 1, d. 496 (‘N.S. Khrushchëv v Afganistane’. Diktorskii tekst V.F. Belikova I annotatsiia k fil’mu’), l. 2.
214 Ibid., l. 3.
Tajik ASSR during the *basmachi* wars, basing themselves in northern Afghanistan: all the more reason for Moscow to promote stability in Kabul and calm in northern Afghanistan. Indeed, since the defeat of the *basmachi* in the 1930s, Moscow proved to be a status quo power, renewing its non-aggression treaty with Kabul in 1931 and then again five years later. The Nazi onslaught made Afghanistan an afterthought during the earlier part of the 1940s, but in June 1946, Viacheslav Molotov hosted the Afghan Foreign Minister in Moscow to sign an agreement on the demarcation of the Amu-Darya along the *thalweg*.

This Soviet-Afghan diplomatic consensus, however, reflected a tenous pre-Cold War world in which the Soviet Union had few pretensions other than the survival of ‘socialism in one country’. For Moscow as for Kabul, the changes in South and Central Asia in the late 1940s, combined with American missteps, propelled Soviet leadership to transform their mission in Kabul from one goodwill and trade to one of state- and economy-building. Recall the situation in which Afghanistan found itself in the winter of 1949, forced to beg with Washington to secure a high-interest loan to finance the Helmand Valley Project. Seventy percent of the project costs had been spent on wages for American engineers and personnel, while MKA engineers claimed that Afghans were incapable of using technology effectively.\(^{215}\) Recall, too, that this debacle took place as Washington provided billions of dollars in grants not only to former Axis states under the Marshall Plan but also to Pakistan, widely perceived as the enemy within Afghanistan.\(^{216}\) The Truman Administration had not gotten Afghan-American relations off to a good start.


\(^{216}\) While Afghanistan received only $21 in loans from 1949–1954, for example, Pakistan received $98 million in total aid during the same period, while India received $255 million in aid. See *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1954* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 901-902.
American diplomats outraged Afghans ever further. In 1953, President Eisenhower’s Secretary of State John Foster Dulles invited Karachi to join two newly-formed anti-Soviet alliance systems, SEATO and CENTO. Kabul was understandably concerned about what these agreements with Pakistan meant for Kabul-Washington relations, particularly with respect to Pashtunistan.\textsuperscript{217} Kabul petitioned to join CENTO. But when Afghan Foreign Minister Prince Muhammad Naim visited Washington in October 1954, not only did Dulles keep him waiting; he refused to see him at all, and dismissed him with a note that read:

\begin{quote}
After careful consideration, extending military aid to Afghanistan would create problems not offset by the strength it would generate. Instead of asking for arms, Afghanistan should settle the Pashtunistan dispute with Pakistan.\textsuperscript{218}
\end{quote}

Adding insult to injury, Dulles sent a copy of the note to the Pakistani Ambassador to Washington. Daoud, now Prime Minister of Afghanistan, learned of the snub that December 1954 and was, perhaps understandably apoplectic. When it came to the two basic problems in contemporary Afghan history – economic development and the need for a political solution to the Pashtun Question – Washington had not only failed to advance a constructive agenda but also destroyed its reputation as an honest broker.

Moscow moved opportunistically. In January 1954, the USSR announced an aid package to Kabul of three million rubles, to be extended over the course of eight years at an annual interest rate of two percent: modest compared to the thirty-year aid treaty Stalin had signed with Mao in February 1950, granted, but orders of magnitude more generous than anything the wealthier United States had ever done. A military aid

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{218} Copy of text communicated to former US Ambassador to Kabul, Leon Poullada, by Prince Naim in an interview in Kabul on 12 December 1976, cited in Barry, 29-30.
\end{flushright}
agreement followed. Shortly after the CENTO debacle, Daoud agreed in January 1955 to a Soviet offer ‘to train and equip the Afghan armed forces, and educate the entire Afghan elite officer corps in the USSR.’ The final shock to Washington came when new Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchëv capped a December 1955 trip to India and Burma with a surprise visit to Kabul, where he signed a major agreement on 18 December that guaranteed Afghanistan 150 million rubles a year in aid and – crucially given Pashtunistan – transit rights through the USSR.

Soon, a huge range of Soviet projects so touted by the screenwriters at Mosfilm was underway. Specialists built a bakery, a grain elevator, an asphalt and cement factory in Kabul, and an equipment repair station in Jangalak, just to the south of the capital. They installed port facilities across the Amu-Darya River at Hairaton, while work began on the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex in the east of the country in 1956. In 1961, Soviet nuclear scientists consulted with Afghan colleagues on the possibility of uranium enrichment and the long-term development of an Afghan nuclear power program. Cotton-growing experts from Uzbekistan traveled to Kabul to participate in conferences on how Afghanistan could grow more ‘white gold’. A Soviet-sponsored university,

219 Barry, 30.
220 For the full text of the agreement, see ‘Prilozhenie’, Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn’ 1 (1956), 82-83.
221 On the grain elevator and bread factory, see: L. Borokhovskiï, ‘Stroitel’stvo klebokombinata v Kabule’, Mukomol’no-elevatornaiia promyshlennost’ 3 (1956), 6-7; on the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex: Author Interview, Abdulwahob Wahidov, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 21 September 2012. While there are several short printed articles on the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex in Soviet papers and at least one book on the project, archival files relating to the project are held in the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which rejected my request for archival access. There may be interesting surprises among the files, but until the archival authorities in Tashkent are willing to grant foreign researchers more wide-ranging access, a more detailed history remains murky and speculative at best.
222 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki, f. 365, op. 2, d. 1397, ‘Materialy o predvariat’nykh peregovorakh delegatsii sovetskikh epektrov s Afganskoi storonoi ob okazanii Afgani stanu nachnehcheskoi pomoshchi v oblasti mirnogo izpol’zovania atomnoi energii I geologoravvedochnykh rabotakh na uran (doklady, sprawki, zapisi besed).’
223 ‘Pomoshch’ tashkentskogo uchenogo afganskim agronomam’, Tashkentskaia Pravda, 18 September 1957; ‘XIV sovetsko-afgankaia konferentsiia’ (po bor’be s saranshoj I vreditel’iami khlopochinka.
Kabul Polytechnic, began to admit students in 1963. Soviet-style mikroaţions of five-
story apartment blocks sprang up and became some of the most desirable housing in the
city. The City of Moscow even funded the construction of the first such apartment block
through a levy on the Soviet capital’s residents.224 Not only did Soviet and Eastern
European road engineers like Stanisław Miarkowski build roads across the north of the
country; in 1964, they opened the Salang Tunnel, at the time the highest in the world,
that connected Kabul with the north.225 Soviet modernity was everywhere.

Coordinating this all was the State Committee for Foreign Economic Ties
(Gosudarstvennyi komitet po vnesnym ekonomicheskim sviaziam, or GKES), an
institution housed within the Council of Ministers that served as an intermediary between
foreign governments and Soviet All-Union Ministries (Heavy Industry, Higher
Education, or Gosplan, for example) and some SSR-level institutions (like the Uzbek
Ministry for Water) that consulted for client states.226 GKES was totally separate from the
Ministry of Trade (trade and aid were viewed as different questions), as well as Party
institutions working in Afghanistan at the same time. ‘Our goal is clear’, said the
agency’s leader, S.A. Skachkov, in a presentation to the Central Committee of the CPSU.

We strive to help underdeveloped countries ensure their economic independence, more
quickly stand on their own two feet, create a modern national industry, more fully utilize
their natural resources, lift agricultural production and so contribute to improving the
lives of the people of these countries.227

---

224 Author Interview, Vasilii Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 23 October 2012.
225 For one of many pieces on the Salang Tunnel, see A. Biriukov, ‘Doroga Salang’, Ogonyok 1960 (9): 22-
23.
226 Author Interview, Valerii Ivanov, Ignatovo, Russian Federation, 2 November 2012.
227 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Novoeštei Istorii, Moscow, Russian Federation, f.5 (Tsentralsy Komitet KPSS), op. 30, d. 305, ‘Zapiski i spravki gosudarstvennogo komiteta SM SSSR po vnesnym
ekonomicheskym sviaziam, Goskomiteta po kul’turnym sviaziam s zarubezhnymi stranami i po
voprosam truda i zarplaty o nauchno-tekhnicheskom i kul’turnom sotrudnichestve SSSR s VNR, PNR,
SshA, OAR i dr. stranami, ob ekonomicheskom i tekhnicheskom sotrudnichestve Sovetskogo Soiuza so
If the operative words here, for our purposes, are ‘economic independence’, ‘national industry’, ‘their natural resources’ – the identification of territory, economy, and identity – American policy planners at the time took a more straightforward view. The Soviet Union was trying to turn Afghanistan Communist. After Dulles’ missteps, the United States continued its limited investments in the country: the troubled Helmand Valley Project, the southern half of Afghanistan’s ring road, industrial parks in Kabul, and graduate scholarships for Afghan students. All of these had their positive effect: in an informal, unscientific word association survey conducted at Kabul University in 1962, Afghan students most associated the United States with President Kennedy, ‘many factories’, and ‘standard of living’; not bad, compared to ‘advanced technology’, Khrushchëv, and ‘Communism’ for the Soviet Union.

Still, the optics of the Eisenhower era were not always encouraging. The Administration had done little to change the impression that the Soviet Union actually built things, while the United States was interested only in military bases. Indeed, with American military interventions in Lebanon, military bases in Libya, and Gary Powers’ takeoff from Peshawar passing through the headlines in these years, there was enough good evidence to support this belief. As one former Soviet advisor gloated, ‘Where is the quarter of Kabul that the City of Washington sponsored?’ From the point of both hawkish Democrats like JFK and the coterie of social scientists that surrounded him,

---

229 Ibid., 21.
230 Author Interview, Vasilii Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 23 October 2012.
America had to compete with Moscow not only through CIA coups and military interventions, as Eisenhower and Dulles had done. It had to make the Cold War about modernization. As these ‘mandarins of the future’ understood, constructing dams was well and good; but modernization at its core had to do with *states*, with *economies*.

It is for this reason that to really understand both the stakes in Afghanistan during the Cold War, as well as the contingency Kabul did possess between the great powers, we must pay less attention to infrastructure and more to the ‘sinews of power’. For this was an arena where both powers sought to influence the Afghan state, although through quite different institutions and frameworks. The USSR, as we saw, would use GKES as a coordinating agency to deploy the experience not just of ‘socialist construction’ but also of Soviet planning agencies like Gosplan in framing Afghanistan’s Five-Year Plans. The United States would likewise adapt its own interwar institutions and expertise. Not long after Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, calls went out through the old New Dealer and academic networks that surrounded the 43-year-old President. As the ‘best and the brightest’ within these élite networks – Harvard Dean McGeorge Bundy, MIT economist Walt Rostow, or President of Ford Robert McNamara – occupied top positions in Washington, others were called upon to implement American policy in the Third World. By the summer of 1961, two men whose accounts help us reconstruct the tensions of Afghanistan’s developmental moment, Bob Nathan and Arthur Paul, received offers to work as what we would call consultants to the Royal Government of Afghanistan, consulting on public finance and trade policy, respectively.231

---

The two men were a world apart personally. Nathan was a second-generation Russian-American Jew from Ohio, while Paul was the scion of a Philadelphia establishment not far from the world of which his Princeton classmate F. Scott Fitzgerald would later write. Still, both men’s professional experiences throughout the 1920s and 1930s provide a neat portrait of the assumptions that shaped American thinking about the state and economy at the height of the American ‘empire of production’.

Consider Nathan’s résumé first. In spite of *numerus clausus* restrictions, Nathan managed to gain admission to the University of Pennsylvania. There, because ‘economics’ did not exist as a formal discipline, he cobbled together a curriculum composed of courses in business, statistics, and mathematics. As Nathan recalled, he became interested in the concept of household income and began to develop sampling techniques to collect statistics from the Philadelphia suburbs.

[What we did was] very primitive by modern techniques of sampling. But then we picked out blocks in the city of Philadelphia and then houses within them, and we did these surveys. I used to go out with the enumerators. We had these women. I bought an old car, a ‘Moon,’ a big sedan for $50 in 1930. I used it to go out and carry my enumerators around. Then we checked them out, and I did that. So I developed unemployment numbers in Philadelphia by composition by age, and by jobs and duration, and so forth, of unemployment. These were really pioneering statistics because that was the subject about which very little was known.

Nathan soon followed his Penn professor Simon Kuznets to Washington, where he would devise GDP figures for the American economy. The idea of creating such indicators for national economies, it bears underscoring, was novel. ‘Most people are shocked’, Nathan recounted, ‘when I tell them that in 1933 there was no such thing as national income measures, officially, such as GNP and all that.’

---

national productivity and wealth soon became useful, however. Later working as a policy planner in the Department of War, Nathan calculated how much of certain strategic materials – steel, aluminium, copper – American enterprises could produce under conditions of full employment and ‘total mobilization’. Nathan then attempted to square these production limits with American, British, and Soviet demands for materiel. The exercise was one of the first to model the American ‘national economy’, and played a crucial role in convincing American civilian and military leadership to defer the invasion of Europe from 1943 to 1944.\textsuperscript{233} In the course of a decade, economic knowledge had gone from undergraduate summer research projects to determining world-historical events.

Paul underwent a similar intellectual journey, albeit one centered more around trade than fiscal. After a job in the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s, in which he resettled Appalachian farmers to new industrial sites, in the early 1940s Paul worked for the Foreign Economic Administration, helping ‘manage a number of South American economic development projects that were related to the needs of the U.S. Government for strategic raw material.’\textsuperscript{234} Later, as an assistant for international trade to Henry Wallace and Averell Harriman, he helped to implement ‘several European industrial projects that owed their existence to the successful operation of the Marshall Plan.’ If the Soviet advisors in Afghanistan from the late 1950s onwards were bringing with them, as one Afghan government pamphlet touted, the ‘more than 40 years of experience in planning its own economy [accumulated during the USSR’s existence]’, men like Nathan and Paul were the brainpower behind the American ‘empire of production’ that had emerged by the

\textsuperscript{234} APJ, Introduction, 3.
late 1950s.235 Both groups were divided by ideology, but they shared a basic consensus that industrialization, formalized economic knowledge, and conscious industrial and trade policy were the watchwords of modernity.

Whether these assumptions was well-suited for Afghanistan was beside the point. The Afghan state had, contrary to such ideologies that stressed the territorial, industrial, technocratic state as the telos of national life, thrived in an environment of empires and loose borders. Yet by the 1960s, the model of bringing northern Tajik merchant élites into the Afghan state and instituting financial and customs reforms to dominate markets in the northwestern Subcontinent that Zabuli had pioneered was now not only politically infeasible within Kabul; it was also impossible to achieve given the state of relations between Kabul, Rawalpindi, and New Delhi. Following the Pakistani decision to merge the NWFP and the Tribal Areas into the so-called ‘One Unit’ of West Pakistan in a 1954 administrative reform, pro-Pashtun crowds in Kabul burned the Pakistani flag and attacked the Pakistani Embassy, triggering a trade embargo. It lasted three years, until the United States agreed to upgrade much of the Pakistani rail structure as part of a Washington-brokered June 1958 transit agreement.236

Border skirmishes in the autumn of 1961, however, prompted Kabul to close the border again, leading to a year of closed borders before another American-brokered summit in New York in September 1962. One year after that, an Iranian-brokered agreement restored bilateral relations and provided the framework for a 1965 transit

agreement that would last for forty-six years. Yet as a 1961 editorial in an Afghan
government newspaper noted, even when the border was open, Pakistan Railways failed
to provide wagons for Afghan goods en route to Karachi. Using Pakistani railway lines
or wagons to transit goods to India remained, meanwhile, out of the question.

At stake here was how to square post-colonial territorial states like Pakistan and
Afghanistan with contested concepts about trade and sovereignty. As the RGA state
paper Anis argued,

in 1947, when Pakistan appeared, the whole world had found any number of ways [to
export goods.] Not only the ports of Italy were open to Switzerland, but in all the corners
of the globe the full right of freedom of transit for countries which lack access to the sea
was recognized.238

This was not quite accurate. As the Austrian-British jurist Hersch Lauterpacht noted in a
1958 essay, the state of international law on the right of landlocked countries to a right of
transit was far from clear.239 Most tortuous were those cases, like West Berlin, or,
arguably, Afghanistan, where there really was only one transitable country for access to
the sea.240 ‘In these circumstances’, wrote Lauterpacht,

it appears probable that the correct way in which to frame the concept of a ‘way of
necessity’ in international law is to say that the transit State is bound to accord such
facilities as the exercise by the administering authority of its right in the enclaved area,
including the maintenance of ‘peace, order and good government’, may warrant.241

The problem with this framework, however was that any interpretation of the
‘way of necessity’ or the ‘peace, order and good government’ principle bore explosive
political implications. If Pakistani transit really was a ‘way of necessity’ for Kabul, it

237 ‘Tranzit Afganistana Í velikodushie Pakistana’, Anis, 17 September 1961, in AVP RF f. 71, op. 51,
papka 70, d. 11.
238 Ibid.
239 Hersch Lauterpacht, ‘Freedom of Transit in International Law’, Transactions of the Grotius Society 44
240 Ibid., 336-337.
241 Ibid., 332.
followed that Pakistan should let goods from its Pashtun enemy, Afghanistan, transit Pakistani territory unencumbered to its Hindu foe. But if Islamabad refused, this meant that ‘peace, order, and good government’ for Pakistan amounted to a permanent blockade of, or at least significant control over, Afghan trade – not the noblest proposition to defend in public. The alternative was to argue that Pakistan was not, in fact, a ‘way of necessity’ for Afghanistan, and that Kabul should therefore export via the USSR. That, however, would necessarily mean a more Soviet-friendly Afghanistan, something neither Rawalpindi nor its American patron desired. None of these scenarios was fair for Afghanistan; but the dilemma represented the logical outcome of applying of both self-determination and territorial states to South and Central Asia.

Given these constraints, it was no surprise that the policy planners who came to Kabul repeatedly ran into the same seemingly intractable obstacles. As Nathan would note in his diaries during his fifteen trips to the country, Afghanistan’s fiscal house was in shambles. ‘They are’, wrote Nathan in 1965,

> going to have to get tough on smuggling and really on corruption, which apparently is rampant and almost universal. If they take the tax matter seriously, a 75 percent increase could be achieved in one or two years rather than in five years.\(^{242}\)

As Nathan saw it, Afghanistan remained trapped in a circle of poor public administration and insufficient tax farming. ‘A very substantial increase in wages is needed for government service’, argued Nathan,

> but this is a difficult time in which to practically double all wages as proposed, because it will mean a serious degree of inflation, with a serious loss in foreign exchange reserves or a real cut-back in the development program.

What was really needed was more investment in private industry, spurred by an

---

242 Robert R. Nathan, Diary Entry, 6 March 1965 (Kabul), Robert R. Nathan Papers, #4410, Box 1, Folder 34.
expansionary monetary policy. But ‘because of the expansionist fiscal policy […] it has been necessary for the Central Bank to be exceedingly restrictive on credit extension.’\textsuperscript{243} Instead of collecting enough taxes to avoid deficits while expanding the money supply to stimulate investment, the RGA had so overspent as to deplete its foreign currency reserves, induce inflation, and threaten to ‘run out of borrowing capacity at the IMF.’\textsuperscript{244}

Paul was similarly pessimistic as he assessed the customs and tariffs policy of the Afghan state. ‘The Ministry of Commerce’, wrote Paul, handled the granting of licenses to foreign traders and the annual renewal of these licenses. It was in a position to control the exit and re-entry permits that a foreign trader needed if he traveled in and out of the country. These functions were often exercised in an arbitrary way, and they were ‘made to order’ as a source of corruption.\textsuperscript{245}

Yet making the situation still more complicated for investors and merchants was a multiple exchange rate system. The RGA had instituted an alternative mechanism to collect customs revenues. Rather than maintaining a floating exchange rate or a fixed exchange rate, \textit{Da Afghanistan Bank} instead used a tripartite formula to determine currency exchange rates for businesses. ‘The weighting of these factors’, Paul noted, was different in the case of each important commodity. Two of these factors were arbitrarily set by government decree and these decrees were periodically changed without prior notice. The third factor was a variable, i.e. the current rate in the ‘free’ money market of the Kabul Bazaar for the various currencies involved.\textsuperscript{246}

This mechanism was effective in the short term, but because it was so arbitrary, it discouraged capital investment and spurred a balance-of-payments of crisis that further lowered the floating value of the \textit{afghani}.

What both Nathan as well as Paul had identified, however, less a failed state than

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., Diary Entry, 8 March 1965 (Kabul), Robert R. Nathan Papers, #4410, Box 1, Folder 34.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245} APJ, 11 June 1960, 40.
\textsuperscript{246} APJ, 16 June 1960, 59.
one that failed to conform to the postwar American model of the state or ‘the economy’, the construction of which stood at the center of both men’s intellectual preparation. Obviously, the economic and institutional history of the United States of America differed radically from those of Afghanistan. Still, Nathan’s and Paul’s training had given them very specific intuitions for what a state or an economy was supposed to be. States, or so Nathan and Paul took for granted, had to have an effective fiscal-administrative apparatus, one that would provide secure government revenues through taxation. And it was not hard to understand why Americans of Nathan’s and Paul’s vintage would take this for granted. Since the permanent institutionalization of the federal income tax in 1913, and the practice of withholding taxes on wages in 1943, income taxes had long surpassed tariffs as a source of income for the United States. The memory of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff in 1930, which triggered an trans-Atlantic tariff war and devastated US trade, pushed intellectuals like Nathan and Paul to support GATT and more open trade after the war. Such beliefs, were easily defensible for a country that dominated global manufacturing and which ran a professional tax-collecting service that dated back to the 1860s, And given the dominance of the US economy – 38 percent of total global GDP when Nathan and Paul arrived in Kabul – there was more than sheer chauvinism behind the conviction that in order to thrive in an ‘American Century’, the Afghan state needed to become more … American.247

247 Data from the World Bank, available online at http://data.worldbank.org
Figure 5: Tax revenues going into the Shah’s treasury from selected provincial centers of the Durrani Empire, circa 1790, with post-1947 Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan borders superimposed. Size of dollar sign represents scale of income. As Soviet scholars were well aware, the Durrani incarnation of the Afghan state was based on extraction from the Punjab and Sindh to compensate for a lightly taxed, poor, Pashtun core. From Iuriĭ Gankovskiĭ, Imperiia Durrani: ocherki administravnoi i voennoi sistemy (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1958), Chapter Five.

While sincerely-held and well-intentioned, though, these beliefs overlooked the fiscal-administrative history of the Afghan state. As regional scholars like Iuriĭ Gankovskiĭ, whom we met in the previous chapter, documented at the same time as Paul, Nathan, and the Gosplan team headed to Kabul, the fiscal basis of the Afghan state had gone through dramatic changes, depending on the extent to which rulers in Kandahar and, later, Kabul, had been able to penetrate the wealthy core regions of the northwestern Subcontinent. In his 1958 administrative history of the Durrani Empire, Gankovskiĭ underlined the extent to which the first iteration of an Afghan state had truly been a ‘coat
worn inside out.’

The core, poor Pashtun territories of the empire, like Kandahar, Kabul, and Peshawar, were lightly taxed compared to the empire’s wealthy periphery in the territory that would become Pakistan two hundred years later. Wealthy outlying provinces like Sindh, Punjab, and Kashmir supplied a majority of the empire’s tax income. This fiscal-administrative system reflected an old Chinese proverb: ‘you could conquer an Indian empire from Afghanistan, but you could not rule it from there.’

Yet with the rise of a series of empires and states based out of the Punjab – the Sikh Empire, the British Raj, and Pakistan – capable of rolling back Pashtun empires, Durrani Pashtun statesmen had adapted their state’s fiscal-administrative apparatus from one based less on tax-farming to the tariff-centric Zabuli model. The issue was not, as Nathan thought, citing the work of the American social scientist Ralph Linton, that tribal, ‘ascription-oriented’ Afghan culture prevented the development of a modern state. Instead, the Afghan state had assumed its shape because of its geographical boundaries, and, more specifically, the fact that 1947 had transformed the historic financial (not cultural or demographic) core of Pashtun empire into territorial state space, marked not by free flows of trade but rather the two borders created by the double partition of the Punjab and Pashtunistan. Afghan policymakers were well aware of this ‘problem’. ‘It is

250 Barfield, Afghanistan, 99.
no secret’, wrote a planner for Zabuli in 1948,

that the customs policy of our country over the course of the last seventy years was based not on the demands of the national economy, but on the interests of government revenues.252

Even if the multiple exchange rate system had the effect, as Paul observed, of discouraging entrepreneurship, it represented a reasonable adaption for a country like Afghanistan, where duty collection all across the Pakistani border was impracticable. Rather than ‘defects’, then, many of the features of the Afghan fiscal-administrative state that Nathan and Paul poked holes in represented ad hoc solutions to the secular fiscal and trade crisis that the 1947 territorial order had imposed on Kabul.

Still, Nathan and Paul had been sent to Kabul to reform the Afghan state, and reform it they did. Several years after Paul recognized the problem with the Afghan multiple exchange rate, Nathan would play a key role in changing it. Throughout the 1960s, Paul noted, whenever the IMF made interventions to keep the RGA afloat, it insisted on structural reforms to improve the long-term floating rate of the afghani. But ‘the RGA was very reluctant to give up its multiple rate system and did succeed in keeping parts of it in effect long after the IMF had made substantial advances.’253 Only the threat of default and an end to IMF loans convinced Afghan élites that something had to change. After several negotiations, in 1964, Nathan convinced the RGA to devalue the afghani: dollar exchange rate from 20:1 to 45:1, more closely approximating the free-market exchange rate of 50:1.254

---

252 ‘Rabota Ministerstva natsional’noi ekonomiki’, AVP RF f. 159 (Referentura po Afganistanu), op. 37A, folder 72 (Informatsia o vnutropoliticheskom polozhenii v strane) [1948], d. 1, l. 11-37.
253 Ibid., 60.
lamb skins, cotton, and wool – were similarly lowered to stimulate trade, and many trade contracts with foreign importers that compelled them to purchase Afghan goods at the official, rather than the free-market, exchange rate, were abolished to stimulate trade. Conversely, higher tariffs were placed on goods imported to Afghanistan in order to reflect the new, higher prices. The reforms had a positive effect: the budget deficit dropped from 1.2 billion afghanis in 1963 to 950 million in 1964, down further to 710 million afghanis in 1965. Yet trade policy reform proved only partly successful, because the Nathan team could not carry it out in conjunction with tax reform, the problems of inflation and depleting foreign currency reserves mounted.

Because these debates over trade policy might seem like abstruse technical concerns, especially to non-economists, it is important to situate them in their Cold War context to understand why Nathan and Paul were concerned with such issues in the first place. Working at the same time in the Ministry of Planning as Nathan was a team of economists from Gosplan whom Nathan identified as ‘Kovchov, Balayov, and Zaritsiyan’, the latter of whom was ‘the finance man among the Russian advisors.’ Over in the Ministry of Commerce, meanwhile, a team of Soviet trade experts was also present, seeking to influence policy. Paul felt his skepticism towards the group justified proved after his first joint meeting with the Soviet team and Ghulam Mohammad Sherzad, the Minister of Commerce. Paul was aghast to see the latter harping on the need to meet absurd quantitative measures of exports in the short term:

‘[The Soviet advisors’] main criticism of our [projections for Afghanistan’s export earnings] was that the carrying out of a plan based on them would not create enough tension, stress, and strain. Several times the senior members of the group told me that the Russian people have achieved “the

255 Robert R. Nathan, Diary Entry, 12 May 1962 (Kabul), Robert R. Nathan Papers, #4410, Box 1, Folder 22.
impossible” because high targets had been set by the planners.\textsuperscript{256}

This might be true, Paul noted, but by failing to set realistic predictions for export earnings (which led to understating expected deficits and inflation), the RGA hindered private sector investment, thus preventing Afghan entrepreneurs from exporting finished goods to Soviet markets. Because of a lack of fiscal discipline, interest rates rose. And because the RGA delayed reforms to its exchange rate, entrepreneurs were reluctant to invest, since the artificially low exchange rate acted as an indirect tax on exporters.

This all mattered to Paul because it drove Afghanistan into a closer commercial embrace with the Soviet Union. When Paul spoke with Abdul Kayoum, the head of a wool export business ‘that handles perhaps forty percent of all of Afghanistan’s wool trade’ and had an ambiguous relationship with Zabuli, the American saw how the policies he sought to reform encouraged Afghanistan to drift in the direction of Soviet dependency. Kayoum’s business, Paul noted,

Goes along on its own inertia, and he shies away from any proposals for change. Most Afghans’ raw wool goes to Russia, where it is washed and processed in plants on the other side of the border, near Tashkent. Kayoum waved aside any suggestion that the country and his company might benefit if some of these processing operations were performed in Afghanistan before the wool was exported […] I thought that the advantages would be obvious to someone as experienced as Kayoum, but he was not at all interested in anything I said.\textsuperscript{257}

There was, Paul concluded, little reason for the business community to change the status quo – an inertia which, unfortunately, fed into Moscow’s hands. Similarly, in a 1962 meeting with a senior Afghan minister, Paul learned that

Afghanistan is under heavy obligations to Russia because of the way in which the USSR has saved part of this year’s crop of fresh fruits which cannot be shipped to the usual markets in India and Pakistan because of the closed border. The USSR had arranged for an airlift to Tashkent and thence to other parts of Russia. This year most of the Afghan grape crop is being dried and will be shipped to Russia in the form of raisins. This shows how

\textsuperscript{256} APJ, 30 January 1961, 420-421.
\textsuperscript{257} APJ, 4 September 1960, 166.
badly the new raising cleaning plant is needed. It would enable Afghanistan to sell dried fruits in the European markets for convertible currency and to use the proceeds in whatever way the country wants. There are ten Russian planes carrying raisins and other fresh and dried fruits daily to Tashkent. 258

This was precisely the kind of situation that Paul was supposed to prevent from happening. And try he did in trips around the region to attempt to bring Afghanistan to embrace more regional trade with partners other than the Soviet Union. Paul met with officials from Burmah-Shell and chemical companies that wanted to expand their presence in Afghanistan; some Afghan officials, meanwhile, were eager to ‘acquire petroleum supplies from the Persian Gulf via Karachi and thence by rail to the Afghan border near Kandahar.’ 259 This seemed like a win-win proposal for all involved; ICA (the precursor to USAID) was even willing to improve the road from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to Kabul via Kandahar. Afghanistan, however, had almost no convertible currency with which it could arrange deals with these international corporations. For several years, Paul discussed with Ellsworth Bunker, the American Ambassador in Delhi, the possibility of ‘regional payments-clearing mechanisms, with related credit arrangements to allow for some “swing” in the credit operations.’ 260

Yet Afghanistan’s trade with Iran was paltry and its trade with India shrinking. As Afghan élites well understood, in the late 1950s and 1960s, much of Asia was the opposite of what investors today would call an ‘emerging market’. As one Afghan banker noted at a 1961 Bangkok summit, ‘the five largest countries of Asia – Burma, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Indonesia – can today purchase 400 million dollars less of

---

258 APJ, 22 September 1962, 998.
259 APJ, 10 September 1960, 174.
260 Ibid., 174-175.
industrial goods than they could thirty years ago. Combined with the decline in terms of trade that commodities exporters like Afghanistan saw worldwide in the 1960s, it was no surprise that Afghan businesses were forgoing capital investment to take inflated commodities prices from Soviet importers.

But what if Paul could convince Afghans to make the institutional and industrial changes needed to export high value-added goods to growing markets outside of Asia? There was nothing wrong in being a commodities exporter, but if Paul could make Afghans see the wisdom in ‘improving the inspection of export shipments and adopting new methods of grading for such important commodities as cotton, wool, dried fruits, hides and skins, and casings’, their exports might become more competitive. In the summer of 1962, Paul accompanied officials from the Ministry of Commerce on a tour of several potential export markets – Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Tanganyika, Greece, Italy, France, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Austria – to arrange barter deals (Finnish paper for Afghan grapes, for example) and spoke with Zabuli’s representatives in Hamburg about the possibility of setting up an Egyptian- and German-run grading operation for Afghan cotton. By helping Afghan entrepreneurs implement the improvements in industrial management he knew well – Paul had managed a Lansdale, PA factory that produced parachutes, aircraft gear, and rocket nose cones after the war – perhaps he could integrate Afghanistan into the Western liberal trading order he had partly help to set up with Lend-Lease in the 1940s.

Yet these attempts to anchor Afghanistan in global trade proved abortive. For as

261 ‘Obzor razvitiia torgovlia I torgovaia politika (Rech’ direktora Mukhameda Akbara Omara na 4 sessii torgovogo komiteita v Bangkoke), Anis, February 3, 1961, in AVP RF, f. 71, op. 57, papka 70, d. 10, l. 19.
262 Author Interview, Leslie Symington, Oxford, United Kingdom, 21 October 2011.
other Western analysts in Kabul at the time understood and feared, the combination of the institutional uncertainty in the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship which Lauterpacht had sketched the outlines of, and the inability of Afghan élites to move the state away from the old Zabuli model to that of a tax-farming state with a developed monetary system, pushed Kabul more and more in the direction of a country that traded primarily with its north. In June 1969, for example, a diplomat at the British Embassy in Kabul compiled a table of economic data outlining Kabul’s major export and import partners from 1956 through 1967. The results were striking: the Soviet Union had gone from supplying 38 percent of imports in 1957 to 63 percent in 1963. Compared to this, the major Western exporters and Japan supplied only a third of Afghanistan’s total imports by the late 1960s, while – understandably in light of the Pashtunistan Crisis – Indian exports to Afghanistan collapsed by more than fifty percent over the same period, from a quarter of total Afghan imports to less than five percent.

Figure 6: Imports into Afghanistan from select countries for the 1956-1967 fiscal years.
The situation was similar with respect to exports. By 1967, the USSR absorbed a third of Afghanistan’s exports to 25 percent among the USA, the UK, and West Germany combined. Here the real divergence occurred during the Pashtunistan Crisis from 1955, when Pakistan closed its borders to Afghan exports. Prior to that conjuncture – after which the northern route through the Soviet Union became the only reasonable outlet to global markets for Afghan goods – the major Western importing countries (the USA, the UK, and West Germany) consumed 50 percent of Afghanistan’s exports, as compared to 25 percent for the USSR. By 1963, however, the ratio had declined to 35 percent for the Western importers as compared to 39 percent for the USSR, a shift in trade balances for the USSR that continued throughout the decade. The trend stood out even more when
framed over the course of several decades: if Afghan statistics are to be believed, in 1923
the USSR had accounted for only seven percent of Afghanistan’s total trade balance,
while ten years later it had reached thirty-seven percent.263 While the British Embassy’s
report neglects to include total trade balance figures, given the import and export figures,
by 1970 total Soviet trade is likely to have reached at least forty percent of total trade
turnover, a remarkable rise over the course of fifty years and part of the reason why
reports are so replete with fears of Afghanistan becoming a ‘Soviet satellite.’

Yet such views often revealed more about the author than they did about how
Soviet policymakers genuinely evaluated their position in Afghanistan. Writing in 2003
about his experience of traveling around Central Asia in the late 1950s, the historian
Richard Pipes recalled:

From Alma-Ata I flew to Kabul in a non-pressurized Soviet plane, full of Russian ‘experts’
en route to Afghanistan to provide friendly help. Once there, I was surprised by the extent
to which the Afghans allowed the Soviet Union to intervene in their internal affairs,
permitting them to construct a highway from Termez in Uzbekistan to Kabul, a road which
could serve only one purpose, namely, to transport Soviet troops into the heart of
Afghanistan.264

This thesis of Russian ambitions in South Asia and the Persian Gulf remains as
attractive to the demonologists today as it did during the Cold War, there is no evidence
to support it.265 Soviet aid to Kabul has to be seen in the context of Afghanistan-Pakistan
and Pakistan-American relations at the time. Between Dulles’ incompetent Afghan

263 Soviet Embassy in Kabul, Summary of Untitled Pamphlet Written by Abdul Hai Aziz for the Afghan
Press Ministry, in AVP RF, f. 71, op. 57, papka 70, d. 10, n.p.
265 As Karen Brutents writes, ‘The idea of “access to warm waters” I heard only once: from the First
Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan […] Sh[araf] Rashidov, when we spoke on
board a plane traveling to Algiers. Even he, I think, borrowed the idea from the American press, a
review of which TASS send around to the top brass. Incidentally, if Moscow had started from such a
conception, this would have meant a rapprochement with Amin – the most rapid proponent of
Afghanistan having access to the Indian Ocean.’ From Brutents, Tridsat’ let na staroi ploshechadi
(Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1998), 481.
diplomacy, a surge in US military aid to Pakistan ($4.2 billion in current dollars from 1955 until the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War), the fact that the CIA was actively launching espionage flights from Peshawar, and the grave state of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations from 1955 to 1962, there were plenty of rational and historically contingent reasons for both Kabul and Moscow to agree to closer cooperation during these years.Indeed, one point of constructing the Salang Tunnel that Pipes was referring to was to facilitate the surging volume of Soviet-Afghan trade caused as a direct result of the Pakistani blockades tolerated by Washington.

More than that, as Valeri İ Ivanov, the head of GIKES’ operations in Afghanistan from the 1970s onward, and later, the Russian Federation’s Trade Representative in Kabul, emphasized in an interview, this view of a Russian bear seeking to dominate Central Asia ignores the context of contemporary Soviet regional diplomacy. For example, on 30 May 1953 (only weeks after Stalin’s death), Moscow officially dropped all pretensions to territories in eastern Turkey and access to the Bosphorus, a diplomatic push that did not reverse Turkish accession to NATO and the establishment of an American base near Adana, but nonetheless facilitated normalization of Soviet-Turkish relations. Aid to India began in 1955 and relations only became closer over time. In the spring of 1956, Khrushčëv hosted the Shah in Moscow, where (according to British diplomats) the Soviet leader ‘frankly admitted past mistakes (attributed to Stalin) in their policy towards Iran. [He] appeared genuinely anxious to turn over a new leaf.’

267 Author Interview, Valeri İ Ivanov, Ignatovo, Russian Federation, 2 November 2012.
268 Communiqué from British Embassy Moscow to Foreign Office, 12 July 1956, PRO (Public Record Office), PREM (Records of the Prime Minister’s Office) 1535.
saw in Chapter One, meanwhile after the huge loss of prestige the Pakistani military establishment suffered after the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, Moscow nonetheless cultivated close relations with both Zulfikar Ali Bhutto even as it maintained a strategic alliance with Indira Gandhi and New Delhi. While some pro-Pashtun members of the Soviet intelligence community would regret in retrospect that the subsequent Janata Party leadership in New Delhi had not taken advantage of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan to smash Pakistan before it acquired nuclear weapons, for more sober minds like Ivanov, the point was that 1979 represented a cataclysmic *rupture* from Moscow’s quarter-century policy framework of pursuing warm ties with Delhi and Kabul and détente with the rest of the region.269

It was for this reason that the Soviet advisors in Kabul and policy planners in Moscow were far from celebrating the pattern of trade dependency with Moscow that Kabul had fallen into. In an April 1966 meeting in the Ministry of Planning focusing on the RGA’s upcoming Third Five-Year Plan, Bob Nathan asked the Soviet advisor Kovchov whether the Plan should favor state-run enterprises or private business. The answer surprised him: ‘This would depend on the industry’, replied Kovchov, ‘but by and large [Kovchov] felt that the managers of government-owned enterprises were not sufficiently “commercially oriented” and that they ought to be more business minded in their tasks.’270 Not only that, Kovchov said nothing about mechanized large-scale farming, a staple of previous Soviet proposals, and even underscored the importance of ‘mobilizing private capital and to encourage private investment’ in businesses. Echoing

269 Author Interview, Vasilii Kravtsov, 15 November 2012; Author Interview, Valerii Ivanov, Ignatovo, Russian Federation, 2 November 2012.

270 Robert R. Nathan, Diary Entry, 3 May 1966 (Kabul), Robert R. Nathan Papers, #4410, Box 2, Folder 5.
Paul, the Gosplan advisor Kovchov noted that small farmers needed ‘material incentives’ to improve the quality of their produce for sale abroad, and not just to the USSR.

While Nathan did not specify Kovchov’s position further, one plausible reason for his attitude was the fact that as early as 1960 the Soviet export boom to developing countries like Afghanistan was exposing serious deficiencies in Soviet industry. Because GKES was only a coordinating bureaucracy, it had few meaningful options to pressure individual factories or, in the case of commodity assistance, oil- or lumber-producing sovnarkhozy, to improve their goods.271 The Council of Ministers conducted factory inspections, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade tried to force producers to comply with international documentation standards when they exported goods abroad, but with few exceptions (Volga cars produced in Gor’kii were said to be well-liked), Soviet goods enjoyed a low reputation in foreign markets.272 As Nathan wrote in November 1965, ‘the market here has not tended to absorb Russian consumer goods readily. The people prefer American goods and I am convinced that far more American goods could be absorbed’.273

The problem – so unrecognizable in a world where mayors, prime ministers, and presidents routinely jet to emerging markets as boosters – was that aid and foreign trade had no domestic constituency in the postwar Soviet Union. Given the rapid expansion of the Soviet economy throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, and the lack of quality checks on factory managers, it was little surprise that the managers of a glass factory, for

272 GARF, f. 5446 (Sovet ministrov SSSR), op. 1, d. 687, l. 5
273 Robert R. Nathan, Diary Entry, Tuesday, 11 November 1965 (Kabul), Robert R. Nathan Papers, #4410, Box 1, Folder 38, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.
example, in Belarus or Ukraine would bristle at foreigners’ complaints that Soviet wares were substandard. More that, as Paul’s anecdote of the USSR importing Afghan raisins suggests, Soviet commodity purchase agreements led to rash purchases of low-quality goods that ended up rotting in warehouses rather than in Soviet stores.

Perhaps, then, by the end of the 1960s, the most helpful way to understand the situation that had crystallized in Kabul is less through the myth of the Russian bear, and more as a moment when Soviet strategic interests in Afghanistan justified the (considerable) economic wastage involved. From the point of view of Moscow, if Kabul’s Soviet-trained army officers were not about to follow the example of the Iraqi general ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim, overthrow their monarch, and distance their country from America – as Afghan officers eventually did in 1973 – there was also no use in crying over spoiled raisins if aid handouts to Zahir Shah and, later, Daoud, meant maintaining Afghanistan as the only Asian neighbor of the USSR that was a genuine ally. In the meantime, added Karen Brutents, the PDPA

w asn’t doing a bad job in learning the “technique” and “technology” of the activity of a Communist Party: their people gradually penetrated various administrative structures, government agencies, and the army in particular.

If only superficially, the situation would resemble the situation that another superpower faced in Asia decades later: the more ambiguous, or even hostile, one’s relationship with Beijing, Islamabad, and Tehran became, the more excusable it became to fritter away money on Kabul and deepen military ties with New Delhi to maintain strategic balance – all the more so if one also shared a 1,500-mile long border with Afghanistan.

274 RGAE, f. 4372 (Gosplan SSSR), op. 62, d. 462, l. 15-16.
275 Karen Brutents, Tridstat’ let na staroi ploshchadi (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniiia, 1998), 475.
276 Ibid., 453.
Then as now, however, the Afghans were more than just pawns in this chessboard. As we saw, the collapse of the regional trading order that had connected Pashtun worlds from Afghanistan to northern India had forced Afghan élites to scramble to re-invent a fiscal-administrative model for their state that would work in a world of territorial states in South Asian. This task was, as Nathan and Paul bemoaned, still a work in progress well into the 1960s, but the Soviet search for security gave Zahir Shah a safety valve. ‘I don’t blame the Afghans’, wrote Nathan in 1965, for selling their goods at high prices to the Russians and buying at low prices, except insofar as it does preclude developing markets that will give Afghanistan the kinds of currency needed for necessary imports. What distressed me is the fact that they are encouraged to continue to pursue rather unsound fiscal policies, which in the long run are going to put them into terrible difficulty and into the hands of the Russians in substantial measure.277

Yet Zahir Shah was no dupe: Soviet aid projects were universally confined to the north and east of the country. More than that, as the aid coordinator Ivanov emphasized, economic development for Zahir Shah was part of the political project of Pashtunization, using Soviet aid projects like the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex and the Sheberghan gasworks to promote Pashtun economic development or resettle Pashtuns to the north of the country, respectively. Far from being economically colonized, Afghanistan under Zahir Shah was perpetually muddling through fiscal crises with slowly – and at times successfully – grasping for modernity on Pashtun terms.

Still, as Zahir, and his cousin and successor Daoud, realized only too late, this program of leveraging Afghanistan’s geopolitical location to promote Afghanistan’s political and economic development in a South Asian order that included Pakistan was a

277 Robert R. Nathan, Diary Entry, Tuesday, 5 March 1965 (Kabul), Robert R. Nathan Papers, #4410, Box 1, Folder 34, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.
race against time. As Nathan and Paul repeatedly underscored, policy planners at the IMF and World Bank tired of Afghanistan’s ‘failure’ to conform to their expectations of good governance, and the introduction of so many foreign influences into the country, particularly into the lecture halls of the capital, was transforming Kabul into an ideological micro-arena of the global Cold War. Even as ‘Westernization’ took hold in the form of Coca-Cola and miniskirts in Kabul, fights between Islamists, Maoists, and Soviet-aligned Communists became more and common in the capital’s universities. Ironically in a country whose problems stemmed so much from the imposition of a territorial state order, Afghan students who came of age in this Cold War context often imagined themselves less as members of the territorially Afghan state and more as potential members of more ideological communities. As a Russian language teacher at the Mining and Petroleum Institute in Mazar-i Sharif wrote in a 1973 report to Moscow:

The theme ‘outer space’ inspired many questions among students, leading to discussions like ‘Man and Outer Space’, ‘Why study outer space?’, ‘How to become a cosmonaut’, ‘Earth and Outer Space’, ‘What is a spaceship?’, ‘Iuri Gagarin, the first cosmonaut’, and ‘Female Cosmonauts’. The last theme in particular led to many arguments, since according to the Quran a woman is supposed to fulfill her duties in the home and not carry out a man’s work. While a female doctor or a female teacher might represent minor additions (nebol’shie dopolnenia) to the Quran, a woman cosmonaut is something else. Some students declared that they wanted to be Soviet cosmonauts since Afghanistan will never conquer outer space; Afghanistan is a poor country.278

We can understand some of these problems relating to territory, nationalism and development more subtly if we refine our focus to the provincial level, something with which both the next section of this chapter and the next chapter of this dissertation grapple with respect to eastern Afghanistan. For while Soviet and American projects were concentrated in the north and the south of the country, respectively, advisors like Nathan

278 GARF f. 9606 (Ministerstvo vyssheho I srednego obrazovaniia), op. 11, d. 5909 (Otchet o komandirovkakh professorskovo–prepodavatel’skogo sostava I nauchnykh sotrudnikov v Afganistan za 1973 god), l. 24-25.
and Kovchov were joined by West German economics and agricultural advisors, as well. In Paktia Province, in the tribal zones of eastern Afghanistan, they would attempt to transform the region’s ecology. Given Paktia’s location and history – abutting the border with Pakistan, and tightly integrated into a trans-border Pashtun world of commerce – it would represent a test of the developmental imagination. If Western and Soviet economics had, at best, struggled to reform the Afghan state to correspond with the economics of a world of territorial states, how would West German agronomy and forestry do when transposed to the wild woods of Paktia?

_**Replenishing the Borderlands**_

West Germany, the third-largest donor to Afghanistan during the Cold War, pursued its foreign policy towards Kabul under substantially different conditions from those of the United States or the Soviet Union. Germany had sought to expand its influence in the country ever since Abdurrahman Khan had invited German engineers to Kabul in the 1880s and 1890s. The relationship between Kabul and Berlin gained momentum after 1919, as a newly independent Afghanistan looked upon Germany as a potential counter-weight to British and Soviet influence, a role that German Foreign Ministries were eager to accept. German engineers like Alfred Gerber, Walter Harten, and Wilhelm Rieck traveled to Kabul via the Trans-Siberian Railroad and horse in the 1920s to construct Amanullah’s Dar-ul Aman Palace, mosques, factories, and even a ten-mile railroad connecting central Kabul with Dar-ul Aman. Nadir Shah’s first Prime Minister, Mohammad Hashim Khan, sought closer relations with Nazi Germany, again as a rising counterweight to the British Empire and the Soviet Union. In the 1930s, more German
experts came to the capital to provide advice, joined this time by Japanese counterparts. Given Nazi ambitions to upset the British Empire in South Asia, perhaps most conspicuous in Berlin’s courtship of Indian nationalist leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose, Germany was more than open to closer relations with Afghanistan.²⁷⁹

As the Wehrmacht charged through Western Europe and, later, the Soviet Union, Berlin appeared to be on the verge of upsetting the British Empire and the Soviet Union as the premier European power. But Britain’s refusal to surrender created a hangup in German ambitions in Eurasia. Afghanistan had declared its neutrality in August 1940, but both Moscow and London insisted that Kabul expel all German advisors from the country. Kabul, fearing a similar fate to that of occupied Iran, agreed. Not that Berlin’s ambitions in the region were so easily undone, however. In the winter of 1941, a group of German engineers still stranded in Kabul aided Bose’s passage from the Khyber Pass to the Afghan-Soviet border using a faked Italian passport that stated his identity as the aristocrat ‘Count Orlando Mazotta.’²⁸⁰ Traveling through the USSR, Bose improbably made his way, via Rome, to Berlin, where he chaired the Special Bureau for India, organized Azad Hind Radio (broadcast in Hindustani and Pashto), and organized a German-aligned ‘Free India Legion’.²⁸¹ In January 1942, Nazi-trained Muslim commandos parachuted into Iranian Baluchistan to sabotage British installations there and foment an anti-British nationalist rebellion. But by the spring of 1942, the loss of military momentum in Soviet Russia forced Germany to curtail its Eurasian ambitions.

²⁷⁹ For more on Bose, see Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s Struggle Against Empire (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
²⁸⁰ Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent, 198.
²⁸¹ For Bose’s broadcasts for Azad Hind, see Subhas Chandra Bose, Azad Hind: Writings and Speeches 1941-1943, ed. Sisir K. Bose and Sugata Bose (London: Anthem, 2004); for the Free India Legion, see Sugata Bose, 209-210.
By the late 1940s, the issues that Berlin and clients like Bose had championed – Indian independence, Baluchi and Pashtun nationalism, the dismantling of the Raj – came to fruition, but only after tens of millions dead and a Soviet flag hanging over the **Reichstag**.

When West Germany regained the right to conduct an independent foreign policy in 1955, the terms on which German power would engage with what was now rapidly becoming a post-colonial world had changed. Perhaps most pressing was the need to discredit East Germany in the Third World. Immediately after renewing relations with the USSR in September 1955, both Konrad Adenauer and top aides like Walter Hallstein and Wilhelm Grewe conspired on how to avoid creating the impression that the diplomatic representation of both the FRG and the GDR in Moscow implied that Third World countries, too, could recognize both Berlin and Bonn. West Germany developed a policy later known as the Hallstein Doctrine: states that ‘recognized’ (what the term meant was left creatively ambiguous) East Germany could expect see reduced West German aid and engagement.\(^{282}\) Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Bonn began to use foreign aid agreements and the Hallstein Doctrine as a way to counter the East German push in the Third World.\(^{283}\) Not that just prestige was at stake. The detachment of East Prussia from Germany meant the loss of one of Central Europe’s richest agricultural regions, forcing Bonn to find ways to finance the import of foreign foodstuffs while also rebuilding its industry. But where would the money to finance the imports come from? ‘The defeat in the Second World War’, writes Bastian Hein,

\[\text{meant a deep caesura for German export trade and German economic foreign policy.}\]
\[\text{Around ten billion \textit{Reichmarks} of German foreign property were taken by the victors as a}\]


\(^{283}\) Ibid., 28-36.
part of the reparations, as were all international German patents and trademarks. German foreign trade was declared to be a privilege of the Allies, and private business with foreign countries was banned as a matter of principle. The products whose export was essential for the financing of imports of food, raw materials, and basic inputs for industry were processed through Allied foreign trade agents. German exporters, meanwhile, were paid prices for these goods that, as a part of the reparations, were artificially kept below global market prices.284

Economic engagement with the Third World and a focus on export-led growth, albeit within the bounds of American hegemony, was the answer. The IMF’s devaluation of the Deutschmark in the late 1940s provided Bonn with a structural export advantage that it exploited to the fullest; the value of the FRG’s exports rose from 8.3 billion DM in 1950 to 37 billion DM in 1958.285 The ‘Korea Boom’ of the early 1950s helped, too, as did American invitations to German firms to build infrastructure at military bases in Turkey, Greece, and Latin America.286 Already in 1953, a consortium of West German firms had bid successfully to construct a steel plant in Rourkela, India, the ‘first large investment project of German business in the Third World.’287 And unlike the Soviet Union, what Germans called ‘economic cooperation’ (wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit) had a domestic constituency. Industrialists with deutschmarks in their eyes came together with Catholic and Protestant leaders who saw development in the Third World as a Christian obligation. In 1961, a Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation was founded to consolidate and execute Bonn’s development policy.288

Afghanistan made a comeback in the German foreign policy imagination, but on

284 Ibid., 26. For more on the constraints facing the postwar German export trade, see Jürgen Bellers, Außenwirtschaftspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-1989 (Münster: 1990).

285 Hein, 26-27.

286 Damm, 25, 31-33, 43-44, 55-59.


288 Hein, for example, counts at least 71 independent agencies having existed by 1971, although he concedes that even this figure blurs the differences between some 200 smaller organizations devoted to international development. Hein, 4.
different terms than two decades prior. Hans Hellhoff, the Director for Siemens (which built several enormous dams in Afghanistan in the 1950s and 1960s) in Kabul summarized the situation in a 1962 letter to his representative in the Bundestag.\footnote{Hans Hellhoff, Letter, 10 October 1962, Bundesarchiv Koblenz B213/2791, Folder Six: ‘Afghanistan / Allgemeines’} No romantic, Hellhoff dismissed any moral calls for development. Still, he argued, it was essential that Bonn, with the help of virtuous West German corporate leadership, ‘maintain the friendship we have had that for years and decades with countries’ like Afghanistan. ‘[Countering] the economic offensive of the Eastern states’ was crucial. As Hellhoff explained, American policy towards the Helmand Valley Project had been devastating for Western interests and prompted Kabul to accept Soviet aid. ‘The result’, wrote Hellhoff,

was that since that time no major assignment for an installation went to Germany, while the Russians tackled (in Angriff nehmen) the construction of several hydro-power stations – projects that prior had been constructed exclusively by Siemens.

This was particularly brutal for the FRG. ‘Every large assignment lost to the East is’, wrote Hellhoff, ‘the same as a lost battle.’ He might have chosen his words more carefully, but Hellhoff was making a serious point:

Due to the economic structure of the Bundesrepublik, we are, as far as I am aware, dependent on exports to live. Given the economic situation, then, it is of highest and most vital interest that we maintain the overseas markets, even if today they are still quite small.

Officials back home agreed. By the time that Hellhoff wrote, as the Soviet ‘aid offensive’ was underway, Bonn activated several aid avenues to Afghanistan: educational exchange, the training of police officers, the construction of technical institutes across the country, a small economic policy team that worked with Nathan Associates and Gosplan in the Ministry of Planning, international educational exchanges for Afghan bureaucrats
in Bonn, and the creation of a blood bank in Kabul.\textsuperscript{290} By 1967, Siemens had built another massive dam in Makhipar to supplement the one it had built a decade earlier in Sarobi.\textsuperscript{291} As a report outlining existing West German projects underscored, by 1961 Bonn had implemented the equivalent of fifteen million in current 2013 dollars’ worth of aid projects, with plans for a further nine million more.\textsuperscript{292}

These projects, however, raised questions similar to those that had bedeviled American and Soviet advisors. As a former development advisor wrote to his Representative, Ralf Dahrendorf, in 1970, many of the Afghans who studied in West Germany for higher education returned to Afghanistan with the desire for a ‘white collar job – for a desk with a telephone and a servant and the rejection of all “dirty work.”’\textsuperscript{293}

And that was if they ever left Germany. Foreign exchange students tended, he continued, to find a blonde girlfriend in Germany, then try to stay in Germany or take the bride back home with them, get married – and sooner or later the marriage goes down the toilet. Afghanistan’s thirst for capital aid, moreover, was unslakeable. In the same report that noted Bonn’s existing commitments of twenty-four million dollars to Afghanistan, the author added that Afghans had submitted a wish list for fifty-six million dollars’ worth of additional projects. This might have been worth it if German businesses were receiving unique access in Kabul, or if Bonn had actually embodied the crypto-imperialism of which the GDR constantly accused it. But neither was the case.

Given the geopolitical role that West Germans ascribed to Afghanistan, however,


\textsuperscript{291} Muhammad Azim Hashimi, ‘Osnovnye napravlenia po razvitiu sistemy elektroznabzhenia Demokraticheskoi Respubliki Afganistan’ (Kandidat nauk Dissertation, Energetic Institute, 1984), 23.

\textsuperscript{292} ‘Förderungsmaßnahmen für Afghanistan. Besprechung im AA vom 14.2.1961’.

‘getting tough’ on Kabul was likely only to drive it closer towards the Soviet Union. Nor, given the USA-Pakistan alliance or Bonn’s own close relationship with Washington and Islamabad, were any dreams of Pashtun and Balochi nationalist adventurism in the cards. But perhaps if the FRG focused more on provincial development – undertaken in a more modest way than the Americans had done in the south – as opposed to large infrastructure projects, it could help Afghans and prove that Westerners were more than the equals of the Soviets, who had just started their own provincial development projects in Jalalabad and the north.

Such, at least, was what Bob Nathan argued. Sometime in the mid-1960s, Nathan suggested a regional development scheme to one of the German advisors attached to the Ministry of Planning, Dr. Hendrikson.²⁹⁴ Hendrikson got in touch with Klaus Lampe, a development expert in Bonn whom then assembled a team of agronomists, civil engineers, husbandry experts, road engineers, architects, and other technical experts.²⁹⁵ After five years of feasibility studies and determining precisely where to station a West German regional development project, in 1966, the first German teams settled on Paktia Province, whose borders have been redrawn since the 1960s, but which can be seen within its contemporary boundaries below.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ What became the Paktia Project was only one of a number of regional development initiatives underway in Afghanistan at the time. Paul Jones, of course, was working on the American-led Helmand Valley Project. The Soviet Union was carrying out a regional development initiative in Nangarhar. The United Nations had organised a wine-growing program for peasants in Parwan Province, and prior to the coup in 1973 there were plans on the table for an ADB- and French-led development project in Kunduz and Baghlan, a World Bank-led program for western Afghanistan, a UN regional development scheme in Kunar, and a PRC-led effort in Parwan Province. For more information, see: Christoph Häselbarth, ‘Ein Landwirtschafts- und Provinzentwicklungsprogramm in Afghanistan unter Leitung von Dr. Wakil, Minister ohne Portfolio im Kgl. Afghanischen Premierministerium’, 24 January 1972, Bundesarchiv Koblenz 213/2797.
²⁹⁵ Author Interview, Christoph Häselbarth, Strittmatt, Germany, 14 April 2012.
²⁹⁶ For more specifics on administrative changes in Afghanistan since the 1950s, see ‘Provinces of Afghanistan’, available online at: http://www.statoids.com/uaf.html
The Agricultural Project (*Landwirtschaftsprojekt*), a program that ran from 1966-1972, formed the centerpiece of the Paktia Project. It employed several hundred German experts and over 10,000 Afghans, whether as ‘counterparts’ or as part-time workers. German experts built irrigation canals across the region, attempted to halt erosion, and introduced modern agricultural techniques to the region. In some model fields, for example, they set up several plots using different combinations of fertilizers to learn for themselves, alongside Afghan farmers, which combinations produced the greatest crop yields. Elsewhere, they imported North American stocks of maize which

---

297 Author Interview, Christoph Häselbarth, Strittmatt, Germany, 14 April 2012. See also Nathan’s discussion of the project in Robert R. Nathan, Diary Entry, Wednesday, 28 July 1971 (Kabul), Robert R. Nathan Papers, #4410, Box 2, Folder 15, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.
grew taller than the seeds that the local farmers had previously planted. At short courses in Khost, a district capital, they introduced modern technology – water pumps, tractors, and Western fertilizers – to farmers, who could then return to their villages to share these new techniques.

*Figure 9:* Food for Trees: farmers in Paktia receiving American corned beef and wheat in exchange for planting trees, c. 1970-1972. Photograph courtesy of Christoph Häselbarth.

The Paktia Project was sold as a locally-driven project, but it bound Afghanistan into global networks of social science knowledge. In 1970, Christoph Häselbarth, the lead German advisor, was invited to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beer-Sheva, Israel, to learn afforestation techniques from Israeli experts. Following a stay of several weeks, Häselbarth brought his new expertise back to Paktia, where the German team started a successful afforestation program from 1970-1972. At a time when agricultural yields declined across Afghanistan in the wake of droughts and overburdened traditional
water management systems, Häselbarth instituted a Food-for-Forests program. Afghans were encouraged to set up plots of anywhere between 225 and 400 square meters per tree and hand-dig small canals leading to small wells in which they could plant trees. During rainstorms or floods, water flowed through the rivulets into the wells, which themselves were filled with soil and stones to stabilize the saplings. The trees – properly watered and stabilized – grew, and after one or two years, they could be replanted elsewhere. ‘If you look at Paktia today’, Häselbarth said, ‘or most of Afghanistan for that matter, it looks like a giant desert – basically, what Israel looked like in the 60s. But within a year or two, it had become really quite green.’ Given enough time, Häselbarth implied, Afghanistan could have become what Israel is today – hot and dry, but increasingly forested and with a population that had developed a greater sense of stewardship towards the land.298

Häselbarth’s comments, however, overlooked the intensely political meaning behind afforestation projects in the twentieth century. His reflections on Afghanistan and Israel, for example, obscured the morally ambiguous role, to say the least, that forests in the ‘re-development’ of Palestine following 1948. The Jewish National Fund and a variety of other Israeli institutions conspired to plant large forests, notably the Birya Forest in the Upper Galilee and the Ramot Menashe Park southwest of Nazareth, were planted over the ruins of Palestinian villages whose population had been expelled into Transjordan. Many Israeli institutions were extensively occupied with devising new Hebrew place names to replace the depopulated and bulldozed Arab sites.299 One 1963 short story by the Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua, ‘Facing the Forests’, captures the moral

298 Author Interview, Christoph Häselbarth, Strittmatt, Germany, 14 April 2012.
dilemma inherent in the connection between afforestation and state-building. In it, a young Israeli forest scout discovers that the pine forest he has been assigned to protect is built on top of bulldozed Arab villages. On the last day of his assignment, an old Arab man burns down the forest to reveal the ruined village ‘in its basic outlines as an abstract drawing, as all things past and buried’ – the remnants of an Arab Palestine lodged within the landscapes even of an exhaustively ‘Hebraized’ landscape. Afforestation in Paktia was to be linked more with economy-building than forced population transfers and ethnic cleansing, of course. But still, Häselbarth’s unproblematic acceptance of the Israeli afforestation project suggested an inability, or unwillingness, to grapple with the essentially political nature of the Paktia Project.

Figure 10: Christoph Häselbarth’s sketch of the Paktia afforestation scheme, courtesy of

---

author. Figures demonstrate how tree saplings were planted in micro-drainage basins between 15 and 20 meters square, fed with small canals, and stabilized by stones and dirt at the bottom of ditches.

It would not be the first such moment, either. ‘You have no idea’, said Häselbarth as he reviewed photographs of Pashtuns at an agricultural exhibition in Khost and pointing to a group of men sitting in a circle,

how long this all took. We’d make a suggestion for anything – to build a school, to introduce a new kind of pepper or corn or any sort of vegetable, and they’d react very skeptically at first. Then they’d go off in their circles, sit and discuss it, often for hours on end while we just stood there.

‘Finally, they’d come over and let us know, and often it would work out fine’, Häselbarth said, gesturing at photographs of locals posing with enormous vegetables. Yet being what Häselbarth called volksnah (‘close to the people’) meant getting involved in disputes, or mastering the local culture. ‘We once tried to introduce a new species of corn’, he noted, pointing to a photograph of two cornstalks, one much taller than the other.

It was imported from somewhere, Mexico or North America, I think. But at first they said they didn’t want it. They made up excuses, said they had no need for more maize even though there were clearly problems with hunger. It was unbelievable.

Häselbarth devised a solution. He had observed that among some of the tribes, the mere fact of a semi-public good (cedar trees in a forest, or unfenced-in grain, for example) being guarded made it seem more valuable in the eyes of many. He asked his Afghan colleagues in Khost to arrange for a guard to be posted around the new imported maize. Within a few days, the locals had noticed: perhaps the new, taller corn was worth something? ‘From there’, explained Häselbarth,

it was simple to convince them to use the new corn. The mere fact of something being constantly robbed, or the threat that it would be stolen, made it more valuable.

Häselbarth was receiving a crash course in local institutions, even as his very presence as an outsider itself caused these institutions to evolve and change. Häselbarth
emphasized how violent Paktia was, for instance. ‘Every day in Khost’, there were
dozens of cases of blood revenge or disputes. Ninety-nine percent of them had to do with
two things: water and land.’ But because the West Germans

were viewed as non-partisan observers to these conflicts, and because they thought we
knew what we were talking about with land and water, tribal chiefs and affected parties
often came to our offices in Khost, to give us the details of a case, and ask what we
thought should be done in that case or the other.

Some of the German workers were hesitant about inserting themselves into these local
disputes or even rejected the legitimacy of Pashtunwali in the local context. Particularly
around 1968, Häselbarth recalled,

we received several [German] students who would talk constantly about how society had
to be completely overthrown and rebuilt from the start. Most of those people didn’t last
too long in Paktia …

Häselbarth’s juxtaposition of the rational technocracy of the Landwirtschaftsproekt
team with West German student radicalism, however, paved over how ambitious the
Landwirtschaftsproekt actually was. However inchoately expressed and ill-suited to
Afghanistan the demands of the student activists sent to Paktia were, they at least
positioned themselves as a political organization. Dissatisfied with the hegemony that a
CDU-SPD ‘Grand Coalition’ held in the West German Bundestag, German student
radicals framed themselves as an ‘extra-parliamentary opposition’
(Außerparlamentarische Opposition) prepared to make political and moral demands of
Germany even if they were shut out of mainstream institutions. The most eloquent of the
student radicals, moreover, like the East German refugee Rudi Dutschke, while standing
in opposition to the ‘Grand Coalition’, nonetheless insisted on a respect for existing
institutions and saw their project of reform as a ‘long march through the institutions’: industry, agro-business, the Bundeswehr and the bureaucracy, and, finally, the
The Bundestag. ‘Permanent revolutionaries’, as Dutschke described the German 68ers at their best, had to remain both political and democratic; the student movement made but little reference to the role of expertise.

It was little wonder, then, that leaders of the Landwirtschaftsprojekt like Häselbarth were so skeptical of student radicals. The issue had less to do with content than form: if members of the Studentenbewegung were obsessed with the political, the guiding ethos of social science interventions like the Landwirtschaftsprojekt were to turn all political issues (visible in the long debates that local jirgas held) into economic questions. The political was not only boring (the jirgas took place for hours ‘while we just stood there’), it was irrelevant. When Häselbarth described the suggestions he made to local elders about new crops, his choice of words revealed his conceptual universe. Villagers were the reactive objects, not the active subjects, of ‘economies’, as Häselbarth and the West German agronomists understood them.

One anecdote that (understandably) remained fixed in Häselbarth’s mind decades later underscored this tendency to discredit local moral economies, or the political itself, as ‘irrational’ or ‘wild’. One day, while a local was driving a tractor on top of a ridge, he accidentally rolled the tractor over, crushing another local Afghan who was walking on the path below. The tractor driver, realizing that the accidental manslaughter would demand blood revenge on the part of the crushed man’s relatives, fled posthaste to Pakistan. ‘Well’, said Häselbarth, because I had brought the tractor there in the first place, and since the man had left, it was soon made clear to me that I was the one upon whom the blood revenge had to be visited.’ Trouble followed. ‘So as soon as I heard’,
said Häselbarth, ‘I went to the local bazaar in Khost and purchased two sheep there.’ But as soon as I came back to my house, there was a group of some two dozen armed men surrounding it, all the doors and windows. They were looking for me, for the blood revenge, and I surrendered without a fight. They took me off to their village, somewhere near Khost and led me down to and locked me in a basement in a house there.

He elaborated:

Now, you have to understand, with blood revenge at this time in Paktia, there were three options for how to settle it. The first was simple: kill the person who killed your relative. The second was to bring the family of the deceased a virgin, that is to say an unmarried woman. And third was to bring them two sheep. You can guess which one I wanted. But they still had to choose. So I sat in this pitch-black room for several hours, probably five or six hours, and finally they opened the door and told me they had chosen the sheep. I’m really glad I went to that bazaar …

Given what Häselbarth painted as the danger and irrationality of the locals, one might ask what was at stake in Paktia that warranted these social science interventions. Another West German operation in Paktia, the Forest Project, underscores why the RGA and foreigners attempted so vigorously to improve the province. One may think of Afghanistan as an arid country, but Paktia comprised an exception to this rule. As one German forester explained,

the natural forests of Afghanistan are, owing to the extremely dry climate, restricted to the Safed Koh range of the Hindu Kush that separates Afghanistan from Pakistan and remains influenced by the Indian monsoon climate. There, in an altitude range of between 1,800 and 3,200 meters that is still nonetheless dominated by strips of rock and scree, mixed reserves of some 80% Himalayan cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) and spruce (*Picea morinda*), fir (*picea morinda*), and pine (*Pinus excelsa*).  

The cedar trees were prized and cultivated by the locals, but, continued the report,

the province is especially difficult since its freedom-loving population possesses political privileges and has closed itself off long ago against all foreign influence. Only a few navigable paths follow the creeks through this land marked by high mountain ranges. With the exception of a 5,000 hectare government forest along the Pakistani border, all of the woodlands are owned by extended families and tribes. The formula for allocating forests (*Aufteilungsschlüssel*) is incredibly muddled (*ist vielfach verworren*) and complicated and often leads to bloody arguments.

---

This might have been an academic issue had Paktia lain five hundred miles to the west, but the fact that the Afghanistan-Pakistan border intersected the Safed Koh, and the fact that the markets for these trees lay in Pakistan, not Afghanistan, made control over the cedar stock a vital issue for the Afghan ‘national economy’. As the German report continued, locals on both sides of the Durand Line ignored the border, passing freely across the border as they engaged in the wood trade. Tribesmen felled trees, saddled the logs onto their mules, and shipped the wood to sawmills and building supply markets in Pakistan. Wrote the German expert:

since a few years ago, a high price has been paid for cedar wood in the neighboring forest-poor but more industrially developed regions of Pakistan. This has led to massive deforestations (Abholzungen) and to the desertification (Verwüstung) of many high-altitude forests. Trees are felled exclusively with the axe, prepared as timber with significant waste, and brought across the border in long camel caravans.

Even if these borderlands Pashtun tribes thought of themselves as part of a ‘Pashtunistan’ that extended from Karachi to Kabul, and even if the RGA did not officially recognize the legitimacy of the Durand Line, as far as the RGA was concerned, the forests that lay to the west of the border ought to be destined for markets in Kabul, not Karachi. If the vision for an Afghanistan-Pakistan ‘division of labour’ that Zabuli had mooted twenty years ago was unviable, then Kabul would claim a monopoly on all the woods that lay to the west of the Durand Line.

In any event, locals’ engagement with transnational Pashtun markets threatened to destroy Paktia’s woods. ‘The demand on the Afghan wood market is, in light of the modest home décor culture (Wohnkultur) here, low, in contrast to which the exports to Pakistan are constantly increasing.’ By 1968, up to 1,000 camels, each hauling one cubic meter of timber, crossed the border daily. ‘With such exploitation apace’, explained a
German report,

we can count on the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the remaining 35,000 hectares of woodlands in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the population density, and, with it, the need for firewood and pasture, is increasing. Clearing the roots and the extermination of the surface vegetation prevent a natural re-forestation and have already led to the karstification of other territories.

If the long-term goal of the RGA in Paktia, then, was to re-direct the shipment of Himalayan cedar to Pakistani markets and encourage the Ghilzai tribes of the region to integrate more with national *Afghan* markets, in the short term there was the no less serious problem of making sure that the combination of Paktia’s independence and the appetite of Pakistani cedar markets did not destroy the region’s resources altogether.

Soon, the ideas of territorial economic space and ‘sustainability’ would fuse to delegitimize the regional economy of Pashtunistan. As early as 1963, the RGA reached out to Bonn to devise a provincial development plan for the province and carry out a study of the region’s forests.302 Two years later, the FRG dispatched a team of experts to Paktia who set up a small ‘demonstration forest’ in Mandaher in the extreme northeast of the province. As one laudatory account of the ‘demonstration forest’ extolled,

In the years of initiating the project, the German experts set up, under difficult living and work conditions, a forest station with living and work quarters at the edge of the government forest, at an altitude of between 2,500 and 3,000 meters. The inventory of this forest is complete, and twenty kilometers of forest paths have been put down in the undeveloped and difficult-to-access forest territory. In two large nurseries, the first forest plants from native forest seeds as well as specimens from the German stock of seed and plants are ready to use for attempts at reforestation, and a block hand saw cuts the logs from the first cullings of the government forest into wood for building materials and boards. The construction of a forest work school, a sawmill, and a workshop for auto repair and wood processing on site at the forest station, all of which began in 1968, is finished. At the Paktia Forest Project, on average four hundred local volunteer workers and one hundred civil servants, government employees, and experts are at work during the summer. Within the framework of the project, three Afghan officers have received a two-year forestry education in Germany and have been deployed into the project again. Two young graduates of the local technical college are at present taking the same course in Germany.

302 Voll, ‘Die forst- und holzwirtschaftliche Hilfe für Afghanistan’.
Yet this chipper article, intended for the West German forestry community at home, masked how dire conditions actually were. In May 1969, one year into the operation of the Forest Project, the Governor of Paktia Province lent the German team a helicopter to conduct an aerial survey of the region. ‘The results’, wrote the lead German expert to the Afghan Ministry of Planning,

are hopeless and crushing (niederschmetternd). Besides the state forest in Mandaher – which, from a bird’s-eye view looks like a forest oasis in the middle of the cut-down reserves – and a few scattered smaller remainders, all of the other wooded surfaces of the province are, from the point of view of forest economics (aus forstwirtschaftlicher Sicht) exploited and annihilated.303

The major forested areas of Paktia – Jaji, Mangal, Chadran, and Charuti (pictured on the map below) – were almost totally depleted.304 The conclusion was bleak:

The substance of Paktia’s forests is reduced. The protective function of the forest for the soil and water is destroyed in large areas. Any further use of the region’s woods as usual will mean eventual desertification (Verwüstung).305

If Kabul wanted to prevent total desertification, it had, the experts suggested, to take four measures: it had to impose a total ban on logging for the four forest areas, with the exception of Mandaher, which could be ‘used sustainably (nachhaltig) according to the economic plan of the German Forest Group.’ It had to ban tribes from using the forest areas as pasture for their animals, so that the forests could grow back. It had to ban the export of wood to Pakistan. And the RGA had to construct two sawmills in Paktia to cut wood more efficiently for domestic use. Unless the tribes relinquished control of the land to the Afghan national economy and German social science vision – embodied by scientific concepts like ‘sustainability’ and the hyper-rational vision of aerial

305 Ibid., 8.
photography—they had no future.

Later that year, in October and November 1969, the Forest Group, in conjunction with its Afghan colleagues, conducted a comprehensive survey of the state of the forests that made clear the precarious fate of the woods. Only three percent of Paktia’s forests could be classified as areas that ‘could be directly transferred to a sustainable economy (Nachhaltswirtschaft)’.

Two-thirds of the region’s surface area might be restored to a sustainable state with intensive forest management, but one-third of Paktia’s forests were devastated beyond all hope. Outside of the government forest in Mandaher and Wazir District (where the German forest teams were not allowed to conduct surveys for fear of

kidnapping), Jaji District had the greatest percentage (55.6 percent) of forests that could either be sustainably harvested or restored to a sustainable condition. The majority of old-growth cedar forests, meanwhile, were concentrated, perhaps not surprisingly, far away from the Pakistani border.

*Figure 12: Districts of Paktia Province (Jaji, Chamkan-Gabr-Lescher, Khost, Setekanda, Zeruk-Spera, Mercaka-Gardez-Sorauza, Urgun-Gomal, Waziri) colored according to percentage of surface area with sustainably harvestable forests. Checkered area is Mandaher State Forest; dotted area in Waziri District is area of known cedar forests, although no measurements were taken. Data from ‘Waldinventur der Provinz Paktia / Waldinventur’, 1 January 1970, Bundesarchiv Koblenz B213/2838.*

The Forest Group’s interventions to that point had had precious little effect. Indeed, if Häselbarth struggled to convince Paktia’s tribal leaders to adopt new seeds which even *they* recognized as beneficial for their people, how was the Forest Group to convince tribes to restructure one of the bases of their economy? As one forester wrote in
January 1968, earlier in the 1960s the RGA had attempted to resettle the Lewani Pashtuns to the Gardez Valley, guaranteeing them land rights. But

the confrontation between the government and the members of the tribe about specific ownership rights and claims led overwhelmingly to demonstrative and wild logging operations (*wilden Holzeinschagsaktion*), and the King soon ceased his efforts.  

Given the history of relations between Paktia and the Durrani government – rebellions in Paktia had led to Amanullah’s ouster forty years before – Kabul would proceed slowly on matters of forest management.

The more fundamental problem, however, was German social science vision, which assumed the territorial state as the basic unit of analysis. As the Forest Group’s analysts knew, none of the tribes in Paktia recognized the Durand Line and participated in larger markets centered around the metropolis of Karachi. Desertification represented a very real risk, but understanding the wood economy of Paktia *in toto* demanded stepping beyond the Line as an analytical boundary. It demanded understanding how tribes in Jaji or Mandral, for instance, interacted with merchants and sawmills in the Pakistani FATA or along the road to Karachi. Yet because Pakistan was a sovereign state, conducting such transnational economic analysis was impossible – analytically if also logistically. Instead of seeing Paktia as part of a complex transnational economic space, then, the German team proceeded from the assumption that Paktia represented a *drain* of valuable cedar resources from the *Afghan* ‘national economy’. Pashtunistan may have already had an economic reality, in other words, but as far as the political project of Pashtunistan was concerned, the RGA might have to destroy one Pashtun world in order to save the other.

As part of this project, Paktia, had become what Timothy Mitchell describes as a

---

'negative space’ bracketed by the idea of the ‘national economy’:

The countryside may contain what one thinks of as traditional practices or precapitalist social arrangements, which resist the spread of the market or even interact with it in some kind of transitional articulation. It may contain political forces that present obstacles to the spread of capitalism or corrupt its operation. People may have social values or cultural norms that differ from those of the market. What characterizes all these additional features, however, is that when they are placed within the larger story of capitalism they are determined by its logic. The narrative marks them as nonmarket factors, meaning that it defines their identity and significance in terms of what they are not. Their role is that of negative elements.\textsuperscript{308}

The issue, to be more precise, was not that the German foresters did not understand the transnational market interactions of the tribes of Paktia, and which went beyond the scope of an Afghan ‘national market.’ Rather, it was the assumption that they could overcome ‘irrational’ human geographies if they only they explained themselves more clearly. As the German team argued in response to a critical article in the \textit{Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung} about the troubles in Paktia, one had to take a long-term view.\textsuperscript{309} ‘In the field of forestry’, went the response,

in contrast to agriculture visible successes can only be awaited in the longer-term time span. The fact that centuries-long customs aren’t given up in the space of a few years shouldn’t surprise anyone who comes from an industrial country and gets to know all of the traits of a just-developing country: the coexistence (\textit{Zusammenleben}) or counter-existence (\textit{Gegeneinanderleben}) of tribes with their socio-economic structures; their property relations which cannot be overlooked, their occasional tribal feuds; their taboos; their extensive and partly nomadic forms of using the land; their way of thinking focused only on their immediate needs.\textsuperscript{310}

The Forest Group’s inventory of Paktia’s forests suggested, however, that the team was interested less in understanding the economies of the region’s tribes than in re-reading the territory of the province in ways that erased, à la Mitchell, alternative stories for how the woods should be organized. Moral or transnational economies that did not


\textsuperscript{310} Herr von Hegel, ‘Forstwirtschaftliche Entwicklung in Paktia / Afghanistan’, 2, Bundesarchiv Koblenz B213/2838.
conform to visions of an Afghan ‘national economy’ simply had to adapt. Understanding the woods of Paktia, the inventory noted, for example, demanded reconceptualizing the province not in terms of its ethnographic reality but rather in terms of the ‘natural’ structure of the economy as suggested by its physical geography. ‘Since describing the region in terms of tribal territories would not yield any sensible (sinnvoll) solution’, noted the inventory’s preface,

[our report conceptually] combines the valley systems and regions whose flow of wood exports (deren Holzabfluß) is forced into a common direction by geographical particularities.311

Human geographies and economies, which fed into transnational Pashtun markets, were simply written out of the group’s report as ‘irrational’. True, the Forest Group recognized that its concept of ‘natural’ flows of wood to Afghan markets as determined by physical geography had no basis whatsoever in reality. In their response to the FAZ article, however, representatives from Bonn argued that if only the tribes could be convinced to think beyond an eternal present, they could be brought to realize the reason of the Forest Group’s ‘natural’ geography. Still, the response concluded,

in light of [the tribes’] need to get all they can out of the woods as long as the reserves are there, and to use a momentary chance at gain until nothing is left, convincing them to think in terms of the tomorrow is rather difficult.312

While the team succeeded in cooperating with the RGA to limit some shipments of two-by-fours across certain border crossings, the problem remained the same. As the borderlands demonstrated more vividly than anywhere else, Afghanistan was a space of economic flows, of transfers, of exchange, not easily modeled in the language of the

312 Voll, ‘Die forst- und holzwirtschaftliche Hilfe für Afghanistan’. 
territorial state or the national economy. Yet the imposition of just such a state order on South and Central Asia had forced Afghanistan into a fiscal and intellectual bind. Because the old fiscal-administrative model of Afghanistan as a space of exchange no longer worked, Afghan élites were forced to bring in foreign experts who thought of the state as a territorially enclosed economic space. Neither the RGA, nor, certainly, the German team had the force to convince these borderlands dwellers to think in terms of ‘natural’ timber flows, a ‘rational’ tomorrow, or – just as much of a myth – a national Afghan market to which they had to contribute. Social science vision could talk, argue, and produce reports, it seemed, but it could not see.

The embedding of Afghanistan into these global intellectual networks would, however, soon bear unexpected consequences. In 1973, Afghan Army officers, many of whom came from the borderlands before studying abroad in the Soviet Union, overthrew Zahir Shah and installed his cousin, Mohammad Daoud, as the country’s new President. The Paktia Project, along with many of the other West German operations, was forced to shut down. In spite of their myopia and arrogance, however, the Forest Team had nonetheless been right about one thing. The forests of Paktia – regardless of whether one viewed them as ‘national’ economic resources, tribal property, or part of a transnational economic system – were indeed cut down to the point of desertification, a development that accelerated a regional economic, environmental, and, as the next chapter of this dissertation will show, ideological crisis.

‘Afghanistan could have been green’, said Häselbarth. ‘It could have had forests, it could have been like Israel.’ Much of the work that Häselbarth and the Forest Group put
into replenishing the borderlands, however went for nought as the tribes continued to plunder the woods.\textsuperscript{313} Within a decade, what remained of Paktia’s forests would go up in flames. ‘When the Russians came’, said Häselsbarth, ‘they used napalm bombs on many of the trees we had planted. Partisans were hiding underneath the trees we had planted, and so they had to all be burnt down.’ From the point of view of Afghan Leftists who would soon invest so much in the idea of an Afghan territorial state, albeit on very different terms from those that Häselsbarth imagined, the borderlands would be lost to a transnational, Pakistani-dominated world of plunder and colonization. ‘Everything was trucked out of Afghanistan’, recalled one ex-Communist,

everything in the ground, and everything in the air. They cut down the trees to ship them to Karachi, and they captured the birds in Badakhshan to sell them at bird markets in Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{314}

In Paktia today, as in much of Afghanistan, few forests still stand. Those that remain are either in severe decline, or exist outside of legal and regulatory frameworks to allow them to grow back. To this day, as a result of ecological collapse in the 1970s and war in the 1980s and 1990s, Paktia remains deforested and plagued by drought. The data German forest experts collected may bear witness to the folly of social science vision and the project of the national economy, but it also remains an unwitting timestamp to the age, diversity, and beauty of Paktia’s forests during Afghanistan’s developmental moment – the last moment, indeed, before woods and country alike were consumed by destruction.

Concluding Thoughts

Afghanistan had gone through an heady journey during its developmental

\textsuperscript{313} Author Interview, Christoph Häselsbarth, Strittmatt, Germany, 14 April 2012.
\textsuperscript{314} Author Interview, Sakina Zyar, Oxford, United Kingdom, 14 July 2011.
moment. Following independence in 1919, the RGA succeeded at making Afghanistan commercially independent from Anglo-Indian commercial networks. It charted a course of genuine independence in a world where empire still dominated. Yet at the same moment that Kabul had achieved its goal of becoming a commercial facilitator, Partition reconfigured a world of empire into one of territorial states where the old Afghan strategy no longer worked. If Afghan élites wanted to continue their political project of economic development and Pashtunization, they would have to negotiate between Cold War powers and their adversary to the southeast. This they did, albeit by agreeing to become, in effect, a laboratory for eclectic social science visions of economic development and the role of the state. This was a deeply ironic fate, since Afghanistan’s history and institutions made it uniquely ill-suited for models of development built around the territorial state and national economy. Nonetheless, far from a ‘graveyard of empires’, Afghanistan would become an unlikely hothouse for ideas about the state and national economy.

But the developmental moment was just that – a moment. By the 1970s, not just the idea of development but also South and Central Asia itself would be gripped by crisis. The debacle in Vietnam discredited the idea that social science interventions could render the former colonial world secure and prosperous for many Americans. In Washington, under a new Republican Administration, ‘modernization’ was out; ‘linkage’, ‘détente’, and ‘credibility’ were in. Washington leaned heavily on Islamabad as it reached out to the People’s Republic of China and quarreled with New Delhi over its growing partnership with Moscow. As President Nixon stated plainly in 1970, ‘no one has occupied the White House who is friendlier to Pakistan than me.’

315 Dennis Kux, The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000, Disenchanted Allies (Washington, DC:
dollars on a country that few Americans had even heard of grew difficult to make. American engagement in Afghanistan dwindled, and the State Department even considered shuttering its Embassy in Kabul.\textsuperscript{316} American retreat from Afghanistan was welcome in the USSR, but the emergence of a Sino-American alliance in the region also reinforced the need for Moscow to bolster its ties with Delhi and ‘national democrats’ like Daoud. As the Western decreased, Soviet advisors carried out projects in the country unabated as Daoud navigated the country closer towards the USSR.

Events in the region, meanwhile, pulled Afghanistan closer towards a vortex of chaos. After the first democratic elections in Pakistani history resulted in victories for Pashtun and Balochi nationalist parties on the provincial level, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto ramped up a campaign of terror in the Pakistani borderlands. In 1975, Bhutto supported an abortive attempt by Islamist rebels to overthrow Daoud in favor of Islamist rebels. Two years later, Bhutto himself become the victim of a coup, but his successor, Zia ul-Haq, prosecuted his borderlands strategy even more aggressively, bringing élite Pashtuns into the Punjabi-dominated Pakistani establishment while also seeking to ‘de-Pashtunize’ border populations through a promotion of Islamic radicalism, Urdu-language education, and the imprisonment and liquidation of leftist Pashtun leaders.

To the west of Afghanistan, the Shah’s ambitions to build a ‘great civilization’ through planning, modernization, and Western alignment cracked up as the country was devoured by revolution in the autumn of 1978. What began as a revolution against tyranny, however morphed into a revolutionary Shi’a dictatorship. The new regime was

\textsuperscript{316} Author Interview, Dick Scott, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 5 October 2012.
unattractive in its own right in places like Herat or Bamiyan, but the threat a revolutionary Tehran posed to Riyadh and Islamabad helped turn Afghanistan into the epicenter of a regional Sunni-Shi’a civil war.

By early 1978, then, Afghanistan was beleaguered enough. Daoud, however, wary of a mounting alliance between PDPA Communists and the Army to oust him, sought to initiate a purge of the former. It backfired. After Daoud’s Minister of the Interior had Mir Akbar Khyber, a prominent PDPA intellectual, assassinated outside his home on 17 April 1978, eleven days later Army officers used Soviet military equipment – tanks, MiG-21s, and SU-7s – to bomb the Presidential Palace in Kabul. Soon, Daoud was dead, and the country re-christened the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The sudden rise to power in April, however, of the PDPA, followed a year later by Soviet military intervention, magnified Afghanistan from the center of the regional pandemonium into a major theater in the ‘global Cold War’. Development, but of a very different sort than the kind that had been tried out during the developmental moment, would be called in to resolve the crisis; but when Soviet advisors entered the same borderlands that Häselbarth and the German foresters had departed only recently, they would be in for a rude surprise.
CHAPTER THREE:
From Pashtunwali to Communism? VLKSM Advisors in the Afghan Borderlands

With the growth of the complexity of society, immediate experience with its events plays an increasingly smaller role as a source of information and basis of judgement in contrast to symbolically mediated information about these events.317

On the morning of 19 August 1981, Valerii Sidorov, a Komsomol secretary from Leningrad, landed with his family at the Kabul Airport to begin a two-year tour in Afghanistan.318 His first day in the country was delirious: his Soviet and Afghan fixers drove him and his family to the Hotel Kabul and handed him the keys to Room 104, just down the hallway from where terrorists had assassinated the American Ambassador Adolph Dubs two years prior. Sidorov’s family lay down to sleep and recover from the jet lag; for Sidorov, however, it was a work day. In spite of the forty degree heat, he changed into a black suit and rushed to the hotel lobby, whence he was taken to a meeting with PDPA General Secretary Babrak Karmal. Karmal told Sidorov how delighted he was that VLKSM advisors like Sidorov had arrived to provide guidance to the PDPA’s youth organization, DOYA (Democratic Organization of the Youth of Afghanistan). Gratified but exhausted, Sidorov collapsed into the car waiting to take him back to the hotel.

Later that evening, Sidorov tucked his wife and children into bed and wished them goodnight. Soon, he knocked at the room of Nikolaï Zakharov, the head VLKSM advisor in Kabul. The heat was still oppressive, Zakharov noted to his friend, letting him into the room. Zakharov grinned, however: he had brought along something with which they might cool off. He placed a melon onto the table, and cut into it. Yet halfway

318 Mushaveri (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 2005), ‘Vsë bylo ne zria’, 17.
through the cutting action, the knife jarred against something hard. Zakharov pried the melon open, revealing a bottle of *Stolichnaya* vodka that had somehow been hidden inside of the fruit. The two men sliced the melon into bite-size chunks, poured shots, and joked that ‘these were special melons and watermelons imported into Afghanistan by the advisors.’ They raised their glasses and toasted one another, anxious, but also excited, about the challenge of bringing socialism to Afghanistan.

Sidorov and Zakharov were both members of Komsomol-2, one of several teams of VLKSM advisors dispatched to occupied Afghanistan from 1979 to 1988. It was the most ambitious outreach that VLKSM would undertake in the Third World during the Cold War. In 1967, two years after the founding of the PDPA, Party leaders formed a ‘People’s Youth Organization’ that agitated for socialism in the universities of Kabul and in the Afghan Army.319 Yet such efforts were desultory: by 1978, the organization numbered only 5,000 members, most of them in the capital. Nor was this a boutique problem. Marx, Engels and Lenin had all explicitly argued that youth represented the future of any socialist state. Without a youth mobilization apparatus, the PDPA was doomed to lack a real social base. VLKSM, which had grown from underground beginnings to a mass organization that penetrated every settlement in the USSR and had international ties, represented what Afghan Communists wanted to build for themselves: an administrative system that could swell the ranks of the Party, fill out the police and Army, and provide a rationalized system of cadre management.

What made VLKSM an especially powerful motivating institution for Afghan

319 BA SAPMO DY-24 / 22217, ‘Information über die Demokratische Jugendorganisation Afghanistans (DJO)’
Communists, too, was the way it zipped up territories, economies, and politics. VLKSM penetrated non-Party institutions like schools, universities, and industrial enterprises. It covered every square inch of Soviet territory; the idea that any alternative institution might claim to organize or represent Soviet youth was anathema. For modernizing Communist élites like the Khalqists who came to power in April 1978, and who had only a tenuous control over their state territory, the promise of a mobilizational, centralizing, matrix of Party control was attractive. Hence, in the summer of 1978, shortly after the April Revolution, the PDPA’s youth organization, now re-named DOYA, requested to Moscow that VLKSM dispatch advisors for help.320

The head of VLKSM’s Cadre Sector, Natalia Ianina, swiftly organized a group of a dozen top VLKSM obkom secretaries to assist the fledgling organization. Yet not long after ‘Komsomol-1’ arrived in Kabul in the summer of 1979, the country descended into chaos. DOYA had originally been led by Parchamists, but in the summer of 1978, Nur Mohammad Taraki and later Hafizullah Amin purged DOYA’s leadership and recklessly remade the organization into a machine geared around involuntary youth conscription in order to engorge the Army and a devoted to a ‘Revolution’ that served only the interests of ultra-Left Pashtun Communists.321 The VLKSM advisors in Kabul were disgusted by what they saw. Working alongside the scholar Viktor Korgun in the fall of 1979, Zakharov felt that the PDPA had exploited VLKSM to abet the ‘establishment in Afghanistan of an Islamic Republic of nowhere near pro-Soviet character.’322 Later, while

320 BA SAPMO DY-24 / 22217, ‘Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Komsomol und der Volksjugendorganisation Afghanistans’
321 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), f. M-3, op. 13, Putevoditel’.
preparing an exhibition on Komsomol with Abdurrahman Amin (Hafizullah’s son) in
November 1979, Zakharov overheard Abdurrahman boast that he was ‘prepared to walk
over the corpses of any internal dissenters’ within the PDPA.\footnote{This was the socialist
revolution these men had risked their lives to support?}

Less than a month after this episode, Amin the elder had a bullet in his head and
Soviet troops, now occupying the country, had installed Parchamist Communists in
Kabul. Yet the question of how to build up DOYA, and the PDPA more broadly, remained
as pressing as ever. VLKSM expanded its advising operations\footnote{Ianina, began in the
spring of 1980 to scour her archives of kharakteristiki and travel around the Soviet Union
to interview VLKSM secretaries and recruit them as advisors.\footnote{As Ivan Obratov, the
\textit{obkom} VLKSM secretary from Voronezh in the late 1970s, recalled in a 2007 interview:

\begin{quote}
How did I end up in Afghanistan? In the spring of 1981 they invited me to the Kiev
Republican Komsomol School to share the experience of our Komsomol organization.
Natalia Ianina, the director of the Cadre Section of the VLKSM CC, turned up there. She
began to ask me: education, whether I knew how to use technology or not (\textit{znau li
tekhniku}), can I drive an automobile, and so on. They said that was it. But then later came
the call from Moscow. ‘There’s a recommendation to send you to Afghanistan as an
advisor of the VLKSM Central Committee.’
\end{quote}

The experience was similar on empire’s periphery. As Saïd Karimov, then a graduate
student who edited Russian-Dari dictionaries at the Lenin State University in Dushanbe,
recalled, one day in the spring of 1987, he saw an announcement calling for recruits to

\end{quote}

\footnote{‘Iunost’ zvaa vpered. Komsomol cherez gody I rasstoiania’, \textit{Kommuna: informatsionnyi portal
Voronezha i voronezhskoi oblasti}, 15 May 2007, available online at:

\begin{flushright}
2005), 12-17.
323 Ibid., 13.
324 Author Interview, Abdurakim Samodov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 19 July 2012.
325 Ianina’s intensity and devotion to the Party was legendary within VLKSM and made her an object of
great respect among the VLKSM advisors. As a young woman, Ianina had fought in the Battle of Kursk,
and was a well-known rising star in VLKSM for much of the postwar period, becoming one of the first
female \textit{obkom} VLKSM secretaries ever after the war.
\end{flushright}
travel to Afghanistan as youth advisors or translators. After an initial set of exams at VLKSM’s Dushanbe offices, Karimov sat across a table from Ianina and a fellow native speaker of Tajik. The two grilled him for hours on the fine points of translation between Russian, Tajik, and Dari. The standards were high, but Karimov passed the test. Like all of the other VLKSM advisors and translators, however, before actually departing for Kabul, Karimov had to attend training courses in Moscow, Tashkent, and Chirchiq (the last the site of a military training camp where, incidentally, the team that had assassinated Amin had trained) in a course in Afghan culture, paramilitary training, and Ianina’s idea of Soviet civilization.

‘Ianina was a strict, strict woman’, Karimov recalled. Of the fourteen advisors and translators in Chirchiq that summer, five were dismissed: four for attempting to sneak out of the compound to visit Tashkent in the evening, another because Ianina disapproved of how sloppily he had eaten his food in the mess hall. ‘That’s not a Soviet person’, she said. ‘We can’t have any uncultured people [nekul’turnye liudi].’ The advisor pleaded his case: his wife in Leningrad had said she would divorce him if he didn’t serve in Afghanistan. Ianina had him placed on the next flight out of the Uzbek capital ‘You’re not a Tajik, you’re not a Russian, you’re a Soviet advisor’, Ianina emphasized. ‘You’re a citizen of the Soviet Union.’ For ambitious dwellers of the Soviet periphery like Karimov, day after day of eating military-grade Uzbek gruel, learning how to lay land mines and throw grenades in the dusty hills around Chirchiq, and having the sixty-three year old Ianina, dressed in fatigues, yell at them to gather for 5:30 AM wakeup calls was a small price to

---

327 Author Interview, Said Karimov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 24 July 2012.
328 According to interviews, VLSKM advisors serving in Afghanistan received roughly three times their normal wage – a handsome sum by Soviet standards, but one they only learned of after signing up for the job.
pay for the assimilation and prestige that came with the job. From 1981–1988, some two hundred men passed under Ianina’s watch, arriving – as Sidorov did one sultry August day – in Kabul to carry out their internationalist mission.

Once there, the VLKSM advisors engaged in a wide variety of jobs to help DOYA. As Obratsov, who was deployed to Herat in western Afghanistan, recalled,

the youth were desperate for contact. And it was as if they had absorbed our ideological guidelines. I can remember the First Secretary of our Youth Obkom, Kadyr Mantyk, an eighteen-year old kid who could recite from memory Lenin’s work *What is To Be Done.* Or girls in *paranjas* would come by and join in the youth protests. For them, the Revolution promised a new life, and they came to that new life through Komsomol.329

Serving was dangerous, but it also represented a chance to fulfill one's sense of idealism.

Once, for example, Obratsov and the other advisors in Herat (of whom more in a moment) escorted a caravan from Kushka, a town on the Turkmen-Afghan border, to Kandahar:

> [we took] everything, *everything,* into a country with no [industrial] production whatsoever, no industrial objects. But we were trying to improve the economy of the country, to embed it within the framework of modern civilization. Now I understand the extent to which that was unrealistic. But then no such questions raised themselves. I knew that I was fulfilling a sacred responsibility: the defense of the frontiers of our Motherland.

Some advisors, like the Tajik Muboraksho Makhshulov, worked in Kabul institutions like DOYA’s Institute for Young Cadre (*Institut molodëzhnykh kadrov*), the equivalent of the USSR’s Higher Komsomol School.331 Most, however, were sent to provincial centers – bigger cities like Herat, Kandahar, or Jalalabad, but also smaller settlements like Gardez,

---


330 The ambiguity in Obratsov’s recollections are worth noting here: while he clearly took pride in the adventure of developing Afghanistan and bringing it into the ‘framework of modern civilization’, his most ecstatic description of his work in Afghanistan was in the language of post-Great Patriotic War Soviet nationalism: Obratsov had to deliver supplies to … Kandahar in order to maintain the territorial security of the USSR.

331 Muboraksho Makhshulov, Author Interview, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 18 July 2012.
Ghazni, and Meymaneh – in the nine administrative zones into which VLKSM divided Afghanistan. As Zaidullo Dzhunaidov, a Tajik VLKSM advisor, explained, this was no simple task. In the Soviet Union, VLKSM existed in an institutional ecosystem of collectivized agriculture, a command economy, urban settlement, and peace. How, then, to translate the Soviet system to a country with private agriculture, a market economy, and whose overwhelmingly rural population was at civil war?

![Map of Afghanistan and Pakistan](image)

*Figure 13:* The nine ‘zones’ into which Afghanistan was divided by the DOYA bureaucracy: North (light green), Northeast (red), East (yellow), Southeast (light purple), South (khaki), Southwest (black/grey), West (royal blue), Northwest (turquoise), and Center (dark purple). From RGASPI, fond M-3, opis’13, putevoditel’ (guide to fond).

*Sources & Methodological Approaches*

It was a daunting question – and one that this chapter seeks to answer through the lens of VLKSM’s presence in eastern and southeastern Afghanistan during the 1980s. Before proceeding with the story, however, this chapter’s sources, regional focus, and methodological approach bear discussion. Perhaps the first question is why VLKSM in

---

332 Zaidullo Dzhunaidov, Author Interview, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 30 August 2012.
particular bears special attention in a study of ‘development’. One could point, correctly, that VLKSM represented only a small part of Soviet advising operation in Afghanistan. In Kabul, for example, Soviet lawyers drafted the DRA’s laws, Soviet engineers upgraded Afghanistan’s infrastructure, while the KGB helped the KhAD fight ‘ghost wars’ against the Pakistani ISI and the CIA. In the provinces, VLKSM was just one of many Soviet institutions present. As Obratsoy remembered,

[along with me in Herat there was] our advisor for agriculture, our advisor for youth affairs, our Party advisor, our KGB advisor, [and] our police advisor.

Why, then, one might, focus on what may seem like a boutique operation – ‘youth development’ – instead of the ‘real’ development tasks of infrastructure and policing?

There are two answers to this question. One is logistical: VLKSM’s records and its ‘alumni’ community, so to speak, remain the most open and best-organized of all of the Soviet advising operations that were in Afghanistan. The archives of the KGB, much less those of the Central Committee, are not yet forthcoming with materials having to do with their advising operations in the country, but all of the reports (otchêty) that VLKSM advisors filed are open to the public. Because of the intimate size of VLKSM’s operations, moreover, many former advisors maintain close contact with one another, and in 2005, two former advisors published an ‘almanac’ on VLKSM’s Afghan experience, drawn from archival research and interviews. Because the almanac provided some basic biographical and professional information about the former advisors, it was further

---

333 Abdurrakim Samodov, Author Interview, 19 July 2012, Dushanbe, Tajikistan.
334 ‘Ionost’ zvala vpered. Komsomol cherez gody i rasstoianiya.’
335 ‘This said, it bears noting that in addition to the otchêty, the VLKSM archives contain (but do not make available to the public) the ‘workbooks’ (rabochie tetradi) of VLKSM advisors, the notebooks that the Komsomol advisors used for day-to-day operations in Afghanistan.
336 Mushavery (Moscow: Mezdhhunarodnye Otnosheniia, 2005).
possible to track down and interview former advisors during an extended research trip. While the research for this dissertation also resulted in interviews with former CC CPSU and KGB advisors as well, these idiosyncratic circumstances make VLKSM the best institutional lens through which to examine Soviet development in occupied Afghanistan.

As Chapter Two stressed, moreover, the importance of VLKSM is clear if one appreciates ‘development’ as something more than just infrastructure. Just as Bob Nathan, Arthur Paul, the Gosplan advisors, and the German Forest Group were engaged in something bigger than ‘just’ economic troubleshooting or horticulture, VLKSM did more than just daycare. All of these developmental interventions represented attempts to reshape how the Afghan state could interact with the mix of peoples, places, ecologies, and local economies that made up the territory comprising ‘Afghanistan’. As the PDPA leadership understood, this was why institutionally enveloping the countryside was so important. Without making it possible for isolated Pashtun tribes or Hazara youth from Qul-i Khush to join the Sarandoy or the Afghan Army, or to find ways to study in Kabul, Tashkent, Moscow, or Berlin, the PDPA could never claim to be a real people’s Party invincible to any tribal and ethnic coalitions that challenged its authority. Hence, when we read the VLKSM reports here, what we are really interested in is less how many youth signed up for a given event, for instance, and more the methods and concepts that DOYA and VLKSM activists relied upon as they sought to define the relationship of the Afghan state and the PDPA to the realities of Afghanistan.

Given the sweeping geographical scope of the VLKSM files and the diversity of Afghanistan’s provinces, the historian working with these files is spoiled for choice on
the question of which region, or regions, to focus on in telling this story. Several regions suggest themselves. One might examine the Tajik- and Uzbek-dominated north; the Durrani Pashtun heartlands of Kandahar and Helmand Provinces in the south; the areas abutting the Iranian border; or the Hazara-dominated central Afghan massif. This chapter, however, focuses on on what VLKSM called the East and Southeast Zones (depicted above in yellow and violet). These regions of Afghanistan (along with Kabul) ‘constitute the heart of the Afghan state’, in the words of a leading historian of Afghanistan, and have historically had both the highest regional population densities in the country – four times that in the south and twice that found in the northern plains – and the largest percentage of the country’s population.\textsuperscript{337}

It was in these territories that DOYA and VLKSM’s mission would succeed or fail – not just because a plurality of Afghans lived in this part of the country, but because of its strategic location between ‘the passes through the Hindu Kush to the north and the passes to India to the east.’\textsuperscript{338} Strategic they were at the time, too: these borderlands were only a few hours’ drive away from Peshawar, the hub of the anti-PDPA mujahidin resistance. More than that, because the east and southeast comprised some of the same lands where the West Germans had worked approximately a decade earlier, a focus on the region naturally suggests continuities and breaks between developmental interventions.

The east and southeast were also fluid borderlands – a problem for a PDPA trying to build a territorial Afghan state. No government in Kabul had ever recognized the Durand Line as a legitimate international border, and as Chapter Two showed, denizens of the region made a living through exchange between ‘Afghanistan’ and ‘Pakistan’. As

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[338] Ibid., 52.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
élites like Zabuli had recognized, the Afghan state and territory it ‘owned’ was better suited to transnational exchange than being a container space of economic and political sovereignty. In spite of the ideological differences between Soviet, American, and West German developmental interventions, however, twentieth century development was enthralled with what Maier calls the ‘territorial premise of collective life’: the idea that a nation’s ‘identity space’, ‘economic space’, or ‘administrative space’ was coterminous with its ‘decision space.’ This tension between the reality of Afghanistan as a fluid space, and the idea of the ‘national economy’ presented for developmental interventions came through most clearly in the borderlands, where the contradiction between reality and political project was sharpest.

This chapter, therefore, places the experience of the VLKSM advisors and their Afghan colleagues into this larger story of the clash between territoriality and reality in the borderlands. This approach diverges from our usual intuitions about Soviet history, according to which the key feature of the Soviet experience was Marxism-Leninism or ‘Communism’. Indeed, from a certain point of view, the Soviet collapse and the ideological discrediting of Marxism-Leninism allows one dismiss the Soviet experience as a historical mistake, as opposed to an institutional project which one might compare to other, non-Soviet forms of sovereignty, ‘development’ or ‘modernization’. This chapter takes a different approach, looking not just to older political science traditions marked by scholars like Barrington Moore, but also to more recent historical scholarship by Timothy

Mitchell, James C. Scott, and James Ferguson. It seeks to examine how VLKSM and DOYA activists ran into problems in Afghanistan that, far from stemming from the Marxist-Leninist nature of their modernizing project, resulted from the ‘territorial premise’ that haunted the developmental project in all of its ideological guises. Rather than viewing VLKSM advisors in Afghanistan as Soviet or Communist actors, then, the focus is on what their story reveals about twentieth century development writ large.

More specifically, this chapter engages with how VLKSM advisors learned to adapt Komsomol’s historical approach to development – so bound to the idea of territoriality – to a context where that model was problematic, to say the least. While, as this chapter will show, VLKSM advisors in the East gradually learned how to adapt their Soviet models of territorially-bound administration and development to the borderlands, this turned out to be a learning process with deadly outcomes for Afghans. Only by the late 1980s did Soviets and Afghans in some select parts of the east give up on the dream of total PDPA penetration of the countryside and devolve autonomy to local tribes. From the point of view of locals, though, it was a lost decade: the policy shift marked a return to the RGA’s policies of the 1960s. Along the way, the crooked road from Pashtunwali to Communism would reveal as much about the limits of the Soviet project as about the ungovernability of the borderlands.

The Afghan Borderlands: Peoples, Places, Histories

In order to ground a potentially over-indulgent discussion of territoriality, sovereignty, and development in something concrete, it is crucial that we appreciate the specific history of the Afghan borderlands in the 1960s and 1970s, a time when such far-
flung locales as Khost and Asadabad became micro-theaters of a global Cold War.\footnote{Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). This all said, the region was famous for rebellion for a reason: since at least the mid-sixteenth century, tribes in this area had rebelled against the Moghuls before becoming more famous for the numerous uprisings against Abdurrahman Khan in the late 19th century and several more revolts against Kabul in the early 20th century, usually staged against attempts to collect taxes or nullify the tribes’ traditional privileges, such as not participating in the Afghan military.} For a start, it may be useful to define the piece of geographical real estate that this chapter examines. While most ethnographers and scholars of Afghanistan and the Pashtuns would concede that precise lines are hard to draw what is now eastern Afghanistan – a fact rendered all the more vivid by the Durand Line – this chapter engages with an Afghan East that can crudely be divided into two zones: in the north, the valleys formed by the Kabul River, the Kunar River Valley, and Nuristan; and in the south, the tribal zones comprised by provinces like Paktia, Paktika, Zabol, Logar, and Ghazni.\footnote{For a learned discussion about further subdivisions of this part of the world, see V.V. Basov, “‘Zona Plemen’ vostochnogo Afganistana (etnomograficheskii ocherk),” in *Stranitsy istorii I istoriografii Indii i Afganistana* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 2000), 245-278.}

Several geographical features stand out: the mountainous regions of Nuristan; the rugged hills of most of the tribal lands; and the relationship of river valleys and highways to major settlements. One might view the region as a series of east-west corridors connecting Afghanistan and Pakistan, most obviously along the Kabul–Jalalabad–Peshawar axis; but also the trade routes from southeastern Afghanistan into the Pakistani FATA and passes further north: the northern reaches of the Kunar Valley, meanwhile, contain mountain passes that permit access to the Karakorum Range and Xinjiang to the east, Afghan and Soviet Badakhshan to the north, and the Panjshir Valley to the west.\footnote{V.V. Basov, ‘Evoliutsiia sotsial’nogo bor’by vostochnykh pushtunov Afganistana: eë osobennosti do I posle Apreli’skoi revolutsii’ (1985), in Basov, *Natsional’noe I plemennoe v Afganistane: k pomnaniu nevoennykh istokov afganskogo krizisa*, ed. V.B. Kravtsov (Moscow: NIIts FSNKh Rossii, 2011), 189.}

One must, in other words, view the east not just as the Pashtun tribal areas and the
Khyber Pass. Instead, the entire ribbon of land from Asadabad to the Khost represented a vast territory that linked Afghanistan not only with Pakistan, but also China and (in theory) Soviet Tajikistan. More than that, it linked together internal regions of Afghanistan in a way that a simple glance at a political or road map might hide.

Demographically, most Pashtuns in the east were Ghilzais, one of whose most powerful sub-tribes, the Ahmadzais, had played a significant role in Afghan history, typically in coalitions with Durrani Mohammadzais from the south. Pashtun tribes in eastern Afghanistan followed many of the core traditions of Pashtunwali as did other Pashtuns – badal (blood revenge), melmastia (hospitality), or nanawatai (asylum) – but the tribes in eastern Afghanistan retained a form of egalitarian, militaristic organization not seen in the south or among re-settled Pashtuns elsewhere in the country. Tribes in this part of Afghanistan were known for forming lashkars, small tribal armies, and badragahs, armed escorts for guests and traveling merchants.

344 This pattern continues even across Cold War or other ideological boundaries. Najibullah, for example, was an Ahmadzai, while from 2001 to 2014, Afghanistan was ruled by a Durrani Pashtun (Hamid Karzai) advised by Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, also an Ahmadzai. One prominent Afghan, Hashmat Ghani Ahmadzai, a key leader for nomadic Pashtun Kuchis in the east, bridges much of the period covered by this dissertation: he was a key advisor to the Mohammadzai royal family before becoming an influential power broker under Hamid Karzai in the 2000s.
Figure 14: Map of Eastern Afghanistan and Northwestern Pakistan

More than that, the difference between Ghilzai and Durrani Pashtuns can arguably be understood in terms of both groups’ relationship with development.\textsuperscript{345} At stake is the tension between the cultures of \textit{nang} (‘honor’) and \textit{qalang} (‘taxes’). Visions of the centralized, fiscally buoyant state may have enthralled urban Pashtuns like the founders of the PDPA as much as they did hierarchically-organized Durrani rulers and foreign experts; but to the more egalitarian Ghilzai Pashtun tribes that lived in poverty, and primarily in rural Afghanistan and Pakistan, centralization often came at their expense. Put another way, officials from Kabul usually came to them to \textit{take} things – money, young men, dignity – rather than to give things. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for making sense of Afghanistan’s history during the 1960s and 1970s. From the perspective

\textsuperscript{345} Tribal Analysis Center, ‘Afghanistan’s Development: An Instability Driver?’ (August 2010), available online at: http://www.tribalanalysiscenter.com/PDF-TAC/Afghanists\%20Development.pdf
of egalitarian rural Ghilzais Pashtuns, many of the development projects endorsed by Zahir Shah and Daoud focused too much on improving Durrani areas of the country, or on re-settling Pashtuns out of their ‘authentic’, ‘indigenous’ nang environment into technocratic qalang systems of administration built around formal education, industrial enterprises, and careers built around the public sector. Unimpressed by ideas of ‘progress’, nang-oriented tribes had two goals, in the words of one former Soviet Afghanistan expert: defending their own critical resources, such as arable land, water, and access to major transit routes; and raising their own wealth, if necessarily via conquest or plunder.346 ‘Development’ that went beyond these modest goals represented a threat. As one group of scholars write in reference to today,

the foundation of the basic problem related to development within the complex Afghan insurgency tends to lie in the nang vs. qalang relationship that is represented in the enormous split between the nation-builders, the non-Pashtun ethnic groups and the ‘settled’ Pashtuns, and the rural tribes that retain their traditional egalitarian self-rule processes through elders. Large development projects benefit the nation-builders at the expense of the tribes – and the tribes know this to be true. It isn’t an accident of history that the Taliban, representing the best interests of the rural tribes, attack schools, clinics, roads, and those projects that tend to strengthen the nation-builders.347

Even taking into account the region’s peoples and places, it is impossible to understand the events of the 1980s without reference to how the region became such an ideological sweat lodge in the 1960s and 1970s. Chapter Two, of course, has already partly touched on this story in its discussion of the West German agronomist Christoph Häselbarth and the German Forest Team in Paktia Province. Part of the reason why the Paktia Projekt was located where it was had to do with Zahir Shah’s strategy of siloing foreigners’ developmental interventions in different parts of Afghanistan. The Americans were mostly confined to the south, Germans to the east, and Soviets in the north. The

346 Author Interview, Vasilii Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, October 23, 2012.
347 Ibid.
more proximate reason for Paktia’s fate, however, was the lobbying of provincial representatives like Hajji Muhammad Iqbal, a prominent businessman from Jaji and the Chairman of Iqbal Transport.\textsuperscript{348} Throughout the 1960s, grandees like Iqbal argued for RGA investment in the Tribal Zones, in particular roads, schools, hospitals, and power plants. (Iqbal, sensibly enough given his chosen industry, went so far as to lobby for an international highway connecting Afghanistan’s ring road with Pakistan via Paktia.)

Others dreamed of bundling up the region’s economic development with bigger political projects. For some, the calculus got back to the idea of Pashtunistan. In light of the impressive economic growth of Pakistan in the 1960s, the out-migration of Afghan Pashtuns into Pakistan, and what some Afghan Pashtun activists criticized as a lack of Pashtun self-determination within the Pakistani ‘One Unit’ administrative scheme, it should come as no surprise that regional development in Paktia could form part of the quest for Pashtunistan. For Zahir Shah as for Daoud and conniving local élites, applying what Terry Martin calls the ‘Piedmont Principle’ to Paktia made political sense.\textsuperscript{349} If only Pakistani Pashtuns could see how good Afghan Ghilzai Pashtuns had it, they might tilt in favor of irredentism. (The prospect of bringing the east under more centralized control, particularly with the help of auxiliaries like Häselbarth, may have also been a factor from Kabul’s point of view.) As Sher Khan, a representative from Tani argued ambiguously,

\begin{quote}
the downtrodden Pashtun nation has not yet been able to realize its rights, and the population of our province can help them in many regards, even though their life [i.e. in Pakistan] is by no means easy.\textsuperscript{350}
\end{quote}

Spurred by lobbying from these groups – and the threat of insurrections from places like

\textsuperscript{348} Basov, 166.
\textsuperscript{350} Basov, 168.
Mangal, which rebelled in the late 1960s – the RGA sought to transform the east.

But Paktia and the tribal areas were not the only part of the region to see social science interventions. The drainage basin of the Kabul River, running from the capital to the warm valleys of Laghman and Jalalabad, long occupied a special place in Soviet developmental interventions in Afghanistan. In the 1960s, Soviet engineers built the Naghlu and Darunta Dams to control flooding and provide electricity to Kabul and Jalalabad, respectively.351 In 1964, Soviet experts began to advise the RGA on how to improve agriculture around Jalalabad.352 Professors like Idris Akhundzade from the USSR’s Central Institute for Sub-Tropical Cultures in Sukhumi determined that Jalalabad’s soil could foster oranges, mandarins, and palm and olive trees. Soon the Soviet effort to remake the valley into a flourishing agricultural region was on. Soviet bulldozers, excavators, and dump trucks removed large stones that centuries of river flow had deposited into the soil. Engineers built a 70-kilometer long canal along which newly established state firms could grow crops.353 Interviewed in 1987, Akhundzade recalled:

> With what hopes did the local inhabitants look upon us! The route of nomads went through the valley, but they understood well (prekrasno ponimali) what it would mean for the country, what it would mean for them, if these dead lands came to life. Already at the time of construction the nomads had settled around Jalalabad, and even helped us … you should have seen their eyes.354

Twenty-three years later, Akhundzade was proud of the olives he had planted in

Jalalabad. Azerbaijani olives, he noted, grew to be five times as large in the Jalalabad soil as they did in the orchards around Baku. Yet expanding efficiency was not the whole story, either. ‘Do you know’, asked Akhundzade rhetorically,

what I dreamed about then? That the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex would be able to help smallholder peasants by providing them with sites where they could grow something.

Yet as Chapter Two showed, few of the developmental moment’s promises panned out. By the end of the 1960s, regional representatives expressed their disappointment with the West German effort.355 ‘The development project for Paktia Province has not justified the expectations of the population’, said Shahbaz Ahmadzai, a representative from Said Karam.

Enormous sums of West German Deutschmarks and afghani are being spent on automobiles, the construction of cottages, the reception of any and all possible guests to the province, and fuel purchases, and yet the return from it all is miserable.

Said another parliamentary deputy, Mirza Jon,

Paktia Province as a whole and the district of Jaji-Maidan in particular, is in a very severe state, suffering from illiteracy, darkness, a lack of hospitals and medicines. The people do not even know what the word ‘doctor’ means.

The complaints continued. Where the RGA was not doing enough to build schools, hospitals, or roads, it had failed to stop other tribes from felling the region’s precious cedar or beryl for sale in Pakistan.356 Historically, representatives from the tribal regions

---

355 The direct quotations in this paragraph are drawn from various parliamentary session extracts in Islah, 18-20 October, 1969, 8 November 1969, and 11-13 November 1969; and Caravan, 28-30 November 1969, as quoted in Basov, ‘Evoliutsiia sotsialnoi borby vostochnykh pushtunov Afganistana: ee osobennosti do I posle apr’el’skoi revoliutsii’, 167-168.
356 Basov, 169.
had revolted over *too much* state influence. Now, however, they demanded *more* help from Kabul. And yet because it was impossible to square the circle of building a tax-farming state, creating a territorial state, and deferring enough to international funders and tribes, the east was in decline.

What exacerbated an ecological and economic crisis, however, were the Cold War ideologies that provided the language and framework through which locals could imagine radical political solutions to their problems. Universities and the military played a crucial role as ideological incubators for the Left. Kabul University started a branch campus in Jalalabad in 1963 that exposed Ghilzai Pashtun students to a world of Leftist ideas, while the networks of lycées and secondary schools that the RGA built across the region during the 1960s provided employment for the educated, upwardly-mobile Leftist Ghilzai Pashtun intelligentsia.357 These were men a generation younger than PDPA leaders like Taraki (a graduate of Kabul University from the 1920s) who formed the vanguard of a broader transnational Pashtun Left. Many of the organizers of Taraki’s generation had familial or tribal links in the Pakistani Tribal Areas and were keen to integrate the new generation of Afghan Ghilzai youth into the political project of Pashtunistan, or, at the least, Left-leaning Pashtun nationalism.358 And given events across the border – Pashtun nationalist parties scored big victories in Pakistan’s 1970 provincial elections – this idea

---

358 As Basov emphasizes, many of the major Pashtun Left leaders of these years had familial ties that went across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border or at least deep into the elite of the Afghan Pashtun east. Babrak Karmal’s father, General M. Hussein, served as the Governor of Paktia Province, Najib’s father, A. Muhammad, was a prominent Ahmadzai (Ghilzai) leader in the early 20th century, and the fathers of both Suleyman Laek (Abdul Ghani) A. Waziri (Asyl Khan) had been prominent freedom fighters against the British in the Waziristan revolts of the early 20th century.
was less far-fetched than it might seem today.\textsuperscript{359} Such dreams of renewal had muscle behind them, too. Ghilzai Pashtuns served disproportionately in the Army’s officer corps and received not only combat but also ideological training in the Soviet Union before returning to serve on military bases in the borderlands. As a result – the Afghan Army was infiltrated by underground Khalqist cells.\textsuperscript{360} When Vladimir Basov, a rare example of a Soviet scholar of the tribal east, consulted the PDPA’s archives in the 1980s, he discovered that one-third of the party’s membership in the mid-1970s came from only seven provinces, all in the east and southeast.\textsuperscript{361}

Of course, powerful forces stood in the way of the Khalqist project of socialist revolution, not least among them local conservative élites and the Pakistani Establishment.\textsuperscript{362} Beginning in the late 1960s, small clashes between the Khalqist Left

\begin{flushright}
359 More than that, due to the large number of Afghans studying abroad during these years, universities, particularly in Germany, often became hotbeds of Pashtun nationalist activity. In 1974, for example, a so called ‘Pashtunistan National Liberation Front’ was founded in West Germany that included not only PDPA members but also Pashtun social democratic groups like Afghan Millat.

360 Basov, ‘Evoliutsiia sotsialnoi borby vostochnykh pushtunov Afganistana: ee osobennosti do I posle aprel’skoi revoliutsii’, 173. Incidentally, one of my interview subjects, Abduzahid Zakhirov, who went on to serve as a VLKSM advisor in the 1980s, worked as a military translator at an Afghan Army military base in Khost in the late 1970s that was increasingly staffed by Khalqist Ghilzai officers. Author Interview, Abduzahid Zakhirov, 31 July 2012, Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

361 Basov, ‘Evoliutsiia sotsialnoi borby vostochnykh pushtunov Afganistana: ee osobennosti do I posle aprel’skoi revoliutsii’, 174. The provinces in question were Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, Ghazni, Zabul, Laghman, and Logar (Khost only became a separate province from Paktia after 2001).

362 I use the term ‘conservative élites’ here as a shorthand for what was actually a fluid group of several opposition leaders that bridged tribal, class, and religious divides. To give some sense of the diversity within the opposition, as Basov describes, some of the key leaders included Mowlawi Muhammad Yusuf Khalis, a wealthy Pashtun poet from Wazir-Hugani who maintained contact with tribes in Waziristan and Islamist circles in Kabul; Muhammad Nabi Muhammd, a Pashtun nationalist and Islamist who had been a deputy in the Afghan national assembly in the 1960s who enjoyed contacts with merchant élites in Kabul; Said Ahmad Gilani, the son of the former prominent Afghan religious leader Naqib (whose real name Efendi Jan), the leader of a sect in Jalalabad, and a former personal advisor to Zahir Shah whose net worth was estimated at several million dollars; Siibghatullah Mojaeddin, a member of the most prominent religious clan in Afghanistan with extremely close political and familial ties to the Royal Family; and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a younger (born in 1947) Kharoti Pashtun born in northern Afghanistan but who became famous in the 1970s while studying at Kabul University for terrorizing leftist students before founding Hezb-i Islami, a more hardline Islamist militia and political organization, in 1975.
\end{flushright}
and religious conservatives became more and more common in the towns of the tribal zones. Religious élites exploited the 100th anniversary of Lenin’s birth – 22 April 1970 – to stage protests against the RGA for being ‘apostates and agents of Communism.’\textsuperscript{363} One of the protests’ ringleaders, the mullah Bismallah from Laghman, denounced Zahir Shah and the Mojaddedi family as traitors to Islam.\textsuperscript{364} RGA police forces arrested him, triggering a series of counter-protests in Jalalabad and Ghazni on 27 May 1970, in which thirteen mullahs were killed.\textsuperscript{365} Still, none of the participants in the protest were members of the religious élite in Nangarhar, which continued to support Zahir Shah. Nor were any of the protestors armed with anything more than bricks or bats.\textsuperscript{366} Signs of unrest continued to grow, however. That November, a PDPA protest in Mihtarlam turned violent when local mullahs and zealots attacked the Communists. The mob horrifyingly ripped one PDPA member to pieces and wounded several others. Rumors circulated: one of the instigators of the violence was a man whom locals called ‘the Pakistani mullah’ whose father and mother lived on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line.\textsuperscript{367}

Daoud’s rise to power, facilitated by PDPA Army officers, amplified the stakes in the borderlands. Those conservatives who had opposed Zahir Shah for his ‘betrayal’ of the country excoriated Daoud as he rendered Afghanistan more dependent on Moscow. When Daoud undertook expanded road-building projects in the tribal zones soon after

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Basov, ‘Evoliutsiiia sotsialnoi borby vostochnykh pushtunov Afganistana: eë osobennosti do I posle aprel’skoï revoliutsii’, 180.
\item The Mojaddeddis were a family of prominent Muslim intellectuals in Afghanistan, said to be descended from the Third Caliph.
\item For more on this episode, see M. Slinkin, ‘O politicheskoï deiatel’nosti konservativnykh krugov Afganistana v 60-70-x godakh’, \textit{Spetsbiulleten’ IV AN SSSR} 2 (Moscow, 1980), 127-128.
\item Basov, ‘Evoliutsiiia sotsialnoi borby vostochnykh pushtunov Afganistana: eë osobennosti do I posle aprel’skoï revoliutsii’, 181.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
taking power in 1973 in an apparent concession, tribal leaders suspected him as less interested in regional empowerment than in expanding Kabul’s control over the region. Daoud did little to ward off these rumors, as he attempted to levy more direct taxes on communities and exert Kabul’s control over trans-border trade.\(^{368}\)

Daoud lost his base of support in the provinces quickly, while his outspoken demands for Pashtunistan put Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in rival Islamabad, on high alert. In the summer of 1975, the Panjshiri Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Mas’ud, along with other Islamists from the region, like the failed engineering student Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, coordinated an uprising against Daoud with the help of the Pakistani ISI. The insurrection failed, but Daoud was becoming engulfed by a civil war embedded within an Afghanistan-Pakistan cold war – both of which processes were amplified by the perceived global stakes involved.

Daoud had sought to boost his image among the populace by granting several hundred Pakistani Balochi rebels’ families asylum to Afghanistan – another tweak to Bhutto and the Shah of Iran. After the failed coup d’état in 1975, however, he became so spooked by the triple threat of ISI-sponsored Islamists, the PDPA, and the tribes that he reversed himself, seeking to buy time by seeking an ‘honorable solution’ to the Pashtunistan Question. If only, Daoud seems to have thought, he could reach a deal with Bhutto, he could buy breathing room to deal with the overwhelming tide of issues at home. He came close to a deal with Zia in a March 1978 visit to Islamabad, but failed. Having alienated both the Afghan Right for his ties with the USSR, and tribal brokers for his centralizing tack and his Pashtunistan policy, Daoud became dependent on – and

vulnerable to – the PDPA officers who had delivered him to power in the first place.

Given the fault lines running through the borderlands by the spring of 1978, it should come as no surprise that the April Revolution catalyzed massive resistance. The Khalqists who came to power may have stood united with old élites on Pashtunistan but the PDPA’s Marxist-Leninist style and redistributionist policies deeply offended many’s sensibilities. In May 1978, local mullahs attempted to incite the population against local PDPA officials on the ground that the government was ‘anti-Islamic.’\textsuperscript{369} In Paktia and Kunar, rebels set the forests alight, causing years of Afghan and German work to go up in smoke. (The forest fires were so intense that Moscow dispatched an élite firefighting commando from Uzbekistan to extinguish the blazes.) That autumn, more attacks on PDPA compounds, staged with Pakistani, Chinese, and Iranian arms, were reported in Zabol and Ghazni. The tribal zones had become a cauldron of foreign ideology, weapons, and money. Cooler heads made a last-ditch attempt at a political solution to the crisis: in the summer of 1978, tribal elders from Jaji, Mangal, and Jarjan visited the exiled Zahir Shah in Italy and begged him to return to the country to restore the monarchy. (The former King elected to remain in his villa in the Lazio countryside.) Attempts at moderation had failed. More common was a language like that on the flyers spread on both sides of the border that accused Taraki, and later, Amin, of being a spy. One cited a apocryphal resolution made by a jirga in Waziristan:

Know that the Red Revolution brought down upon us means that Taraki wants to seize Pashtunistan. Taraki is the representative of the Russians and we will never agree to Pashtunistan becoming their fiefdom, since in doing so we would undermine Islam. Be attentive!\textsuperscript{370}

\textsuperscript{369} Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 188.
The tribal areas were coming apart. From the point of view of reactionary Islamists and the Pakistani Establishment, this was because Khalq had taken over the Afghan state. In the mind of the Afghan Left, the problem stemmed from the way that the idea of Pashtunistan had been perverted into into an Islamist movement that would turn Afghanistan into a colony of Islamabad. Both were right. By early 1979, both Taraki and Amin realized that they were on the verge of a tailspin. The two Khalqist leaders arranged meetings with leaders of the Mangal, Ahmadzai, and Tota-Khel tribes and guaranteed the safe return of some *ulema* from Pakistan into Afghanistan. Still, even a sympathetic observer like the historian Vladimir Basov noted that these Khalqist leaders’ outreach consisted of

fundamentally parade-like events calculated for external effect. They provided no tangible result other than leading the Party into the delusion of a picture of superficial well-being.373

Amin and Taraki tried again in the summer of 1979 to enhance their position among their Pashtun brethren, declaring the April Revolution for all Pashtuns ‘from the Amu to the Indus’ (i.e. both Afghan and Pakistani Pashtuns). They had little credibility, however, and the proclamation only provided Pakistani intelligence and military élites with further justification to amplify their campaign of terror against the Pakistani Pashtun Left.374 By the autumn of 1979, by which time Amin had murdered Taraki and launched a policy of extreme repression, the borderlands had become an arena for the battle between some 15,000 *mujahideen* from various tribes and a murderous PDPA regime. In

---

371 Author Interview, Sakina Ziar, 14 July 2011, Oxford, United Kingdom.
372 In particular, some of the leaders turned to the DRA in 1978-1979 included Abdur Ghafur Khan, Mawlawi Wali Khan Garibi, Mawlawi Fakir Muhammad, Mullah Abdul Ghafur, Mawlawi Saíd Jafar Akhund Zadeh, and Mawlawi Abdul Salam.
373 Basov, 169.
374 Author Interview, Vasilii Kravtsov, 23 October 2012, Moscow, Russian Federation.
Asadabad, the one city Amin’s government controlled in Kunar Province, the DRA Army murdered at least 800 civilians in cold blood. In one sign of Amin’s total delusion, he renamed Jalalabad to Tarunshahr (‘Tarun City’) after the fallen DRA Army Colonel Saïd Daoud Tarun. There is no compelling evidence to suggest that Amin was acting on the basis of anything else than his own intuitions, but in light of how swiftly the situation had spun out of control, CPSU élites suspected that Amin (who had studied in the United States) was a saboteur installed by the CIA, so disastrous were his policies.375

In light of these developments, it may be easier to understand the case one could make for putting a bullet in Amin’s head, as the ‘Muslim Division’ dispatched from Chirchiq to Kabul did in December 1979. Yet the new PDPA government led by the Parchamist Babrak Karmal rendered the task of governance in the east more daunting still. Khalqist PDPA activists from Paktia and Nangarhar were staggeringly unpopular among local religious élites and Islamists, granted; but at least they had some local knowledge of the place they purported to rule. After 1979, however, the Parchamists appointed as Governors, Secretaries of of PDPA or DOYA Provincial Committees (PCs) faced enemies all around: not only those elements suspicious of all Afghan Communists after Amin’s regime of terror, but also the Khalqist grassroots infrastructure in the east which viewed Parcham as a puppet of Moscow. Karmal made gestures to return some autonomy to the tribes, and staged meetings with the Pakistani ANP leader Mohammad Wali Khan to attempt to revive interest in Pashtunistan. But the PDPA still faced giant challenges in mastering the borderlands. Could Soviet advisors save the region?

375 For one example of how remarkably durable this myth is in spite of no material evidence, consider the postscript to Vladimir Snegirëv’s and Valeriï Samunin’s Virus A: Kak my zaboleli vtorzhением v Afganistan. Politicheske stale v rasst at (Moscow: Rossiiśkaia Gazeta, 2011), in which the two authors debate in detail for several pages whether Amin was a CIA agent or not.
Touchdown: VLKSM In Eastern and Southeastern Afghanistan

‘Komsomol-2’, the group of VLKSM advisors that included Valeriĭ Sidorov, landed in Kabul in the summer of 1981. Advisors soon fanned out to provincial centers like Jalalabad. As the first report written from that city by Boris Tivanov made clear, however, the ‘military-political situation in the “East” Zone has not improved and remains extremely tense.’376 Jalalabad was the only city that the PDPA controlled in the entire Zone (‘there are practically no connections with the city of Mihtarlam’), and ‘90% of the border battalions had gone over to the enemy side, [including] more than 500 soldiers and Sarandoj officers, 320 of them with weapons.’ Mujahedin routinely murdered tribal elders who sided with the PDPA, while mass desertions plagued the Afghan Army. For advisors like Tivanov, it all differed radically from what their Komsomol experience had prepared them for. Tivanov himself had been the First Secretary for the Kalinin VLKSM gorkom and passed the Chirchiq training course, but Jalalabad was a world apart from what one translator, Abdulwahob Wahidov, dubbed ‘our East’ (nash Vostok), Uzbekistan.377 In Jalalabad itself, recalled Wahidov, ‘people lived normally’, but ‘national power’ (narodnaia vlast’) ended just outside the city walls. In the city’s bazaars, stores were frequently bombed. Once, when visiting the city’s main bazaar, Wahidov saw a fully-loaded camel explode before his eyes when mujahedin detonated a bomb that had been surgically implanted into the animal. The olive and mandarin orchards which had represented Professor Akhundzadeh’s dream were

377 Author Interview, Abdulwahob Wahidov, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 21 September 2012.
becoming killing fields.

Still, the VLKSM advisors were professionals. And DOYA was hardly dead. As of August 1981, half of the organization’s members in Nangarhar Province lived in the city of Jalalabad itself, but there existed, at least on VLKSM’s accounting sheets, dozens of members in districts that lay outside of government or Party control, like Surkhrud or Hisarak. 378 DOYA simply had, with VLKSM’s help, to follow the military into the countryside and establish ‘primary organizations’ (pervichnye organizatsii) in schools, industrial enterprises, underground PDPA organizations in those (numerous) regions still controlled by mujahedin, women’s associations, peasants’ associations, and so on. As the Afghan Army and the ‘limited contingent of Soviet forces’, as the Soviet Army in Afghanistan was officially called, cleared out territory, DOYA and the PDPA would encapsulate this space with Party institutions, just as the CPSU and VLKSM intersticed territory and industrial enterprises in the USSR.

Indeed, this task was nothing new for the VLKSM advisors. When advisors described their work in Afghanistan in retrospect, they framed it not in terms of a unique adventure, but as ‘youth work’ (molodëzhnaia rabota) or ‘Komsomol work’ (komsomol’škaia rabota) that was identical to what they had done before in the Soviet Union. There was nothing, or so it seemed, interesting to describe. ‘Youth work … what can I tell you?’, said one. 379 And they were right: there no formal difference between the work one would faced in Pskov, Kaunas, Sakhalin, or Jalalabad.

This, however, was in many ways the problem. For even if VLKSM work was

379 Author Interview, Abuzahid Zakirov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 31 July 2012.
formally identical in both Kaliningrad and Kandahar, the civil war on the ground and the radically different institutional and economic reality of Afghanistan made the country something other than a blank slate onto which the Soviet institutional imagination could be projected. As Peter Rutland writes, the Soviet project was predicated on very specific late 19th century assumptions about economies and political administration:

Unlike most non-communist political parties, [CPSU] members joined a party unit at their place of work. These party units were grouped together on a territorial basis – the so-called ‘territorial-production principle’. This arrangement made it difficult to supervise life among non-working groups such as pensioners and single mothers, and in residential areas in general, although territorial party organizations could be formed at the place of residence if desired.

The historical origins of the territorial-production principle are obscure. It arose in the pre-revolutionary period, out of the general Marxist belief that life in the modern world revolves around the factory, and out of the idea that the Communist Party was the party of the workers – who were to be found in factories. 380

For readers who came of age in ‘post-industrial’ economies, this principle may seem obscure. But it underlay, if also in slightly different form, many other forms of twentieth century political that took for granted that one’s work – more precisely, one’s style of production – was constitutive of one’s political identity. Whether it was trade unions or political parties which turned the concept of ‘labour’ from a verb into a noun, the idea that political identity and organization flowed as organically from one’s position on the factory floor as did the sweat from one’s brow was, for much of the late 19th and 20th century, axiomatic. But if the problem that political organizers faced in Europe in the 1980s was the shuttering or ‘rationalization’ of so many of the grand old platforms for such political organization – coal mines, steel plants, railway companies – the problem in Afghanistan was the reverse: the idea that ‘life in the modern world’ in Afghanistan was

organized around Magnitogorsk-style foundries or coal mines was laughable. A majority of the country was closer, in terms of life-cycles and lifestyles, to the ‘non-working groups’ – people whose independent, subsistence-oriented family economies made them obviously ill-suited to industrial organization.

Even if the country had been fully industrialized, moreover, it remained too dangerous for organizers to do much of use deep in the provinces. As Tivanov’s successor in Jalalabad, Nodari Giorgadze, noted in his 1982 review of the Zone, DOYA and VLKSM faced an overwhelming task. ‘It may suffice to note’, wrote the Georgian of the Pakistani side of the borderlands,

that since 1947 there have never been any Pakistani forces, police, or gendarmes on their territory. Pakistani laws and the criminal codex have never extended to this territory. […] Practically speaking, the population of the zone never paid any taxes, customs, or any sorts of tolls to anyone. The only social stratum controlling any definite influence in the zone are the elders, as well as the mullas and ulema.381

Still, Giorgadze thought, recent history provided grounds for hope. Zahir Shah, after all, had allowed Soviet engineers to build the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex

in order to transform Nangarhar – bordering on Pakistan – into a blooming region and, in doing so, solve not only the economic challenges of the region but also the political and social problems of the region, turning the Pashtuns to sedentary life. One has to note that the government succeeded to a certain extent in constructively solving this challenge.

If, Giorgadze argued, the PDPA could manage the reconstruction of the region’s agricultural economy, more of the population would become settled, and more importantly, legible in terms of mass industrial organization – the only terms on which the PDPA and the Soviet-style territorial system could engage with the population.

Yet who would carry out the engagement? Giorgadze, after all, was only a temporary Soviet advisor; DOYA secretaries had to take charge. Here was where some of

381 Nodari Giorgadze, ‘Spravka TsK VLKSM pri TsK DOMA v zone “Vostok”’, RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 24, l. 87-88
the first limits of the Soviet imagination began to reveal themselves. In his November 1982 report to VLKSM in Kabul, Giorgadze attached detailed comments on the Jalalabad DOYA PC leadership. (This was a common practice for advisors: the point was to supply the head VLKSM advisors in Kabul and the DOYA CC the information they needed to implement a wise cadre policy.) Giorgadze was blessed with a dynamic colleague in Maudzudin Khatak, the twenty-one year old Secretary of the Nangarhar DOYA PC.

‘Even when Daoud was in power’, wrote Giorgadze,

[Khatak] was a member of an underground PDPA PC and the Secretary of the Youth Organization. They threw him in prison when he was still a minor for his political activity, for his work with the masses, and his loud statements against the Daoud regime. He’s from the Pashtun tribes, single, educated to a twelfth-grade level, a member of the PDPA since age 12, from the intelligentsia, and born in Laghman Province.  

Crucially, however, Khatak was no mere bandit. ‘I should mention’, Giorgadze added,

that he was born in the same village as the PDPA Secretary for Nangarhar, the Governor of the Province, the Commander of the Sarandoy, and the Director of People’s Education for Nangarhar.

The fact that men from the one same village, in a country of tens of thousands of villages, had coincidentally come to dominate PDPA leadership in Nangarhar Province should have stood out to Giorgadze as suspicious, one is tempted to say.

But the Georgian was impressed. Given the propensity of VLKSM advisors to lambast their DOYA colleagues as lazy and unmotivated, Giorgadze’s high opinion of Khatak stands out. ‘Comrade Maudzudin’, he wrote,

wields special respect and enormous authority. One can especially sense the respect towards his past. Even the leaders of the tribes and the members of the religious elite (dukhovnostvo) respect him. He’s modest, brave, and devoted to the cause of Saur and Soviet friendship (you can sense this sincerity in him with every footstep), smart, completely open with his advisor, a good organizer, an amazing orator, strives to study, reads literature, systematically acquaints himself with the press, improves himself at every opportunity, collegial, and is well-educated.

---

Given Khatak’s standing at the intersection of the provincial world of Nangarhar, on the one hand, and the transnational institutional world of the PDPA, DOYA, and VLKSM, on the other, it is no surprise that Giorgadze recommended that he be promoted. The main PDPA apparatus in Nangarhar (as opposed to DOYA), Giorgadze hinted, wanted to hire him as its Deputy Secretary (again, suspiciously, to a Secretary from his home village).

Yet Khatak was not perfect. Giorgadze criticized him, noting that ‘one has to work punctually and precisely (akkuratno) with him. Still, the Georgian added, ‘to one extent or another, this is an eccentricity of character of practically all the Pashtun tribes.’

These remarks hit on one of the major divides that hindered relations between VLKSM and DOYA. Particularly notable in interviews with Tajik translators, but also apparent in the reflections of non-Tajik advisors, was a distrust of Pashtuns that bordered on racism. When the advisor Zaidullo Dzhunaïdov searched for adjectives that he would associate with Pashtuns, he was forthcoming: ‘Disrespectful ... uneducated .... argumentative ... what else?’, he asked. ‘Hot-tempered [vspyl’chivyî]?’, I asked, thinking of a term that appears frequently in VLKSM reports. ‘Very hot-tempered’, he responded. Mamadsho Davlatov, who worked at Kabul Polytechnic University for several years in the 1970s and early 1980s, was more direct still: ‘Pashtuns are barbarians [Pushtuny – varvary].’

More subtly, Dzhunaïdov underscored that there was a reason why Dari was the Afghan state language, even if Durrani Pashtuns ran the state: only Tajiks and Persianized Pashtuns knew how to govern. Much of Central Asian history, Dzhunaïdov argued, could be told in terms of the battle between progressive, settled, hierarchical Persian culture

383 Ibid., l. 110.
384 Author Interview, Zaidullo Dzhunaïdov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 30 August 2012.
385 Author Interview, Mamadsho Davlatov, Khujand, Tajikistan, 6 September 2012.
and unruly, egalitarian Pashtun barbarism. Pashtuns, he argued, were reactionary and opposed to non-tribal institutions.

Dzhunaïdov was wrong, of course. As the discussion of the social and demographic makeup of the borderlands above emphasized, even though Pashtuns in the tribal areas were skeptical about the benefits of centralization and the risk that it posed to ‘authentic’ Pashtun values – independence, ruggedness, liberty – both Durrani and Ghilzai Pashtuns had thrived in building, manning, and commanding states and armies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ayub Khan, the 2nd President of Pakistan, was a Pashtun, as were many of the Pakistani military and intelligence officers, like Nasirullah Babar, who sponsored the insurgency against advisors like Dzhunaïdov. The real point – one that the few Soviet scholars of the Pashtun worlds of South Asia knew – was that any sensible policy demanded tweaking the Soviet-style territorial-administrative system to accord with the realities of nang and qalang-based cultures and caste in Pashtunistan. Instead, Soviet academics and policy advisors had conspired to suppress scholarship that might have informed advisors’ work.

Before indulging in counterfactuals too much, however, it is worthwhile recalling some of the methodological reflections that the introduction to this dissertation raised: even if VLKSM advisors had been equipped with exquisite ethnographic knowledge, how much of a difference would it have actually made on the administrative transformation they sought to carry out? As Peter Rutland, challenging the image of the Brezhnev era as one of stultification, writes, ‘in the Brezhnev era the party pledged to put the USSR through “accelerated socio-economic development”’ and

made great play of its ‘scientific’ approach to social problems, using this to distinguish its
own interpretations from Khrushchev’s ‘voluntaristic’ interference.\(^{386}\)

The CPSU CC encouraged local Party secretaries, meanwhile, to think creatively about management and public administration. Throughout the late 1970s, experiments (opyt) were in great fashion. Nothing could propel the career of a young, ambitious Party worker like having his or her initiative declared a ‘leading experience’ (peredovoi opyt) or receive approval (odobreniie) from Moscow.\(^{387}\)

And yet it was frequently difficult to determine what, exactly, any of these experiments did. ‘There were’, writes Rutland,

cases such as the Rostov ‘work without laggers’ campaign, whose precise administrative and economic content is obscure, no matter how closely one scrutinizes the voluminous materials published extolling its merits. It seemed to amount to little more than political exhortations directed at local managers. The campaign was merely a vehicle for showcasing what party organs were already supposed to be doing.\(^{388}\)

Those experiments that did feint in the direction of market reform, moreover, like the so-called Shchekino Method (‘involving a stable wages fund and cuts in the labour force, with savings passed on to the remaining employees’), could not be expanded without questioning basic assumptions about full employment and the nature of the Soviet economy. As far as management was concerned, in the ‘eternal state’ of Brezhnev’s Soviet Union, everything really was ‘forever until, it was no more.’\(^{389}\) The point, as concerns VLKSM in Afghanistan, then, is that even with added ethnographic knowledge, it was intellectually impossible, in the system that was the CPSU or VLKSM of the 1970s and early 1980s, to highlight structural, as opposed to tactical, failings in


\(^{387}\) Ibid., 67-69.

\(^{388}\) Ibid., 69.

management. Indeed, without the later discursive separation of ‘socialism’ from ‘stagnation’ that Gorbachëv pioneered, it was difficult to imagine Soviet-style administration as a socially constructed structure at all.

Hence, when one reads the reports of advisors like Giorgadze, one finds not only a lack of attention to Pashtun culture. More than that, the reports are rife with banal stratagems about how to improve DOYA’s management. Future VLKSM advisors, Giorgadze stressed, had to take the initiative on all projects for anything to get done, but they also had to defer to their Afghan colleagues ‘the chance to think for themselves and make decisions’: not the most specific piece of advice. Afghans, Giorgadze argued, had to feel for themselves ‘in full the bitter taste and delight that comes from success or failure.’ ‘Working with the Afghans’, he continued,

I became convinced that it’s better not to suggest anything to them and to simply keep silent than to try to convince them of something they’re definitely not convinced of already. For every Afghan, a Soviet advisor is the holiest of holies, all-knowing and a universal person (universal'nyi chelovek), so any ill-thought-out or infeasible piece of advice could hit you in the face like a boomerang.

To be clear, the point here is less about a lack of intellectual creativity on Giorgadze’s part than about the discursive limits of late socialism itself. It was precisely banalities like the above that prompted so many at the time to complain about a lack of content (soderzhanie) to the Party’s practices, but making genuinely critical suggestions would have been as far-fetched in the VLKSM context as a management consultant today suggesting that a government adopt a policy of full employment and nationalization.

New ideas were brewing at the time, of course, but they were to be found at Moscow

---

391 Ibid., l. 123.
research institutes, not in the foothills of eastern Afghanistan.

![Map of Nangarhar Province](image)

*Figure 15: Maudzudin Khatak’s Travels Around Nangarhar Province, Spring-Summer 1982. Green Line represents March 1982 trip; purple line represents June 1982 trip.*

And yet VLKSM and DOYA would build a Party and state with the conceptual tools they had. The task of building up DOYA began in earnest in March 1982, when Khatak formed an expeditionary group of seven people outfitted with propaganda material and the most recent decrees of the PDPA Central Committee and visited Shinwar Province ‘to form any (kakikh-libo) contacts with the local population.’

Giorgadze did not accompany the team, but he chipped in by giving Khatak ‘help and presents from the Komsomol of Georgia’ to distribute. A first trip to the Mamandi and Shinwari tribes involved face-to-face contact – nothing more. Still, Giorgadze emphasized, contact had been established. A second visit into the field that June proved more successful. The

---

DOYA PC sent out an agitational group (*agitgruppa*) and an ‘agitational automobile’ (*agitatsionnaia mashina*) outfitted with a radio, tape cassettes of speeches by Babrak Karmal, and several Pioneer-themed souvenirs and children’s toys. The team also enlisted two mullahs, Shiahzamir and Ghulamsarvar, who were said to be ‘well-known and authoritative in Nangarhar.’ This group’s visits proved more successful. Khatak visited the villages of Azoranu and Torkham and traveled throughout Nazyan, Lalpur and Jani Khel Districts. ‘Practically everywhere’, wrote Giorgadze,

the group was received warmly (*serdechno*), people listened to the concert program, songs, poems, the speeches of the leaders of the Party and the government, they read (*gramotno chitali*) newspapers and the leaflets, they gladly attended and listened to our activists at popular meetings. Among the majority of the tribes, the members of the group were hosted overnight by the elders and leaders (*vozhdei*) of the tribes.393

The DOYA PC soon grew bolder in organizing the tribes. The Jalalabad PC gained the support of more mullahs, who helped to organize youth organizations in the fulfillment of ‘as they themselves said, “a just, divine cause.”’ After obtaining the assent of the tribal elders, DOYA worked with local youth to found primary organizations among the Mamandis and Shinwaris (thirty-seven and forty-two members in each, respectively). Shortly after that, moreover,

in spite of the fact that these tribes had been fully relieved from military service by the state, a group of twenty-five men enlisted from local DOYA groups were sent by the tribal elders into active border patrols on the border with Pakistan.

Giorgadze saw in this the seeds of a regional army, something novel:

the fact that this group of soldiers did not tire out (*neoslabeniiie nachatoi raboty*) led to, on 1 November 1982, a group of 300 young members of DOYA from the tribes of the Mamandi and Shinwaris gathering with weapons in hand in the role of border patrol soldiers to dependably guard the border of the republic.

Giorgadze was thinking in terms of a container space state: note his emphasis on the need

393 Ibid., l. 89.
to guard the ‘border of the republic’, as if Afghanistan were similar to East Germany or North Korea. Still, over the course of just one calendar year, Giorgadze claimed, the DOYA membership rolls in the ‘East’ Zone had more than doubled. Giorgadze counted 55 primary organizations that the Nangarhar DOYA or PDPA had founded: ‘Housewives of the Localities of Keral’, ‘Pathan Underground Organization’, and a lycée in Narang. It all looked impressive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province Name</th>
<th>1981 Membership</th>
<th>1982 Membership</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nangarhar</td>
<td>1480</td>
<td>3970</td>
<td>168.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunar</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>1301</td>
<td>80.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laghman</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>1167</td>
<td>287.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2830</strong></td>
<td><strong>6438</strong></td>
<td><strong>127.49%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Yet what did such numbers mean precisely? Eastern Afghanistan had the highest population densities in the entire country, but only three years later, another VLKSM advisor, Georgiï Kireev, would learn that there were only 10,000 PDPA members in all of provincial Afghanistan, not including those in the Army or the Sarandoy.394 DOYA members did not all go on to become PDPA members, granted, but given the low ceiling of 10,000 members in virtually the whole country by the mid-1980s, either Giorgadze was misreporting his numbers, or the Party had grown incredibly selective. And what precisely did it mean when a ‘primary organizations’ existed in such far-flung villages?

The answer to this question has to do with the administrative culture and the institutional vision that defined VLKSM. By the late 1970s, whether in the USSR itself

---

394 Georgiï Kireev, Diary, available online at: [http://kireev.info/w-4.html](http://kireev.info/w-4.html)
or in provincial Afghanistan, VLKSM secretaries were expected to produce considerable amounts of reportage. The advisors in Afghanistan had to produce, biannual typed reports around fifty single-spaced pages in length and that included dozens of statistical tables summing up membership growth numbers and their accomplishments for the period. Fortunately for the historian, but unfortunately for the advisors, these norms generated mountains of paperwork. Soviets citizens even had multiple words for the phenomenon: bumagotvochestvo (‘paper-creation’), kantseliarskhina (‘stationery-itis’), otchënist’ (‘reportality’), or, most ubiquitously, biurokratizm (‘bureaucratism’).395 As Galina Tokareva, a longtime obkom secretary who later worked in the VLKSM Central Committee, reflected, this culture had devoured an institution she adored. She recalled her time as a junior secretary in Sakhalin in the 1970s:

Whether it was the number of youth … how many in the raion in whole, the number of youth … or, production statistics [I had to fill out a lot of forms]. Or suggestions for how to improve efficiency (ratspredlozeniia) What other indicators? Gross production. I had to fill out all of that, but there was no separate system of accounting for youth. So I went to the raikom Party Secretary.

‘Ivan Stepanovich’ – Sadovskii was his name – ‘what am I supposed to do? So he called [inaudible] for the production statistics and said he needed them in two hours, and for them to call me. Then he would call the head of Party organs (zavpartorganami).

‘Hello?’ [they would say at the other end].

‘Come and help out the Komsomol here’, [said Sadovskii]. These statistics were always needed in the raion. ‘What are the youth figures here? Show me how to do it. Help me put it together.’ What had already started by then was … I’d call it formalization (formalizatsia), formality (formal’nost’).396

VLKSM advisors were aware of this problem, and yet ‘formalism’ and ‘bureaucratism’ (biurokratizm) seemed inescapable. Virtually every report, made some

395 By the late 1980s and early 1990s, probably as a result of glasnost’, there was a surge in popular works, most of varying quality, on biurokratizm and how to divorce it from ‘authentic’ socialism. For some, see: L.N. Ponomarev, ‘Eto vopros tseloi epokhi: demokratiaa protiv biurokratii’ (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1990); R.I. Khasbulatov, ‘Biurokratiiia tozhe nash vraag – sotsializm I biurokratiaa’ (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1989); A.G. Karatuev, Sovetskaia biurokratiaa: sistema politiko-ekonomicheskogo gospodstva I eë krizisa (Belgorod: Izdatel’stvo ‘Vezelitsa’, 1993).

396 Author Interview, Galina Tokareva, Moscow, Russian Federation, 29 November 2012.
mention of a troubling culture of ‘formalism’ within DOYA, more focused on filling out charts than engaging with youth. As Abduzahir Zakhirov, a VLKSM advisor who also worked as a translator at an Afghan Army military base in Khost in the 1970s, recalled,

Something about the relationship between the government (pravitel’stvo) and people (liud’mi) wasn’t clear. The government did its own thing, and the people did their own thing. [Pravitel’stvo samo po sebe, narod sam po sebe.]397

A queer system of governance and accounting was emerging. Even if DOYA had a paper-thin presence in the east, the VLKSM reports made it sound as though DOYA was making progress in slicing through Afghan society. To paraphrase Zakhirov, Afghan society – and DOYA – was doing one thing; VLKSM was reporting another thing. The problem had not only to do with ‘formalism’, but also the extent to which VLKSM-style reporting only really made sense in the ‘territorial’ world of the Soviet Union. There, institutions like Komsomol built on the ‘territorial-production’ principle zipped up vast amounts of space and the national economy, since there were actual factories occupying physical space where people actually worked and where Party cells actually existed. As Tokareva proudly reflected, at its peak

Komsomol was in every, [I repeat] in every branch of industry. If you look at a decree, then often these decrees were produced along with one Ministry or another. Especially anything that had to do with socialist competition. But in spite of this, I think … even having studied the life of the youth, when [VLKSM] took part in the whole life of the country, you could talk about the active position of the young generation.398

In the words of Viktor Struchkov, the head Komsomol advisor in Kabul from 1983–1985, VLKSM was a

powerful system of discipline (moshchnaia sistema distsipliny). […] Whether we like it or not, the Soviet Union was a giant system for processing and training youth, without alternatives.399

397 Author Interview, Abduzahir Zakhirov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 31 July 2012.
398 Author Interview, Galina Tokareva, Moscow, Russian Federation, 29 November 2012.
399 Author Interview, Viktor Struchkov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 24 October 2012.
As products of the system like Struchkov knew well, it was unthinkable for even the most precocious Soviet citizen to make a career for himself outside of Komsomol. VLKSM was a system in which one could make “disciplinary careers” in which, through various exclusions and rejections, a whole process is set in motion.\textsuperscript{400} This system, however, hung on the combination of formal economies, political monopoly, and territorial security that the Soviet Union of the 1960s and 1970s embodied. Translated to Afghanistan, however, where people did not cluster around industrial ‘objects’, the system was incoherent. For as Giorgadze’s charts of which parts of the ‘East’ Zone were actually under PDPA control underscored, the overwhelming majority of the east constituted not a institutional-territorial matrix of discipline, but rather the confused, tolerant and dangerous domain of the ‘outlaw’ or at least of that which eluded the direct hold of power: an uncertain space that was for criminality a training ground and a region of refuge; there poverty, unemployment, pursued innocence, cunning, the struggle against the powerful, the refusal of obligations and laws, and organized crime all came together as chance and fortune would dictate.\textsuperscript{401}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Map of Afghanistan showing the distribution of PDPA control.}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{401} Ibid.
The strange thing about the VLKSM–DOYA marriage, however, was that the lack of an emergency brake, in the form of structural criticism of the administrative system, meant that Komsomol advisors never stopped producing the kinds of reports they had written in the USSR. In 1983, for example, the Nangarhar PC founded a primary organization for the province’s mullahs, numbering thirty people total, ten of which were outside of Jalalabad. ‘Each of them has a membership card’, Giorgadze noted. What this actually accomplished, however, remains unclear. Nonetheless, Giorgadze filled out his tables and reported the statistics to Kabul and Moscow. A modus operandi emerged over time: Giorgadze offered patronage and support for the DOYA PC, the DOYA PC supplied Giorgadze with the numbers he needed to fill out his reports, and local village élites could exploit the DOYA PC as an organizational device to meet their own modest needs (cleaning a mosque, or providing access to networks of education, cash, and weapons). Although advisors in the field were unaware of it, moreover, because VLKSM’s central advisors in Kabul were so overwhelmed by the flood of paperwork, very few of the reports were actually read, either in Kabul or Moscow.\footnote{Author Interview, Viktor Struchkov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 24 October 2012.} In effect, the advisors in the field were exchanging paperwork for patronage. They maintained the image, both in their ‘reportality’, their paperwork, and their relations with DOYA, that an apparatus was actually in the process of formation. And yet as so many complained in retrospect, both ‘action’ (deiatel’nost’) and ‘content’ (soderzhanie) were absent. The VLKSM-DOYA
partnership embodied, in some sense, the sendup of postmodern discourse that an English author produced at almost the same time that the VLKSM advisors entered the borderlands:

The point [of the work], of course, is to uphold the institution […] We maintain our position in society by publicly performing a certain ritual, just like any other group of workers in the realm of discourse – lawyers, politicians, journalists.

The deeper one penetrated the borderlands, however, the more tenuous this arrangement between locals, DOYA and VLKSM became. In Kunar Province, to the northeast of Nangarhar Province, for instance, Giorgadze found that imposing the Komsomol-style system of administration, territoriality, and discipline was almost impossible. Not only was the road up the Kunar Valley, which led to the highland passes to Nuristan and the Karakorum Range, barely under the control of DRA or Soviet troops; the province also shared a border with Pakistan, which, Giorgadze noted, ‘groups of bandits cross […] practically without any obstacles.’

The issue was not that Giorgadze or the PDPA was without hard-working, loyal, idealistic Communists. Indeed, the Soviet system actually thrived at connecting isolated idealists within its international institutional matrix into other nodes in the network. Daoud Mahmand, a twenty-year-old DOYA organizer in Asadabad had, for example, already studied at the Tashkent Komsomol School and was ‘devoted to the cause of the PDPA and friendship with the USSR.’ The Head of the Department of Finances and Accounting, meanwhile, the twenty-one year old Pashtun Nur ul-Haq had earned Giorgadze’s respect by participating in battles along the border against enemies (dushman), and wanted to continue his

405 Ibid., l. 112.
education in the USSR.406

Yet managing the DOYA organization in a violence-prone border region was, unfortunately, something that ul-Haq was unlikely to learn in Tashkent, for the administrative matrix that VLKSM was designed to implement was bound up with the idea of tightly-controlled borders and the state as a container space to be occupied with objects of production. As Maier writes:

state socialist regimes [...] had committed themselves to controlling politics, economics, and ideology on the basis of territory and frontiers (most tangibly in East Germany). They were also most heavily invested in the aging processes of heavy industry that had characterized the territorial era.407

Regimes like the Soviet Union ‘emphasized that national power and efficiency rested on the saturation of space inside the frontier.’408 They also rested on the idea that citizens’ identities had do with their roles as producers, attached for their duration of their entire life cycle to enterprises so tied to territory and population in the Soviet case that new words — monogorod (uni-city), gradoobratsushchee predpriatiie (city-forming enterprise’) – emerged to describe new economic and territorial phenomena.

Hence why Soviet advisors concerned with the construction of an Afghan ‘national economy’ like Valerii Ivanov so often stress today the sheer quantity of physical objects and institutions they built in Afghanistan; unlike men like Nathan or Paul, who conceived of ‘the economy’ in terms of capital flows and fiscality, for many of these Soviet advisors, the point of economy-building was that

no point inside the frontiers could be left devoid of the state’s control [...] administrative energy in the form of primary schools, prefectures, and railroads would pervade and “fill” the nation’s space.409

406 Ibid., l. 113.
407 Maier, ‘Consigning the Twentieth Century to History’, 824.
408 Ibid., 819.
409 Ibid., 820.
As Muboraksho Makhshulov noted in similar terms, what struck him on his first trip to Afghanistan was less the exoticism of men in turbans and more the ‘mercantile mindset’ (*merkantil’noe myshleniie*). As an economist, he emphasized, he had been taught that developing countries were supposed to head in the direction of countries like India: industrial enterprises firmly implanted in the national territorial grid, not the informal bazaars and subsistence agriculture that Makhshulov discovered the more he traveled throughout Afghanistan.410

![Figure 18: Kunar Province and Northeastern Afghanistan](image)

Search as one might, however, there were few such enterprises in Afghanistan. True, the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex or the saw mills that the German Forest Project had constructed in Paktia promised to ‘fill’ national space with economic enterprises that

410 Author Interview, Muboraksho Makhshulov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 18 July 2012.
could ‘ground’ Afghan citizens in the matrix of territory, economy, and the Party. Yet few of these projects had ever been completed. Many of those that had been completed, moreover, were later destroyed by nang-oriented Ghilzai mujahedin, to whom such sites of industrial ‘modernity’ represented the cavalry of a centralizing state alien to ‘authentic’ autochthonous Pashtun values. As a result, province to province, DOYA’s membership consisted largely of students (uchashchiesia) and members of the Sarandoy – the institutions that came the closest to approximating a formal economy in Afghanistan, but still far from the Marxist-Leninist vision of production as the core human activity around which Party cells would form. Try as they might to found primary organizations among, for example, the villagers of the remote mountain towns, without control of space and frontiers or an economy of smokestacks and mines, the political project of a Communist Party grounded in the union of territory and production was doomed.

The Spaces in Between: Soviet Identities in the Borderlands

The tension between VLKSM’s and DOYA’s identity as an institution designed to rule over uncontested ‘national territory’, on the one hand, and the actual situation of ‘outlawry’ in the borderlands becomes especially clear if one looks at the experience of the Tajik translators who occupied a liminal space in this world. In 1982, Rakhmatullo Abdullaev, an ethnic Tajik translator, and his advisor Anatoliï Makushev, a VLKSM propaganda advisor from Mordoviia visiting from Kabul were traveling along the road from Jalalabad to Asadabad in the Kunar Valley. ‘We were’, Abdullaev recalled

supposed to carry out a meeting in the schools. In other words, we needed to head to the school there. But as we were on the road there, there appeared all of sudden several
dushman. All with automatic weapons, they intercepted us, and surrounded us straight

411 Persian for ‘enemy.’
away. So they had us surrounded. And then in between two of them there walked up to us a fellow without a uniform, without an automatic rifle, nothing, no weapons, and three or four people around him, his bodyguards. Who it was precisely, we didn’t know. But it was obvious that he was someone respected. He came up to us, invited us to sit [inaudible] … he asked us if we would like some tea, something to eat. Everyone was silent, and he came up to us.\textsuperscript{412}

The situation looked grim. Both Abdullaev and Makushev worried that they would be killed. However, the bandits, who communicated through Abdullaev, questioned their captives. Recalled the Tajik:

[The leader] asked, ‘Where are you from?’ I said, ‘From the Soviet Union.’ ‘So’, he said, there are no Muslims there.’ […] So I said, ‘Let’s debate something [davaite my posporim]. If I can answer your questions about Islam as a representative of the Soviet Union, as a Muslim from the Soviet Union, [and you’re not satisfied], then do what you want with us. But if I answer your questions, then you’ll let us go.’ So it was obvious that this was something really serious. And so there started … not so much a conversation as an argument, I want to say. He’d start asking questions, and I’d answer them.

The band leader asked what Abdullaev mocked as ‘primitive questions’ about Islam in the USSR – whether mosques existed, what kind of prayers Soviet Muslims read, and so on. He answered them easily. Finally, it was Abdullaev’s turn to ask the leader a question. More than that, the leader offered, if he could not respond to the satisfaction of the other Muslims present, he promised to let Abdullaev and Makushev go.

Abdullaev gathered his composure, and posed the following question:

I said, ‘You’re a Muslim. Let’s say you’re sitting on a camel. You’re going by a graveyard. You want to say a prayer for the deceased. But you don’t want to stop. You’re riding on the camel. Is it allowed to say that \textit{sura} from the Quran out loud, or can you only say it to yourself?’ [Laughter] He thought about it, thought about it.

Abdullaev waited for a response.

And he said, ‘Yes, you can say it out loud.’
I said, ‘No!’ And suddenly everyone around me turned silent. Everyone who had been asking the questions turned to listen to me. And I said, ‘Look, I’ll explain to you why not.’ Now remember, the leader had just said ‘Yes’ in front of everyone. [I asked:] ‘Does the name of Allah appear in the [inaudible] \textit{ayat}?’
He said ‘Yes.’
‘Is it allowed to pronounce the name of Allah incorrectly?’

\textsuperscript{412} Author Interview, Rakhmatullo Abdullaev, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 25 July 2012.
He said, ‘No, under no circumstances.’ ‘So when you're riding on the camel, he's bucking you back and forth. Your voice is changing. So it’s not all right to say the *sura* out loud.’ And so that was an interesting incident. They said, ‘fine’, and let us go.

A second incident in Khost, underscored the liminal role as translators that Soviet Tajiks could take on in the spaces between two worlds. Saïd Karimov, the linguist and translator we met earlier, was deployed to Khost in the summer of 1987. Because of the intense fighting, however, Khost City was only via a helicopter from Kabul. Security in the city was uncertain, moreover. Snipers lurked in the hills during the day, while landmines lay just outside the city limits. More than that, Aleksandr Balan, the advisor with whom Karimov was working, had grown erratic.\(^{413}\) By 1987, Karimov recalled, Balan’s wife, resident in Leningrad, had declared that she wanted a divorce. Balan became near-suicidal and ceased to take proper security precautions when entering the field. Karimov, however, as Balan’s interpreter, had no choice but to follow him. It was bad news if he wanted to leave Khost alive.

Karimov sought out Afghan PDPA colleagues around Khost, some of whom had switched sides from *mujahedin* groups, or who wanted to keep their distance from the Soviets for their own safety. One Afghan Tajik pulled him aside, speaking to him in their native language. He and his allies intended to assassinate Balan by having a sniper shoot the Russian in the head while he drove his jeep outside the city. They had, however, no quarrel with Karimov, a fellow Tajik. Indeed, the Afghan Tajiks explained, it would be easier for all involved if Karimov would seat himself diagonally across from Balan in the jeep’s two-by-two seating configuration (as opposed to sitting next to, behind, or in front of Balan). Otherwise, there was a risk that the bullet could strike and kill Karimov.

\(^{413}\)Author Interview, Saïd Karimov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 24 July 2012.
Before long, the entire VLKSM outfit in Khost was airlifted out of the province as conditions deteriorated further; Karimov never did test whether the Afghan Tajik would keep his word. Yet both his and Abdullaev’s encounters with Afghans as ‘Muslims’ and ‘Tajiks’ respectively underscore how Soviet Tajiks occupied both realms of Soviet ‘discipline’ and Afghan ‘outlawry’ when they came to Afghanistan. The Soviet system had given such men opportunities that would have been unthinkable for their grandfathers. As one VLKSM advisor, Abzuzaid Zakhirov, born in the prosperous Leninabad oblast’ of northern Tajikistan, said, he still thinks of Ianina as his mamochka (‘mommy’); Ianina had, he always thought, taken a political risk in selecting a Tajik advisor. But the combination of her trust and the Soviet administrative system helped make Zakhirov’s career. ‘[For there to be] an advisor from such a small republic [like Tajikistan] – well, it was a sensation.’

The Soviet matrix of education, the Party, and ‘national economies’ that could be modeled and managed in spreadsheets provided even more of a career ladder for Muboraksho Makhshulov, a VLKSM advisor born in rural, mountainous Badakhshan. Had he been born across the border, in Afghanistan, Makhshulov reflected, he would have likely been trapped in the same village all his life. In Soviet Tajikistan, however, Makhshulov was able to study economics, complete his kandidat nauk work, and become one of the top young Central Asian economists in the entire country by the 1970s. (That said, while fluent in Russian, Makhshulov remained

---

414 Author Interview, Abduzahir Zakhirov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 31 July 2012.
415 Author Interview, Muboraksho Makhshulov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 18 July 2012. While I have not been able to locate Makhshulov’s earlier work in state or university libraries in either Tajikistan or Russia, he served much later as a government official in the Department for Foreign Economic Trade of the Ministry of the Economy of the Republic of Tajikistan. Ironically in light of his earlier career, it was in this role that Makhshulov advocated for Tajikistan’s accession to the WTO. For more, see ‘Tadzhikistan gotovitsia vstupit’ vo Vseimirniu Torgovuiu Organizatsiu’, IA Regnum, 24 April 2006, available online at:
in Dushanbe over the course of the decade.) Makhshulov twice rejected invitations to join the Party: he was just an academic, he insisted. But an obganiating friend convinced him that he had to join to reach the top of his field. Such was many a ‘disciplinary career’ made.

Once these Soviet Tajiks came to Afghanistan, however, they arrived in a country that, while similar to home in some ways, was devoid of the territorial-administrative matrix within which they had made their lives to that point. As Makhshulov laughed when he recalled his first impressions of Kabul, he said that only after several weeks could he shake off the assumption that anyone wearing a turban or a pakol (the hat common in northwestern Pakistan and northeastern Afghanistan which Ahmad Shah Mas’ud frequently wore) was out to kill him. Even within the PDPA, Makhshulov had much to learn: as his chauffeur told him one day, the mustached Soviet Tajik had to make a political decision about his facial hair: either grow it out the shape of an ‘n’, as Khalqists did, groom it up into the shape of a ‘u’, as Parchamists did, or shave it off entirely. Otherwise, Makhshulov’s flaccid mustache would only confuse his hosts. Central Asian cadres were perplexed, but the combination of war, the absence of Soviet-style ‘discipline’ in the countryside, and their own jumbled position as Communists, Central Asians, and Muslims launched them, often unintentionally, into the world of the ‘outlaw’, whether as a ‘Muslim’ or a ‘Tajik’.

Incidents like Abdullaev’s and Karimov’s underscored the irony of the myth of a divide between Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan. Even though both the economist

anizaciyu
Makhshulov and Abdullaev were both representatives of an officially atheistic, bureaucratic Party-state machine, their basic education had, at least in Abdullaev’s case, changed little from the broad education in Islamic theology, law, and history which had been common across Central Asia before 1917. Abdullaev, for example, had studied with someone whose father had worked as a qazi prior to Soviet power. Someone with an average level of education. And his son instructed us … we didn’t learn any grammar. There wasn’t any methodology whatsoever. Every mullah instructed his students with the same tools that he had studied himself. And there was a sort of a textbook we used … Haft-o-yek Sharif, it’s called. One seventh of it is the Quran, but it’s mostly short suras – middle-length ones and short ones. We started with those, and in principle we studied not the Arabic language, but we knew how to read. We studied the rules of how to pronounce it. The mullah who taught us, I think he knew Arabic. But they just taught us how to read the sura.146

While Abdullaev’s education had been privately arranged with the qazi, the principal at the local Soviet school was aware of the arrangement. But so long as Abdullaev received good marks in school, all agreed not to say anything. ‘After the Haft-o-yek’, he said,

we studied the Quran, then Persian literature, for example, a collection of ghazels and Hafiz, the Kalila-o Demna, and at the same time all the other classics. Then there was a collection, Chahar Kitab, the prose of the great theologians and poets who spoke about Islam, about the fundamental principles of Islam, [inaudible], religious rites, and so on … these kinds of books. In other words, they taught us the foundations of Islam … the foundations of belief without a deep knowledge of the Arabic languages.

Following his secondary education, Abdullaev went on to Tajik State University in Dushanbe, where he began to train as an Orientalist as a specialist in early modern Iranian literature and civilization. His religious and theological knowledge expanded by leaps and bounds: ‘We received a secular education’, he noted.

I studied in a university, studied the history of religion, not just the history of Islam, but also the history of Christianity, of Judaism, others … Buddhism, Confucianism, so we had a much higher level of information than a mullah who had also studied like us [in the village].

Hence, by the time he arrived in Afghanistan and held disputes with mere Afghan bandits, he could feel sympathetic, even prideful, with respect their misunderstandings

146 Author Interview, Rakhmatullo Abdullaev, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, July 25, 2012.
while also correcting them on Islamic ‘orthodoxy’ thanks to his Soviet education.

The irony was rich: as Maier writes, socialist countries like the USSR or the GDR were among the most faithful to the idea of the individual as a long-term producer rooted in a continuing workplace and most resistant to his or her decomposition into a virtual wardrobe of multiple roles.417

Yet the closet went deeper at empire’s edge than one might have thought. As Karimov’s case illustrated all too well, Soviet scholars and ethnographers had invested serious – and successful – effort into the invention of a national Tajik identity. By the 1960s, moreover, as Abdullaev recalled of his Islamic education, the postwar Soviet matrix allowed, structured, and even encouraged the cultivation of a specifically Soviet Muslim identity. In this way, Central Asian advisors and their translators were representatives of what B.G. Privatsky and Paolo Sartori have called ‘Muslimness’ – a ‘cultural framework’ within which Islam, although challenged by the discourse of an unabashedly anti-religious state, remained a source of knowledge, ethics, morality, and spirituality for many (but by no means all) Muslims in the USSR.418

Even as late socialism foreclosed certain ideological, religious, or sexual identities for its citizens, hence, it also shaped new possibilities for identity that Soviet citizens might not even be aware of until outsiders viewed them entirely through one of their constituent roles: Soviet, Muslim, Tajik. Identities that had been consciously forged, or, in the case of Islam, managed by institutions of Soviet discipline, became the garments that one could don to blend in in the borderlands, often saving one’s hide in the process. This blending of the two worlds – Soviet discipline and Afghan ‘outlawry’ – was, however, not confined merely to the plane of identity. At the very limits of Soviet and PDPA power in

417 Maier, ‘Consigning the Twentieth Century to History’, 823.
Afghanistan, advisors would devise more institutional solutions to blend the two worlds

Reset?

By May 1986, Babrak Karmal, the General Secretary of the PDPA since the assassination of Amin, was replaced by the more dynamic Muhammad Najib, a Pashtun nationalist and the former director of the KhAD who ‘had caught the eye of Soviet agents in Kabul as well as of leaders in Moscow even before the intervention.’419 Thinking back to Aburrahman Khan, whom the British had installed as Emir in 1880 following the Second Anglo-Afghan War, new Soviet leaders like Gorbachëv and foreign policy advisors like Anatoliĭ Cherniaev hoped to manage their disengagement from the country by installing a strong, centralizing Pashtun leader, even if they had been warned in advance that Najib was not trusted by the country’s ethnic and religious minorities.420 As J.N. Dixit, the Indian Ambassador to Kabul at the time, noted, Najib ‘exuded confidence, and facts and figures were at his fingertips. He conveyed the impression of being efficient, competent, assertive, and alert.’421

With Karmal soon handed a one-way plane ticket and the keys to an apartment in Moscow, by the summer of 1986, Najib was ready to govern, buoyed by a February 1987 aid package of 950 million rubles, ‘more than the USSR had ever given to any one country.’422 But the aid package was meant to be more than a mere lifeline. Some of the aid was explicitly targeted to help develop an Afghan private sector, one of the aims of a newly-announced policy of ‘National Reconciliation’ (Masalheh-yi Melli in Dari,

420 Ibid., 251
422 Kalinovsky, 101.
*Natsional’noe primerenie* in Russian). By 1988, Soviet journals were even touting the commercial success of Afghan entrepreneurs like Rasul Barat, an Afghan who ran a shipping and logistics business in Mazar-i Sharif that shipped local goods not only to the USSR (his primary customer, granted) but also to West Germany and Japan.423

More important, however, was that Afghans learn how to govern themselves. Fikriat Tabeev, an élite Tatar Muslim, the former First Secretary of the Tatarstan ASSR, and the Soviet Ambassador to Kabul since 1979, had quickly worn out his welcome among the new ruling élite in Kabul with his bombastic, domineering attitude; in one of his first meetings with Najib, for example, he told him, ‘I made you a General Secretary.’424 By late 1986, Tabeev had been sacked and replaced with the more sensitive Yuliǐ Vorontsov, a leading Soviet diplomat who had just served two tours as the Ambassador to India and France. Top among Vorontsov’s priorities was disrupting the culture of government-by-advisors that had infected even the top levels of the PDPA. Najib would later describe a typical meeting of the Council of Ministers:

> We sit down at the table. Each minister comes with his own advisor. The meeting begins, the discussion becomes heated, and gradually the advisors come closer and closer to the table. So accordingly our people move away, and eventually only the advisors are left at the table.425

From the perspective of Vorontsov, who had spent two years of his career as a Soviet representative in the UN, the need to move away from such an imperious position was vital. ‘[Advisors] were everywhere’, he said, ‘absolutely everywhere. It was the worst sort of colonial politics. Terrible.’426 As Gorbachëv and Foreign Minister Eduard

426 Artemy Kalinovsky, Interview with Yuliǐ Vorontsov, 11 September 2007, Moscow, Russian Federation.
Shevardnadze sought to negotiate a framework for Soviet withdrawal and cessation of American aid to the mujahedin, leaders in Kabul hustled to forge an Afghan state that could survive without Soviet aid, govern itself, and which, following withdrawal, would not turn into a security headache for a USSR that needed as few distractions while reforming itself, but also did not wish to discredit its credibility in the Third World.

Inklings of this changed attitude can be seen on the provincial level when one combs through the reports of VLKSM advisors in Eastern Afghanistan. Consider one of the last reports written from Paktia, written by Oleg Maslov, a VLKSM advisor from Leningradskia oblast’. Writing to Dmitrii Ostroushko, the head VLKSM advisor in Kabul at the time, Maslov began a November 1987 memorandum by stating that

> I consider it crucial to share with you some of my reflections on the local activity of DOYA. [...] What we’re doing right now in Paktia, may, after some adjustments, be used by our boys in other provinces. Especially in Pashtunistan [Pashtunistan], where tribal relations are strong. Considering that the central advisors are planning to travel to the provinces before our arrival (of we zonal advisors) in Kabul, it’s possible that the materials on Paktia might suit themselves, to other provinces.  

Already the fact that Maslov was making suggestions of his own spoke to the changed institutional atmosphere within Komsomol. By the late 1980s, VLKSM secretaries not just in Afghanistan but also back home in the Soviet Union were encouraged to propose their own solutions to administrative problems, rather than continue in the rituals of formalism and excessive paperwork that had come to define the institution. Maslov’s report, both in its direct tone as well as in its lack of section formatting, differs markedly from the vast majority of VLKSM otchêty, which consisted of the same headings on recruitment into the Sarandoy, the Army, students in a given Zone, and so on.

---

Maslov noted that when he had arrived in Paktia, the province was in a similar state to Kunar or Khost. ‘Tribal relations were strongly developed’, he wrote.\textsuperscript{428} Mujahedin groups ran rampant in the countryside. ‘Capitalism’, he wrote, has penetrated our province, and has freakishly fused with the communal organization of society, with the tribal relations. [...] The old ‘friendly Pashtun spirit’ (doby̆i pushtunskii dukh) has been replaced in a way gainful not to the tribes, but to certain people – as a rule, the tribal elders. They are the wealthiest among their tribesmen (as one might assume under a tribal primitive structure).

Facilitating the degradation of Pashtun tribal society was the inactivity of the DOYA PC. In spite of the PC’s dynamic young secretary, Shahzadaegul Nuri, Maslov bemoaned, in terms eerily similar of those above about ‘formalism’, that in the PC each department directed its work in a rather abstract (without concrete goals) way. In the collective one never felt that the coworkers were making the necessary contact to unite their affairs. Everyone acted by himself (kazhdoe samo po sebe).\textsuperscript{429}

The DOYA PC in Paktia was a zombie institution. It claimed to coordinate the activity of primary organizations within its territory, but in reality, noted Maslov, ‘many coworkers rarely visit the “primaries”, while virtually no one goes to the villages.’ Worse, even if Nuri was, as Maslov believed, a plausible future candidate for the DOYA CC in Kabul, the PC’s Deputy Secretary, Ayub, was hopelessly lazy and ineffective. Because he was a Khalqist, however, neither Maslov nor Nuri could sack him.

Still, Maslov suggested, there was a solution: what he called ‘people’s divisions’ (narodnye divizii). There was, or so Maslov and Nuri argued, no point in maintaining the fantasy that the primary organizations did anything – or even existed – in areas like Paktia, where neither the Afghan Army nor the Soviet ‘limited contingent’ controlled territory outside of Gardez. Why not, then, Maslov suggested, supply the tribes with

\textsuperscript{429} Ibid., l. 103.
weapons, access to education, and the resources of the PDPA, halt conscription into the DRA Army and *Sarandoy*, and curtail land reform programs? Such was what Maslov and the DOYA PC agreed to do at a 10 November 1987 meeting. Explained the advisor:

This year, the decision was made and recently effected to form national divisions of the tribes of Paktia. In my view, this is the crucial link (*glavnoe zveno*) in the system, by pulling on which we can reach the goal of National Reconciliation in the province. The essence of the idea is the following: their ‘Boers’ aside, the tribes could represent strong military organizations unto themselves, if provided with modern combat technology and trained cadres. All of this is something that national power (*narodnaia vlast’*) will give them. The leadership of the national divisions will be confirmed at the tribes’ *jirgas*. The core part of each division will be located in the tribe’s place of residence and will concern itself with guarding the villages, escorting caravans full of food and materials for the tribes, the building of schools, irrigation systems, and so on.  

The DOYA PC intended to carry out this plan in the winter of 1987–1988. First the PC would collect intelligence on the Mangal, Totakhil, Ahmadzai, Gardezi, Ladai, and Ahmadkhel tribes. Next, it would dispatch ‘agitation caravans’ to recruit ‘tribal propagandists’ (*plemennye propagandisty*) from the tribes. These young men would be invited to Gardez for training (but also monitored for scholarships to study in the USSR or GDR). Next, the tribal propagandists would return to their villages to serve as liaisons between the PC and the tribes.  

If everything went according to plan, DOYA activists based in Gardez would enter the villages to conduct literacy courses and convince the locals of the wisdom of accepting the PDPA’s proposal to give them weapons and aid in exchange for being left alone. From Maslov’s point of view, the idea was also that the ‘national brigade’ system could turn DOYA from an institution obsessed with a matrix of shambolic primary organizations to one that actually engaged with the tribes.

The character of the devolution revealed much about the shifts in Soviet

---

430 Ibid., l. 103-104.
administrative thinking. As we saw earlier, one of the major rationales for DOYA’s existence was to recruit Afghan youth into the police and, above all, the Army. Recall, for example, Giorgadze’s enthusiasm in 1982 over how tribal youth had been organized ‘to dependably guard the border of the republic.’)\textsuperscript{432} Both of these policies reflected not just obvious practical concerns but also a more abstract preoccupation with territoriality and national identity. Conscription, writes Charlies Maier, but perhaps especially conscription into border guards, which literally defended the outlines of the territorial state, constituted ‘one of the key institutions by which the defense of identity space was built into the life cycle of male citizens.’\textsuperscript{433} In abandoning DOYA’s claim to mobilize children in tribes into the practices of the territorial Afghan state, Maslov and Nuri were, granted simply kowtowing to reality. But the degree to which Maslov made this retreat explicit, and even celebrated it as an \textit{upgrade} to governance in Afghanistan, reflected the extent to which ‘the once-reassuring congruence between identity space and governance space [had] weakened.’\textsuperscript{434} As, by the late 1980s, consuls in Kabul like Vorontsov sought to manage the transformation of the Afghan state, the motivating images of the territorial state – grounded in industrial life, energized with centralizing administrative practices – were faltering.

This shift in thinking was most felicitously captured by the end of Maslov’s report. There, Maslov noted that he had convinced his DOYA colleagues to spend less time working in the ‘abstract’ (to return to the tortured place of ‘formalism’ in VLKSM

\begin{footnotes}
\item[433] Maier, ‘Consigning the Twentieth Century to History’, 824.
\item[434] Ibid., 823.
\end{footnotes}
advisors’ minds) and more time practicing what he called delovy igry (‘practice games’). 435 ‘Since’, he wrote, patronizingly, ‘Afghans love to sing, dance, and play [popet’, popliasat’, I razygrat’]’, Maslov suggested that the PC invite in local peasants to engage DOYA members in a ‘duel’ of questions about the benefits of Communist rule. If the peasant felt he had won the duel, the remaining PC members (also in the room) would have to try to ‘defeat’ him. It bore an uncanny formal resemblance to the game that Rakhmatullo Abdullaev’s captor had improvised on the road to Asadabad, but it also spoke to the way that the old structures of ‘formalism’ and ‘reportality’ were evaporating. Politics no longer had to do with the dispatch of loudspeakers and taped recordings of Babrak Karmal’s speeches into the Afghan countryside, whereby centrally-issued ideology echoed and radiated through sonic and electromagnetic waves into territorial space for locals’ reception. Less still did politics have to do with the formation of primary organizations on sheets of paper to be filed back to Moscow. The idea of the centralized, coordinating, radiative territorial state had been replaced by a more informal, disputational, and fluid politics of the kind that Maslov had identified and sought to manage with the dwindling formal devices left to VLKSM and DOYA.

Concluding Thoughts

VLKSM advisors like Maslov, however, had precious little time to test such proposals. By the spring and summer of 1988, Moscow had begun to withdraw soldiers and advisors like Balan and Maslov from more unstable regions like Khost and Paktia. That August, I. Cherniak, a correspondent for the newspaper Sobesednik, captured the

435 Maslov, ‘Nekotorye charakternye osobennosti’, l. 106.
mood among the advisors as they prepared for a one-way flight to Moscow. ‘The advising apparatus had almost completely shut down’, he wrote. ‘Our mikroraјon emptied out: no more women, no more children.’

Cherniak waited around the Kabul Airport with the last VLKSM operatives to leave, Aleksandr Gavriia and Iuriї Afanas’iev, and two Tajik translators, Maston Khakimov and Khudaberdy Khaliknazarov. The team had just finished one of the last projects VLKSM would carry out for DOYA, a bathhouse in Kabul. Gavria explained the logic:

[Afghan] Prime Minister [Mohammad Hasan] Sharq just declared that as of the next year, all social organizations in the country will have to become self-financing. That means tough times for DOYA. But a bathhouse – well, maybe it can be some source of revenue ... 

The situation was deteriorating. Gunshots crackled in the air every night, and Gavria had heard that a mujahedin rocket attack had destroyed a school that VLKSM advisors had built. Several students had died, and many more were wounded. One VLKSM advisor, Aleksandr Pankratov, stepped on a land mine while abandoning his Kabul apartment and had to be transported to Moscow posthaste to be saved. ‘There’s rotten luck for you (Vot nezadacha)’, Gavria murmured.

As the group made conversation over a table loaded with grapes, watermelon, and tea, Cherniak reflected on VLKSM’s mission. Cherniak was ready to leave himself, but Gavria wanted to stay. ‘Let them know [in Moscow]’, he said’, ‘that they shouldn’t hurry to call us back. We’re still needed here.’ But why, Cherniak thought? As he wrote:

What force is forcing [the Soviet advisors] to stay here? What’s forcing them to risk their life on an hourly basis – every second? Don’t get angry at me, boys. I’m not going to pass on Gavria’s request. After all, how do we teach children to walk? At first we hold them by the arm, and then by the hand. But there then comes a time when we need to let go. Afghans can already do a lot themselves (Afgantsy mnogoe uzhe umeyut). They should take

Indeed, Afghans would very soon have to ‘take care of themselves’. By the autumn of 1988, VLKSM’ advisors were all evacuated. The last Soviet troops left the country in February of the next year. An aid apparatus and KGB residency remained at the Soviet Embassy, but the visions of importing a Soviet-style administrative system had vanished.

It marked the desultory ending to three decades of developmental interventions in the Afghan hinterlands, As both this and the previous chapter showed, not even the remote Afghan borderlands of Paktia and Khost had been excluded from the exercise in state- and economy-building that had marked Afghan history during the Cold War. Yet these attempts – the West German attempt to integrate the borderlands’ woods into an Afghan ‘national economy’, and, following Amin’s reign of terror, the PDPA’s attempt to integrate into the different territorial system of the PDPA shattered. These lands resisted integration into the ‘economic space’ or ‘political space’ that the border, or the idea of the border, had suggested. Only by the late 1980s did the advisors for VLKSM and officials from DOYA finally accept this. And yet this shift from ‘seeing like a state’ to a less totalizing vision took place at the moment that Moscow withdrew its support for an Afghan state. Soon, Pakistani-sponsored militants like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar terrorized the region. By the early 1990s, the region was devastated, the forests and agricultural complexes of bygone days burnt down or destroyed, and with more youth looking not to the Left, but to violent visions of Islamist revival, as the ideological vehicle that might, finally, replenish the borderlands.

Yet as this chapter has shown, the crisis of the 1970s and the 1980s is best understood not from the failure not to colonize Afghanistan but rather from the demand
that it conform to late 20th century preoccupations about *sovereign* states, their ‘national economies’, and territory. As the previous chapter showed, the developmental moment short-circuited not because brave Afghan warriors beat back armies of dastardly imperialists. Afghanistan was a place where Western and Soviet social science was invited in, not kicked out. The failure took place less on the level of military tactics than on that of the American, Soviet, and West German sociological imagination. Whether it was Western assumptions about fiscality or international political economy, German ones about forestry, or Soviet ones about the necessary link between economies and political identity, neither Afghanistan’s institutional history nor its geography fit these models – nor could it ever, arguably, after Partition imposed territoriality on South Asia.

Other elements in the Soviet developmental ‘package’ would change – if also eventually to fail – over the course of the decade, too. Not least among them was the Soviet women’s movement’s outreach to Afghanistan, the focus of the final chapter of this dissertation. The CPSU, the PDPA, and their attendant women’s institutions took seriously the idea that their socialist revolution could also resolve what they referred to as ‘the woman question’, even in a country as ‘backwards’ as Afghanistan. The quest to protect Afghan women and turn them into modern and productive socialist citizens seemed like a brilliant marriage. The Soviet Union had, after all ‘liberated’ Central Asian women from the horsehair veil and turned them into some of the most highly-educated and productive women in the Muslim World. Encounters between Soviet feminists and their Afghan counterparts, however, revealed as many stresses as points of possibilities for the socialist women’s project. By the end of the decade, the Soviet women’s rights
project would be plunged into crisis both intellectually and institutionally, under siege by a new women’s rights project that stressed human rights and NGOs as its key ideas and institutions.
CHAPTER FOUR:
Under A Red Veil: The Soviet Women’s Movement in Afghanistan and Beyond

… the search for freedom from, rather than in, the nation-state.437

On Wednesday, 23 June 1982, a group of young Afghan women got on a plane and flew from Kabul to Moscow to discuss their liberation. The war in Afghanistan had posed challenges, as we saw in Chapter Three, for Soviet organs like VLKSM that sought to translate socialism to Afghan conditions, but it also marked perhaps the apogee of the Soviet Union’s international commitment to women’s issues. Not only did soldiers and advisors on the ground help autochthonous Afghan activists promote women’s education and employment through PDPA organizations like the Democratic Organization for the Women of Afghanistan (DOWA); back home in the Union, women’s organizations like the Committee of Soviet Women (KSZh), forged links with their Afghan colleagues. For that was precisely what was underway in the Soviet capital this summer day. Having arrived in Moscow, the Afghan women – all members of DOWA, Kabul soviet or provincial cooperatives – spent three days at a joint DOWA-KSZh seminar titled ‘Paths and Methods for Work Among Women in the First Years Following A Revolution’ before departing on Saturday evening for more meetings in Tashkent.438

The seminar crystallized several trends in the history of Afghanistan, the USSR’s relationship with the Third World, and the women’s movement. Throughout the 1950s

438 Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 7928 (Komitet Sovetskikh Zhenschin), o. 3 (Dela obshchego khraneniia, 1958-1991 gg.), d. 5583, l. 2-3, ‘Poriadok raboty dvustoronneho sovetsko-afganskogo seminara “Puti i metody raboty sredy zhenschin v pervye gody posle revoliutsii” (23-30 iiunia, 1982g., g.g. Moskva, Tashkent.’). Historical weather data from Weather Underground, available online at: http://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/UEE/1982/6/26/DailyHistory.html?req_city=Moscow&req_state=&req_statename=Russia
and 1960s, there existed a broad, if inchoate, consensus among Kabuli élites and foreigners that Afghan women – at least some – had to get an education and seek employment if Afghanistan were to become truly modern. Soviet promotion of women’s employment and ‘liberation’ was nothing new, either. As KSZh activists never tired of mentioning, the Soviet system provided ample opportunities for women’s employment, education, abortion on demand, and childcare. More than that – perhaps the core myth for KSZh – the Soviet project had ‘liberated’ Central Asian women from darkness and tyranny, both symbolized by the paranja, the horsehair veil. Afghanistan was a sovereign country of its own, true, but supporting Afghan women seemed to sit squarely in this tradition. Like other women from the Third World – Iraq, Nicaragua, Ethiopia – the DOWA activists were engaged in a struggle for liberation as they shed the burden of centuries of colonialism, patriarchy, and exploitation.

Yet while the 1982 seminar presented itself as a straightforward exercise in sororal unity, it unintentionally highlighted the problematic way in which the Soviet women’s movement, particularly in relation to the Third World, became muddied. Such is the tension that this chapter seeks to examine. Using the Moscow seminar as one episode around which to frame a bigger discussion of the Soviet Union’s place in the global history of women and development, this chapter shows how the Soviet outreach to DOWA and other Third World women’s groups was unexpectedly deflated by two changes stemming from perestroïka that posed vital discursive and institutional challenges for organizations like KSZh. What began as an attempt to renovate the Soviet system unintentionally emasculated, so to speak, the institutions and rhetorical strategies
that made the Soviet idea of a women’s movement unique.

The first shift had to do with discourse. By the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet women’s movement – at least in its official embodiment through institutions like KSZh – could look back on several proud accomplishments, most spectacularly among them the transformation of Central Asia from a Tsarist colony to a paragon of enlightened gender policy, at least by the standards of the contemporary Middle East or Asia. The way that Soviet feminists talked about and promoted these accomplishments, however, had become frozen and hyper-normalized. A particular narrative centered around the liberation of Central Asian women in the 1920s became so baked into the ‘authoritative discourse’ of Soviet feminism that it became near-impossible to adapt the Soviet women’s movement’s rhetoric to the idiosyncratic conditions of the Third World. Women in countries like Afghanistan, Angola, and Ethiopia lived under different conditions from women in Uzbekistan in the 1920s, but the discursive constraints within which KSZh activists had to operate made it difficult to adapt this message to Afghans, even if Afghan women’s activists would find ways to appropriate these Soviet discourses for their own uses. By the late 1980s, however, glasnost’ would unmoor the Soviet feminist message from its old piers of Marxism-Leninism and the Central Asian transformations of the 1920s. But even as this rhetorical shift made it possible to stage more candid dialogue with other Third World women’s activists, it raised the awkward question of what the actual content of Soviet feminism was – a question that the ensuing political collapse in Moscow made, for better or worse, academic.

The second shift had to do with the changing institutional terms of the USSR’s
engagement with the international women’s movement. It might be tempting to place the 1982 Moscow seminar in a Whiggish history of women’s rights that begins with the United Nations’ 1975 declaration of International Women’s Year (and the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City), continues on to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), segues to the 1985 Nairobi Conference and Hilary Clinton’s 1995 declaration that ‘women’s rights are human rights’, and comes full circle to the contemporary outrage over the Pakistani Taliban’s attempted assassination of the student and activist Malala Yousafzai. Such an optimistic narrative overlooks, however, how contingent the apparent international consensus on women’s rights that emerged by the early 1990s actually was. It overlooks the extent to which, within a decade after one vision for human rights was ascendant – one centered around national self-determination and the sovereign state – key decisions taken in Moscow helped to re-frame ‘women’s rights’ (a term Soviet women’s activists never used) into an issue centered more around human rights, the NGO, and individual activists. Far from an example of how the USSR was an opponent of ‘Talibanization’ avant la lettre (as some former VLKSM advisors would like to insist), the 1982 Moscow seminar instead shows how crooked the journey of women’s rights from Mexico City actually was, as well as the ironic role that the USSR played in the re-framing of women’s rights.

This chapter explores this story in four parts. Firstly, it traces the history of women in 20th century Afghanistan, where feminism went from being an élite-led Ottoman- and European-inspired project to a Soviet-inflected project carried out by
members of a Leftist intelligentsia. Secondly, it turns to the 1982 Moscow seminar to analyze how the KSZh activists addressed their Afghan colleagues. Attempting to situate the KSZh activists’ remarks within the history of Soviet feminism and Alexei Yurchak’s framework of ‘authoritative discourse’, it unpacks the KSZh representatives’ self-presentation of their women’s rights project vis-à-vis Afghanistan and the Third World. A third section shows how DOWA representatives responded to their Soviet counterparts, both in their official scripted speeches and in their extemporaneous remarks. Finally, a concluding section offers some reflections on the eventual NGO- and human rights-inflected trajectory that the women’s rights project took after the Soviet collapse and asks what, if anything, we might learn today from the rise and fall of Soviet feminism in the context of the intervention in Afghanistan.

_Afghan Feminism(s) Before 1978_

Before examining the 1982 seminar itself, it is crucial to understand the multiple indigenous traditions of Afghan feminism of which the DOWA activists were only the latest exponents.\(^{439}\) While actual _movements_ (in the sense of institutionalized organizations devoted to women’s issues as such) date only from the postwar period in Afghanistan, under Amanullah the Kingdom saw inklings of more liberal mores. As in early 20\(^{th}\) century Egypt, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire, attempts at reform took place in reference to European norms of ‘civilization’ and ‘included the admission of women and girls to educational institutions, their appearance in public, and certain legal

\(^{439}\) Much of this section is derived from a dissertation written by Julia Bauer, a student in the _Asienwissenschaften_ subfaculty of the Humboldt University of Berlin in 1985, available for consultation at the Humboldt University’s Asian and African Studies Library (Invalidenstraße 118, Berlin 10115): ‘Zur Entwicklung einer Frauenbewegung in Afghanistan im Zeitraum von 1946 bis zur Gegenwart.’
questions’ like inheritance and property ownership. Girls’ schools opened in Kabul. Queen Soraya, the daughter of the cosmopolitan Afghan intellectual Mahmud Tarzi, embodied this attempt to wed domestic reform with European civilization as she accompanied Amanullah on a grand tour of Europe and the USSR during which she donned elegant European dresses and hats.

After a coup overthrew Amanullah in January 1929, however, the tradition of reform that Amanullah and Soraya had represented was interrupted. In general, Afghan women had no right to choose their husband, girls went almost universally without formal education, and purdah (‘curtain’), the tradition of separating men from women in public, remained largely upheld. True, more and more Europeans (and Japanese) came to Kabul, forming and founding their own schools in the capital, but not until 1943 were Afghan girls’ schools re-instituted. Only in 1946 was the first Afghan women’s association, Da Mermeno Tolana (Pashto for ‘The Women’s Society’, abbreviated here as DMT), founded. It thanked its existence to Madame Asin, a French woman who had married an Afghan and settled in Kabul. The organization reflected the reformist aspirations of a small group of Kabuli intelligentsia and technocrats. Zabuli provided patronage to the young organization, including the capital to cover its day-to-day needs, and in 1947, the RGA nationalized the organization, and began to provide DMT with half of its annual budget. Queen Humaira (Zahir Shah’s wife) became the organization’s official patron, and the wives of Members of Parliament often staffed the organization.

The organization’s aims were modest. It ran courses in stitching and obstetrics for

women in Kabul, employed women to produce clothing and supplies for soldiers and poor children in the capital’s schools, and ran both a literacy program and a more comprehensive course consisting ‘of the reading of the Koran, history, geography, writing, mathematics, and Pashto.’ A library with over 2,000 volumes and a rotating film program completed the cultural offerings. *Da Mermeno Tolana*, in other words, had morphed from a charity to a part of Zahir Shah’s reformist politics of the 1950s, a time in which the Afghan government had begun to implement maternal health programs with the World Health Organization, allowed women to work in libraries, banks, and airlines, and made de-veiling a condition for women working in the public sector in 1959. But this was no Golden Age. A trivially small percentage of Afghan women actually worked outside of the home and DMT existed to represent the RGA’s positions, not to challenge them. In no way did it constitute civil society. Feminism in Afghanistan remained state-managed and, arguably, stage-managed. De-veiled, modern Afghan women demonstrated the country’s progress to nodding foreign delegations and keep the foreign aid flowing, even if change stopped outside the gates of Kabul.

By the time the Polish journalist Andrzej Bińkowski visited the capital in the late 1950s, nonetheless, DMT had built an impressive institution. Pulling up to a given address in the *Shahr-i Nau* neighborhood, Bińkowski rang the doorbell. Someone buzzed him through. Behind the street gate, he found yet another gate and a police officer; under normal circumstances, men and women would have to speak through the interior gate

under supervision. Bińkowski’s interpreter explained the situation, however, and the
journalist was soon met by Zeynab Enayet Saraj, DMT’s Deputy Director and ‘a cousin
of Amanullah’s who had long lived with her father and brother in the Afghan emigration
in Tehran.’

Continuing in what was becoming a tradition of Polish men’s fascination
with Afghan women, Bińkowski was entranced. ‘Whoever’, wrote Bińkowski,

like myself, had only seen Afghan women thickly veiled on the dusty streets pulsating
with exotic life, would find this black-haired women sitting in an easy chair all rather
unusual: the modern, gray checkered skirt, the pink pullover, her petite black shoes with
pencil heels, the discreetly applied eyebrows, and her fingernails painted in the same
color as her pullover.

As Saraj explained, ‘folding her long, slim fingers together’, DMT had built a
girls’ school inside of its Kabul headquarters. Bińkowski and Saraj entered a
classroom, where

the girls, all dressed in light blue outfits, got up from their seats and looked at us without
any timidity, even though their faces were uncovered and their chadors hung on the
clothes hooks.

It was all impressive, noted Bińkowski:

a true revolution was underway at Da Merneno Tolana […] women, still not having
separated themselves from the chador, were driving time forward by centuries in
Afghanistan, here in the school.

As earlier, ties with the Kabuli intelligentsia and political élite kept DMT alive.
Rokia Abubakir, an Afghan suffragist and member of the organization, was the sister of
Sayed Rishtia, who directed DMT’s Department of Press and Information, but also, more
importantly, was a leading figure in government who granted DMT political immunity.
Rishtia’s daughter edited DMT’s official magazine, Khanum, which Abubakir’s husband,

445 Bińkowski, Von Taschkent nach Kabul, 154.
446 Ibid., 154-155.
447 Ibid., 157.
448 Ibid., 158.
449 Ibid.
a dean at Kabul University, had founded. Still, the overall project remained one of feminist autarky. A European-oriented Afghan élite had formed a network of schools, theaters, restaurants, and workplaces where Afghan women could work, unveiled if still behind walls. Based in Kabul, but with a new office opening in Kandahar that would employ three hundred women, DMT sought emancipation in spite of segregation. As Saraj emphasized to Bińkowski as he left DMT’s headquarters,

the most progressive women of Afghanistan work in our school. Afghan women want one day to work side by side with the men, and I think that they’ll succeed in doing so.450

Figure 19: European modernity for Afghan women? Zeynab Enayet Saraj, the Vice-President of DMT. From Von Taschkent nach Kabul, np.

Yet as Afghan women were looking out onto the world, Soviet women were looking in on Afghanistan. By 1958, the International Section of KSZh began to file reports on what it viewed as the dire situation of women in Afghanistan.451 Two years later, analysts at the organization and the Soviet Embassy in Kabul prepared detailed

450 Ibid., 160.
briefs on the history of women in Afghanistan, the history of DMT, and even the status of women in rural Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{452} By May 1961, KSZh sent out feelers to establish a relationship with DMT, which found solid footing.\textsuperscript{453} Rona Mansuri, one of the leaders of DMT, invited two KSZh representatives, Zoya Kalinina and Nina Voronina, to Kabul, where they visited DMT’s main institute and two older Kabuli institutions for girls’ education, the Malalai College and the Nazu kindergarten.\textsuperscript{454} Ties improved from there as the Soviet Embassy and KSZh sponsored scholarship for Afghan women to take their higher education in the Soviet Union, provided stipends for Afghan activists to attend international women’s conferences, and mailed DMT copies of \textit{Sovetskaia Zhenshchina} (Soviet Woman), the official Soviet women’s magazine.

Soviet ideas about ‘the woman question’ took root in Kabul. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as more women attended Kabul University and the Soviet-sponsored Kabul Polytechnic University, Afghan women grew aware of the possibilities open to women in the USSR. One alumna of Kabul University recalled seeing a team of five Soviet engineers – four men and one woman – moving in together into an apartment in the Mikrorayon neighborhood. Brought up hearing about the evils of Communism, she assumed that the woman was the men’s shared property. Only later did she discover that the woman was the \textit{supervisor} of the entire team.\textsuperscript{455} What if socialism promised more for women than the \textit{ancien régime} of state-sponsored, European-oriented feminism? By the mid-1960s, Afghan Communists had assembled the institutions to promote just such a

\textsuperscript{452} GARF, f.7928, op. 3, d. 455, ‘Spravochnye materialy’ contains several such reports, each of which runs twenty to thirty pages in length.
\textsuperscript{453} Ibid., d. 656, l. 4, Letter from KSZh to \textit{Da Merno\no Tolana}, 13 May 1961.
\textsuperscript{454} Ibid., d. 656, l. 10, Letter from Nina Voronina to Rona Mansuri, 27 September 1961.
\textsuperscript{455} Author Interview, Sabina Ziar, 14 July 2011, Oxford, United Kingdom.
feminist project. DOWA was founded in 1965 (the same year as the founding of the PDPA) by Anahita Ratebzad, Babrak Karmal’s wife. Ratebzad, thirty-five at the time, embodied the aspirations of the upwardly mobile Afghan female intelligentsia: born in the village of Gulnara in Kabul Province, Ratebzad attended the Francophone Malalaï Lycée, trained as a nurse at the Chicago School of Nursing, received her M.D. from Kabul University, and became one of four women elected to Afghanistan’s Parliament in 1965.

Feminism in Afghanistan was changing. Before, it had mimicked the aspirations of Kabul’s European expatriates and contented itself to be mentored by aristocratic Kabul élites like Zabuli. But the expansion of higher education, and the transformation of Afghanistan into an ideological micro-arena of the Cold War, changed all of that. The shifts inscribed themselves on the ideological topography of the capital. DMT had hidden in a complex in Shahr-i Nau; now, groups held regular meetings at Zarnegar Park in the city center. ‘One corner’, said an alumna of Kabul University, ‘was dominated by the Russian orientation, one by the Muslim Brothers, one by the Maoists, and one by the royalists.’456 The turn towards the outside world of the 1950s and 1960s was taking Afghan feminism in exhilarating – but potentially grave – directions. An Afghan women on the Left might one day attend PDPA protests to show solidarity with Chilean women tortured in Pinochet’s prisons or Indian women sterilized by Indira Gandhi; the next day, however, she might be dodging acid attacks from Islamists in the halls of Kabul University.457

456 Ibid.
Granted, like the PDPA of which it was a part, DOWA was no a mass organization. At the time of its founding, it had seven members. But by 1978, it had grown to 2,000 members and claimed 2,500 sympathizers. Ratebzad boasted, rather implausibly, that ‘in the middle of the seventies there was almost no city, no village, in which DOWA did not have an influence.’\textsuperscript{458} An illegal organization from its founding, DOWA sought to recruit women from DMT to attend events to discuss ‘the real reasons for the oppression of women’, prompting DMT to ban its members from all contact with the group.\textsuperscript{459} The ideological gap between the organizations was now clear: could ‘the woman question’ be addressed \textit{ad hoc} within the framework of the state, or did it belong to a panoply of related issues – along with racism, apartheid, and Zionism – that demanded organization through proletarian internationalist groups in league with the USSR? If members of DMT had been content to build a state-managed women’s society as part of the long march towards emancipation, DOWA viewed the full emancipation of women as just the beginning of a a more ambitious project to build socialism in Afghanistan while also cooperating with a global Left on a variety of social issues. DOWA’s first political program, released in 1969, demanded equal rights for men and women regardless of their social position or ethnic background, and described the organization as ‘consisting of working women, working peasant women, female members of the intelligentsia, housewives, and others.’\textsuperscript{460}

\begin{flushright}
International shifts in how women’s issues were conceptualized changed the terms
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{458} Matn-e Asnad-e Awalin Konferens-e Sartasari-ye Zanan-e Afghanistan (Kabul: 1980), 25.
\textsuperscript{459} Interview with Ms. Najiba, Member of the Central Committee of DOMA, Kabul, January 1984, cited in Bauer, 54.
of debate in Kabul, too. As part of International Women’s Year in 1975, Daoud re-christened DMT as the ‘Organization of the Women of Afghanistan’ (OWA).\(^{461}\) The organization devoted itself to ‘campaigns against illiteracy among women, against forced marriage and superstition.’\(^{462}\) (DMT had attempted to organize a birth control campaign in 1968 with the support of the RGA, but it fizzled rapidly.)\(^{463}\) Daoud’s government held events to celebrate International Women’s Year in Kabul, developed statistics on women’s welfare, and founded provincial committees to promote OWA’s goals. But none of this satisfied the Afghan Left. DOWA members insisted, looking back a decade later, that

> the [International Women’s Year] actions were done for the sake of appearance and that the weekly meetings of the members of the commission occurred more as a tea-drinking circle and to exchange gossip about the latest events in the city than as work towards the ‘year of the woman’.\(^{464}\)

In DOWA’s official newspaper *Zanan-i Afghanistan* (*Women of Afghanistan*), meanwhile, activists promoted the women’s movement as run through proletarian internationalist organizations like the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF), a Soviet-affiliated umbrella organization for Leftist feminist groups around the world.

Yet these debates about the proper way to organize a feminist project coincided with ‘the woman question’ becoming more prominent at the United Nations. Given the contemporary preoccupation with self-determination and the sovereign state at the United Nations at the time, it should come as no surprise that women’s issues became subordinated to these concerns. When proposals like CEDAW (under preparation since 1976 and adopted in December 1979) were debated in the General Assembly, for

---

463 Ibid.
instance, Soviet and Third World leaders could agree with the framework of the Convention, but for different reasons. For the Soviet Union, signing CEDAW re-affirmed its image as the world’s most progressive state for women – particularly compared to the United States, where Republican Senate opposition blocked adoption of CEDAW. Image mattered to Third World tyrants, too, but more meaningful was how CEDAW reinforced the state, as opposed to ‘civil society’ (or proletarian internationalist groups like WIDF), as the premier platform for women’s issues. Since states, not NGOs, were parties to the Convention, leaders like Daoud could claim that groups like OWA possessed a monopoly on women’s issues in their countries. Groups like DOWA, rather than representing one thread in a tapestry of women’s viewpoints, were simply illegal.

Further, because states could unilaterally declare themselves unbound by any provision of CEDAW (paragraphs contradicting Sharia law, for instance), and because countries’ CEDAW-mandated reports on the situation of women in the country were written exclusively by domestic observers before being presented to a committee of ‘experts’ who hailed overwhelmingly from the Third World, the UN effectively had zero ability to enforce CEDAW. This was certainly not what second-wave feminists like Betty Friedan had thought they were getting when they sought ‘women-to-women’ contact at forums like Mexico City in 1975. Arguably, too, it was not necessarily what Moscow would have wished for, either: power on women’s issues shifted from proletarian internationalist organizations to the UN and the nation-state. Yet the unanticipated

---

explosion of the number of member states at the ‘parliament of man’ changed the terms on which both women’s and other issues were debated. Similar to the way ‘human rights’ would be handled at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, ‘women’s rights’ portended to become an issue where luminaries like the Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea could wrap themselves in the language of sovereignty and ‘internal affairs’ while excoriating the United States, Israel, and South Africa for their sins. The former ‘prison of nations’ had, it seemed, exploited Third World preoccupations with self-determination to turn the Third World sovereign state into a ‘prison for women’.

Just as CEDAW was under debate, however, back in Afghanistan the tables had been turned on Daoud, whom PDPA-affiliated Afghan Army officers assassinated in an April 1978 coup d’état. The ensuing power struggle within the PDPA saw Ratebzad and other Parchamists ejected from the Central Committee and exiled to Ambassadorships around in semi-friendly countries. Ratebzad, for her part, was stationed in Belgrade after the summer of 1978, a short flight away from Prague, where her husband hid out in the Afghan Embassy.466 From July 1978 to December 1979, a Khalqist women’s organization, ‘The Women’s Organization of the People’, led first by Delaha Kahn and later, after Amin’s takeover in November 1979, a ‘Dr. Aziza’, organized women’s issues in Afghanistan. When an East German graduate student interviewed DOWA members in Kabul in the 1980s, she could find little information about the status of DOWA during these years of retreat. Members reported only that ‘the organization had worked in

466 ‘Moscow’s New Stand-In’, *Time*, 7 January 1980, available online at:  
http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,923866,00.html
illegality, fought against the efforts of the Amin Group, and finally actively took part in the struggle towards the overthrow of Amin.\textsuperscript{467} Crucially, however, now any gradualist approach to ‘the woman question’ was off the table. Radical change imposed by a Communist state apparatus unafraid to shed blood was the only possibility. The only real question was whether the Khalqists or Parchamists would do so.

The liquidation of Amin and the Soviet intervention answered that question. Ratebzad followed her husband, now General Secretary of the PDPA, back to Afghanistan as the Minister of Education, and in November 1980, DOWA hosted its first-ever national conference, which included over 2,000 Afghan delegates and 21 delegations from 19 foreign countries.\textsuperscript{468} The conference spoke the language of Marxism-Leninism, promoting ‘productive work’ as

\begin{quote}
the first and most important condition for equality between men and women [and] the only road to the removal of the economic dependence of women and towards the development of her abilities and talents.\textsuperscript{469}
\end{quote}

The conference also reorganized DOWA into Soviet-style provincial, district, city, and enterprise-level committees. DOWA, like KSZh, gained a Central Committee along with departments devoted to international relations, social affairs, ‘production affairs and employment searches’, political and general education, women’s rights, and administration.\textsuperscript{470} By 1981, DOWA had opened its first women’s club in Kabul, resumed publication of \textit{Zanan-i Afganistan} in Dari, Pashto, and English, begun to publish a page devoted to women’s issues in the English-language \textit{Kabul New Times}, and even produced a daily 30-minute radio program, ‘Women and Family’ and a weekly hour-long women’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{467} Bauer, ‘Zur Entwicklungs’, 36-37.
\item \textsuperscript{468} \textit{DRA Annual} (Kabul: 1980), 1000.
\item \textsuperscript{469} Bauer, ‘Zur Entwicklungs’, 38.
\item \textsuperscript{470} \textit{Matn-i asnad-i awalin konferens-i sartasari-yi zanan-i Afghanistan} (Kabul: 1980), 25.
\end{footnotes}
television show. By the early 1980s, then, DOWA boasted contacts across Afghanistan, growing institutional confidence, and connections with the Soviet-sponsored proletarian internationalist organizations that promoted anti-colonial and women’s rights issues. Afghanistan hosted the 10th Session of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in November 1982, at which Ratebzad gave the keynote speech, and DOWA delegations participated in anti-fascist and socialist women’s conferences in Prague in the early 1980s.\footnote{Bauer, ‘Zur Entwicklung’, 43.} Not only that, because of the identification of the state with ‘women’s issues’ at the UN, DOWA members could attend the UN’s Second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980 as full-fledged representatives of all Afghan women.

Such, then, was the context within which DOWA activists were invited to Moscow in the summer of 1982. Afghan feminism had come a long way since the 1940s. Once based out of the royal household, feminism in Afghanistan was now ‘owned’ by Communists. Organizations like DMT had begun modestly in their ambitions, but the emergence of Soviet-inflected feminisms in Kabul, and of women’s issues as a project centered around the sovereign state changed the terms on which Afghan feminists would, or could, frame their own domestic project. Communist Afghan feminists still concerned themselves with transforming Afghanistan, but they no longer relied on French lycées and gradualism to do so. Now they presided over a violent, mobilizational state apparatus ready to implement their program of social change. They could rely, too, on a UN framework for women’s rights that ceded to them, as masters of the state, a monopoly on the representation of all women interests within the borders, such as they were, of Afghanistan. They still looked to the Soviet Union for inspiration, but those who
disembarked from the Kabul-Moscow flight that summer day in 1982 could now speak with their Soviet sisters not as tutors, but as equals.

*Methodology: Feminism Was Forever, Until It Was No More?*

The speeches of the KSZh activists to their DOWA colleagues raise several methodological issues. A near-constant theme that emerges from memoirs and interviews with people who lived in the Soviet Union before *perestroika* is the extent to which what Alexei Yurchak calls ‘authoritative discourse’ permeated virtually all public speech. As Yurchak argues, policy shifts encouraged by Stalin in the early 1950s unintentionally destabilized the ‘Soviet discursive regime’. Prior to this period, it was possible to stage ‘meta-discourses’ on what, precisely, ‘socialism’ ought to mean. One could analytically stand outside of ‘socialism’ to make suggestions on what Soviet civilization or discourse ought to be. In the mid-1930s, for example, newspapers featured public discussion on what the new Soviet Constitution should include. Reader contributions might have been stage-managed, but in contrast to the lack of debate surrounding the 1977 Constitution, it was taken for granted that denizens of the USSR could enrich the conceptual vocabulary of ‘socialism.’ Not that everything was up for grabs, of course: only the discursive ‘master’, Stalin, could challenge key elements of Soviet discourse, such as Lenin or the leading role of the Party. Indeed, Stalin himself made such rhetorical interventions when he altered canonical texts like the Soviet national anthem, or legitimized the system he built as ‘Marxism-Leninism’ rather than ‘Stalinism’.

---

473 Ibid., 37.
474 Ibid., 42.
475 Ibid., 43.
But, argues Yurchak, following Stalin’s demise, Soviet authoritative discourse shifted away from a model based on the publicly circulating subjective knowledge of a ‘master’ who was located outside discourse and calibrated it towards an independent ‘canon’ toward a model based on ‘objective scientific laws’ that were not known in advance, not controlled by anyone exclusively, and therefore did not form any external canon. This shift meant that there was no longer any external discursive location from which a meta-discourse on ideological precision could originate.476

This discursive shift meant that regularity, predictability, and formalism, not calibration against a master, determined the validity of ideological statements. This, Yurchak, contends, led to the formalistic quality of Soviet official discourse of the 1960s and 1970s. This formalization of authoritative discourse had unanticipated consequences. Former Soviet citizens recall the era as a period when ‘socialism, in effect, had become demagnetized.’477 Even as some found ways to live вне (‘outside’) this rhetorical system, more recalled the way the ‘master signifiers’ of late socialist authoritative discourse – Lenin, the Party, Communism – colonized and limited the ways of talking about everyday subjects.478 ‘We simply did not speak with each other about work or studies or politics’, said one of Yurchak’s interviewees. ‘Everyone understood everything, so why speak about that. It was not interesting.’479

For the purposes of this chapter, the point is that one cannot just analyze the remarks of official activists – whether from KSZh or DOWA encounter – as if their speech were the product of autonomous, independent liberal subjects freely issuing their opinion.480 Conversely, rather than viewing them as the brainwashed subjects of a

476 Ibid., 46.
477 Benjamin Nathans and Kevin Platt, ‘Socialist in Form, Indeterminate in Content: The Ins and Outs of Late Soviet Culture’, Ab Imperio 2/2011, 313.
478 Yurchak, Everything Was Forever; Until It Was No More., Chapter 4; 73-74.
479 Ibid., 129.
480 For more on the debate between liberal subjectivity and the idea of a distinctively Soviet subjectivity,
‘totalitarian’ regime, one must treat these women as subjects of a late socialist interiority, one that had at its disposal primarily the phraseology, syntax, and content of late socialist authoritative discourse, but which also possessed a certain amount of freedom to appropriate that same discourse for new, ironic feminist projects.

For Afghan women would need new rhetorics and feminist projects indeed. The shocks of the 1970s had changed dramatically what it meant to advocate for feminism in Afghanistan. True, some conservative tribal leaders still regarded ‘women as property to be owned, the honor of whom must be upheld by the family.’ But while others had opposed the Musahibans’ attempts to expand formal education for women, or the 1959 deveiling regulations, it seemed hard for an intellectually honest observer to maintain, in a region now dominated by Khomeini, Zia, and Amin that the ‘real’ threat to women came from capitalist exploitation or ‘imperialism’.

This, nonetheless, is precisely what the KSZh activists argued. In their view – part of the trismus of authoritative discourse – the historical experience of the liberation of Central Asian women in the 1930s as the central experience that could inform their Afghan colleagues’ feminist project. The conditions of Afghan women in the 1980s may have differed from those of Uzbek women in the 1930s, but the KSZh activists nonetheless unflaggingly resorted to this established canon of tropes while lecturing their


482 Ibid., 94.
Afghan colleagues. The use of the *hujum* of the late 1920s as a shorthand for ‘women’s rights’ became so entrenched in authoritative discourse, so assumed as *obviously* relevant that it became impossible for Soviet women’s activists to conceptualize women’s rights through any other lens.

*Soviet Women Speak Out*

With these methodological thoughts in mind, one can now turn to the remarks of the KSZh activists. Consider those of Nalia Erumukhanovna Bekmakhanova, a Kazakh scholar from the Institute for the History of the USSR from the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Her opening remarks on ‘The Development of the Social-Political Activity of Women’ represent a textbook case of authoritative discourse:

Among Soviet women there are representatives of one hundred and thirty nations and *narodnosti* populating the USSR. Linked with the names of Soviet women are all of the accomplishments (*sversheniia*) and victories of our motherland (*Rodiny*). They participated in the Great October Socialist Revolution, overwhelmed their opponents (*srazhali*) for the power of Soviets, built socialism, evinced bravery and firmness on the front and on the home front (*tyula*) of the Great Patriotic War, reconstructed the destroyed war economy, and today they are actively participating in communist construction. Bekmakhanova elides the range of experiences of Soviet women into an unproblematized narrative of Soviet history consisting of distinct phases (the October Revolution, the Civil War, the construction of socialism, the war, postwar reconstruction).

---

483 Bekmakhanova was the daughter of Ermukhan Bekmakanovich Bekmakhanov (1915-1966), the major Kazakh historian of the first half of the twentieth century who became a pariah for arguing that the Kenesary Karimov revolt had been progressive. Bekmakhanova was herself also a historian of 18th and 19th century Kazakh history. See, for example, N.E. Bekmakhanova, *Kazakhki mladshevo i srednego zhuzov v krest’iansko voine 1773-1775 pod predvoditel’stvom E.I. Pugachev*, Dissertation, Leningrad Section of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1966); Ibid., *Legenda o Nevidimke (Uchastie kazakhov v krest’iansko voine pod rukovodstvom Pugacheva v 1773-1775 gg.*) (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1968); Ibid., *Mnogonational’noe naselenie Kazakhstana i Kirgizii v epokhu kapitalizma (60-e gody XIX v. – 1917 g.*) (Moscow: Nauka, 1986). Throughout the 1970s she produced updated school textbooks on Kazakh history which her father had originally written.

484 N.E. Bekmakhanova, ‘Razvitie obschecestvenno-politicheskoi aktivnosti zhenshchin’, GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 5583, l. 54.
Consider, however, how Bekmakhanova frames her message. Most of the phrases in the excerpt are fixed (‘actively participated’ rather than ‘participated’). Rather than constituting new affirmations of fact, they convey

the idea that authoritative discourse was immutable, citational, anonymous, and removed into the past in terms of temporality.  

The phrase ‘representatives of one hundred and thirty nations and narodnosti’ is another example of this phenomenon and its persistence: not only was the phrase fixed in Soviet authoritative discourse (to reflect Soviet ethnography), but the phrase, even with its fixed number (130) remains common today in 2013 in Kazakhstani, Uzbekistani, and Belarusian ethnicities discourse – even though, with the arguable exception of Kazakhstan, none of those countries has more than 130 ethnicities living within its borders.  

Apace here, is less any autonomous opinion on Bekmakhanova’s part about the status of Soviet women, and more the framing of Soviet women’s history into terms framed exclusively by authoritative discourse.

But some of the contradictions in the application of authoritative discourse become apparent as Bekmakhanova shifts her attention to ‘Eastern’ (vostochnye) women.

Only after the October Revolution did women occupy a position of equal rights in society. In Tsarist Russia the female worker and the female peasant underwent cruel exploitation, were deprived of their civil, political, and economic rights, their position within the family was severe (tiazhelym). But especially severe was the fate of women of the Eastern outskirts of the country – Kazakhstan, Central Asia, the South Caucasus. These were colonies of Tsarism, here both among the settled denizens (zhitelei) as well as nomads there prevailed a natural economy in which along with the man the women worked much, too. They raised children, carried out the domestic tasks (domashnee khoziastvo), looked after the livestock, worked in the fields, worked in the orchards, brought the goods to market, prepared carpets and felts, textiles, and sewed clothing. But only the male master of the house (khoziain doma) could guide the domestic economy, own property, sell it, and control the money. The man also controlled the fate of the woman. He received up to 40

485 Yurchak, 67.
livestock as ransom, kalym, when giving his daughter away in marriage.\textsuperscript{487}

Bekmaksanova asserts a historical disjuncture between the European and Muslim women of the Russian Empire, expressed in Marxian terms (‘natural economy’).\textsuperscript{488} She implicitly argues that the Soviet case (the Soviet Central Asian case in particular) furnishes relevant and useful lessons for her Afghan colleagues.

Consider, however, how she makes this case, and how Soviet authoritative discourse limits the relevance of her feminist project to the Third World. While the Russian Empire, notes the historian Adeeb Khalid, institutionalized difference between ‘natives’ and others, the Bolshevik seizure of power opened up vistas of reform that far outstripped earlier Tsarist reformers’ ideas about grazhdanstvennost’ (‘civic spirit’) and sближение (‘rapprochement’) of Russians and Central Asians.\textsuperscript{489} Both predominantly Slavic Bolshevik and indigenous Jadid activists and intellectuals advocated for orthographical reform, education, and the de-veiling of women, albeit for different reasons. The former did so as part of a class-centric Marxist ‘conquest of difference’, the latter out of a nationalist project of Muslim modernization not dissimilar from what the Afghan Mahmud Tarzi had proposed ten years prior, a project which thought in terms of how to reconcile national and Islamic ‘authenticity’ with the perceived need for ‘modernity’.\textsuperscript{490} The campaign these different forces led in conjunction with one another, the hujum (Central Asian Turkic for ‘assault’) to remove the veil, failed, however, even as it represented the last point of agreement between Jadids and Bolsheviks before the

\textsuperscript{487} Ibid., 1. 54-55.
\textsuperscript{488} See in particular Karl Marx, Capital, Volume 2, Chapter 4: ‘The Three Formulas of the Circuit’, available online at: \url{http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1885-c2/ch04.htm}
\textsuperscript{489} Adeeb Khalid, ‘Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective’, Slavic Review 65:2 (Summer 2006), 236-237.
\textsuperscript{490} For more on the Jadid movement, see Adeeb Khalid, The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
national purges of the mid-1930s led to the murder of Jadidist cadre and their replacement with indigenous Stalinists.\(^{991}\)

The destruction of the Jadids meant that the Bolshevik class narrative of Central Asian women’s history became the only narrative available for future Soviet outreaches to the Third World. Obtaining an education, finding work, becoming a professional, initiating a divorce, obtaining an abortion, or raising a child on one’s own were all signs of becoming a class-conscious, progressive, internationalist, productive – and so on – socialist citizen, not signs of becoming authentically Turkmen or Muslim. Events like the \textit{hujum}, even if originally conceived as part of ‘Muslim cultural reform’ (the subtitle to Khalid’s work), became re-imagined in retrospect as a story of rising class consciousness and \textit{the} decisive step that had allowed Central Asian women to become \textit{not} modern Muslim Uzbeks, but rather socialist citizens. Whereas intellectuals in Kabul, Cairo, or Tehran continued to think of ‘the woman question’ as a question of autochthonous Muslim cultural reform, in the Soviet Union, similar concerns became a \textit{class} story that involved women moving from primitive stages of history, like feudalism or the ‘natural economy’, towards the socialist future that \textit{all} nations and ethnicities were headed.

Whether or not this narrative was true was another thing. Historians of Central Asia today might emphasize collectivization (which took place in the mid 1930s), rather than the \textit{hujum} of the later 1920s, as the decisive step in the Soviet transformation of the region. My focus here, however, lays less on the rich social history that adjudicating this

claim would require; the point is only that Soviet feminists built a *myth* out of what was, in any event, shaky history. By the time of the discursive freeze of the late 1940s and 1950s, it had become *the* motivating image of Soviet feminists’ pitch to foreign feminist activists. Consider how little Bekmakhanova mentions nation, collectivization, or the 1930s, and how much she mentions class, the *hujum*, and the 1920s in her remarks:

> For example, in the Soviet East basmachiism had been liquidated, a national-governmental land division had been carried out in Kazakhstan and Central Asia and the first socialist republics formed here; a land and water reform had been effected, in result of which the woman received land and water on equal terms with the man; more and more women started to work in a system of cooperation. But working under the paranja or veil (*pokryvalo*) was difficult. And in the families of workers, poor peasants (*dekhanov*), communists, Komsonol workers, and among the studying youth, women with the agreement of their family were the first to take off the veil. The *bašis* waged a cruel struggle against this. In 1927, in Uzbekistan alone 203 women activists died. But Soviet power had dared to defend the rights of the women of the East, which granted them new strengths and the desire to participate in the building of socialism.492

This branding of Soviet feminism, with a focus on class not nation, was coherent in a world where socialism’s chief competitors were National Socialism, empire, and Western capitalism. But with the emergence of the Third World in the 1950s and 1960s and the concomitant fetishization of national self-determination, nationalist-minded feminists had, little by little, less reason to look towards Moscow. Third World élites – think Nasser or the Musahibans – advocated for women’s advancement as part of the modernization of ‘the Egyptian nation’ or ‘the Afghan nation’, all while remaining true to inchoately expressed ideas of Muslim authenticity. Institutionally, women’s rights and education became sponsored by state-affiliated groups like DMT. Groups like DWIF may have retained some prestige in Europe, but they were marginal at best in the Third World. And when the women’s movement did take off internationally, in the late 1970s, it did so through the framework of the nation-state and the United Nations, not movements like

492 Ibid., 1.64
DWIF.

True, as groups like DOWA embodied, Soviet-style feminism was not dead. Underground Communist Parties advocated for women’s emancipation within the universalist class-centric narrative, and the diversity on offer at Soviet-sponsored events – Ethiopians, Congolese, Guineans, Cubans, Germans, Mongolians – hardly seemed like evidence of a moribund organization. But while Ratebzad and friends advanced their class-centric women’s rights project, it had become commonplace, at least outside of the living rooms of Kabul’s mikrorañons, to discuss women’s issues more in terms of the nation-state and sovereignty, rather than in terms of proletarian internationalism.

Figure 20: One Soviet presentation of the liberated women of Uzbekistan, a 1980 book entitled To Each Their Glory (U kazhdoi svoia slava). The book, published in a Dari translation here, presents fourteen profiles of successful Uzbek women. The caption on the right reads: ‘The book that you have in your hand is about the women of Uzbekistan – cotton-pickets, ballet dancers, teachers, engineers, composers, and others. This book provides information about the subject of how one of the Soviet republics developed in the years of Soviet power, and how women were freed by the victory of the October Revolution, as well as how women participated in the field of industry.’

KSZh’s speakers, however, remained unwilling or unable to grapple with these changes. In her talk ‘The Recruiting (vovlechenie) of Women Into Societal Production’, S.Ia. Turchaninova describes the lives of Central Asian women in Russia in the 1920s:493

493 For more on the history of this work exchange program that Turchaninova was describing, see: Voprosy istorii Uzbekistana (Tashkent: 1975), 54.
Such methods of work among women such as an exchange of the experience of female workers of the various republics proved a great help for the recruiting (privlechenie) of women of the East into production, for their instruction in professional mastership, and in the growth in political consciousness. Having begun the construction of enormous socialist enterprises for the cotton and silk industries in Central Asia, the Soviet government (gosudarstvo) sent a large group of local women for industrial training in the textile centers of the country – to the factories of Moscow, Ivanovo, Vladimir, and other oblasts of the RSFSR and the Ukraine. Here were created all the necessary conditions for the raising of the cultural level (povyshenie kul'turnogo urovnia), for the successful mastery of modern technology, and for the achievement of professional mastership for the female workers and trainees.

This training in the center of the country became a school of rich revolutionary and life experience as well as international education (vospitanie) for the women of the East. Returning from Moscow and other cities of Russia and the Ukraine, they became the initiators of socialist execution, while in conversations with young female workers, they told the young girls about the life of Russian women, about their kindness and friendly, brotherly (bratskoi) help, about their active participation in the construction of a new life. In the long term, these qualified national cadres of female textile workers played a large role in the instruction of many thousands of women – Uzbeks, Turkmen, and Tajiks – in professional mastership at the newly constructed enterprises in the republics of Central Asia.494

Similarly to Bekmakhanova, Turchaninova draws on the citational phrases of authoritative discourse (‘enormous socialist enterprises’, ‘rich revolutionary and life experience’, ‘active participation’, etc.). More than that, however, she lays out a transnational vision for how to become an emancipated woman. In her re-telling of the myth of Soviet women’s history, Central Asian women become emancipated not within any national framework, but rather within a universalist class story that centers around becoming a productive (the textile mills) class-conscious individual. The women in her story, whose specific nationality goes unmentioned, go to the industrial cities of the Soviet Union for the ‘awakening and formation of social consciousness’ (probuzhdenie i formirovanie obshchestvennogo soznaniia) – or, as Bekmakhanova called it in her remarks, the ‘awakening of class consciousness among the multi-national masses of the laborers’.495 (Both of these phrasings are examples of what Yurchak has called ‘displaced

494 S. Ia. Turchaninova, ‘Vovlechenie zhenshchin v obshchestvennoe proizvodstvo’, GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 5583, l. 46.
495 Ibid., 37; Bekmakhanova, 56.
agency’ in authoritative discourse – it is never clear who is doing the awakening and forming in these formulations, ‘contributing to the general circularity of the constantive dimension of discourse.’

Production and work, not some final reconciliation of national, religious and gender identity complete the formation of the modern woman.

This discourse was not used exclusively for addressing Afghan women. When KSZh held a seminar for Mongolian women’s activists in Tashkent and Moscow from 22 November to 7 December 1977, the rhetoric they used was almost identical to what they used for DOWA five years later. In one speech, Meli Akhunova, the Director of the Institute of History of Uzbekistan, deployed the citational authoritative discourse we are familiar with, located women’s emancipation as a class issue, and explicitly identified the hujum as the key episode in the de-veiling of women. ‘An important milestone on the road to the emancipation of the women of Uzbekistan’, she said,

was the ‘hujum’ introduced half a century ago, in 1927, into the complex of activities of the Party, the Soviet government, and social organizations towards the decisive attack on the old way of living and the feudal and bai-like relationship to women.

By now it should be clear how entrenched the image of the hujum, specifically when cited as part of a universalist story about class and progress, had become to KSZh’s outreach to at least its the Eurasian abroad. Yet how would the Afghan DOWA activists react to – or re-appropriate – this same authoritative discourse?

Afghan Women: Speaking Soviet, Speaking Out?

Many of the DOWA activists, while Communists, had grown up in a world where

496 Yurchak, 71.
497 Akhunova was, in addition to the Director of the Institute of History, a prolific author on the history of Uzbekistan, publishing books in both Uzbek as well as Russian on 20th century Uzbek history and the local history of Andijan.
498 Meli Akhunovna Akhunova, Untitled Speech, GARF f. 7928, op. 3 d. 4215, l. 134.
Soviet-style authoritative discourse was far from ubiquitous. Most had grown up in rural Afghanistan, where traditional oral culture and high levels of illiteracy were more common than the endless citational rhetoric prevalent even in rural areas of the Soviet Union of the 1970s and 1980s. Eventually, however, all of these women had become Communists, socialized into the authoritative discourse of a particular social world. At the same time, following the Soviet invasion, they had to contend with new ‘counter-revolutionary’ forces who spoke a language not of class or nation, but of jihad, of Islam. Something new was apace, something that the old discourse had not quite anticipated.

![Image of map of Afghanistan and Soviet Union](image)

*Figure 21: Origins of DOWA Women at the Moscow Conference. Based on GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 5.*

As a result, one encounters something curious in the DOWA representatives’ remarks. Like their Soviet colleagues, several of the DOWA activists ably deployed the citational authoritative discourse of Soviet power. But when many of the young Afghan Communist feminists were encouraged to speak extemporaneously at the seminar,
however, they sounded odd. They still made some use of the tropes of authoritative
discourse, but they also found ways outside of the citational canon to appropriate those
old tropes to describe the new world around them. Authoritative discourse was breaking
down outside of the Soviet Union because of the inadequacy of the class-centric Soviet
feminist story to portray events in Afghanistan.

Before analyzing these women’s voices, one has to offer a few methodological
disclaimers. One has to do with how representative these women’s voices they are for
Afghanistan in the 1980s. In some obvious sense, because the majority of Afghanistan’s
population was illiterate, the voices of the Afghan women at the seminar, while offering a
rare window into the world of Afghan Communist women, are unrepresentative of the
society as a whole. Dealing with this hermeneutical issue would require further
engagement with sources from Afghan oral tradition, or by contrasting the DOWA
message with that of, for example, anti-Communist women’s groups – something outside
of the scope of this chapter. The same issue can be raised as far as geography is
concerned. Not all of the women at the conference came from the Kabul intelligentsia; as
the map below shows, most came from northern Afghanistan.\footnote{GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 5. The full list of women at the conference and their capacities is as follows: 'Jamilia Nakhid – Head of Delegation, Member of the Executive Committee of DOWA. Chair of the International Commission. Sultana Omid. Deputy Chair of DOWA, Member of the Executive Committee of DOWA. Zainab Bakhidi – Chair of the Kabul Provincial Committee of DOWA. Del’jon Abdulkhafiz – Chair of the Kabul City Committee of DOWA. Shakhlo Shadzhimi – Chair of the 4th Kabul City Committee. Nasiri Khusein – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Lagman Province. Sarvar Sultan Abdulrakhim – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Badakhshan Province. Mamlakat – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Paktia, Khost uyed. Aziza Dodamanesh – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Jawjzan Province. Anisa – Member of the Cooperative Uyed of Deh Sabz.'} None of the documents
from the seminar, however says anything about the women’s ethnicities. Language, too,
is an issue: as far as the documents attest, all of the Afghan women at the conference
spoke in Russian, not Dari or Pashto, which limited at least one of the DOWA activists from expressing herself fluently.\footnote{All of the documents in the stenogram for the seminar are in Russian, save for one press released in Dari prepared by DOWA. The DOWA women at the conference appear to have spoken fluent Russian, or at least prepared their presentations to a high linguistic standard, but in the sections of the seminar where they were speaking freely, they often employ unidiomatic linguistic constructions, which suggests to me that they were speaking in Russian (rather than through a translator) at these moments.}

Another methodological issue concerns the appropriate hermeneutical approach for approaching such speeches and texts, like the ones produced by the DOWA activists, that were explicitly addressed to state or Party audiences. As criticism of Robert Crews’ readings of Tsarist-era Muslim petitions suggests, one must be mindful of how Eurasians who encountered the Soviet state or the CPSU adjusted their language to meet audiences’ expectations.\footnote{Robert Crews, \textit{For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Alexander Morrison, Review of \textit{For Prophet and Tsar, The Slavonic and East European Review} 86:3 (July 2008): 553-557; Jeff Sahadeo, Review of \textit{For Prophet and Tsar, Central Asian Survey} 27:1 (March 2008): 105-106.} What to do? Rather than claiming to have a key to all mysteries to unlock what the DOWA activists were ‘really’ saying or what they ‘really’ meant in their remarks, my aim is more modest. Rather than asking what the DOWA activists ‘really’ meant, this chapter examines these speeches as examples of how Afghans could reproduce, or ironically re-appropriate, Soviet authoritative discourse even as they sought to articulate their own feminist project.

Several of the DOWA activists began with prepared remarks to their Soviet counterparts. Many reproduced the authoritative discourse of their KSZh colleagues. Consider the opening remarks of Jamilia Nahid, the head of the DOWA delegation:

\begin{quote}
The Democratic Organization of Women of Afghanistan should exert all of its efforts towards the actualization, realization, and preservation of the rights of Afghan women that were envisioned by the revolutionary order of the country.
The National Democratic Party of Afghanistan is a party of the working class, a party of all the laborers of the country. With great interest it proceeds towards the resolution of the
woman question in Afghanistan and exerts all of its energies towards the further engagement of women into the national life of the country.

To the women of Afghanistan has fallen the enormous honor of, with the entire nation, and with a resolute step, to go along the road that has opened up before them and solve the questions standing before the country, and, along with that country, overcome all difficulties.  

---

Figure 22: Women’s clothing as progress or backwardness: a photograph of three Afghan women. Given the diversity of Afghan society, it is important to underline – in spite of the value of the 1982 stenogram – how unrepresentative it can be. Photograph from Afghanistan Today (Kabul: Bihqy, 1981).

This excerpt shows all of the traits of authoritative discourse: verbs turned into noun phrases (‘actualization, realization, and preservation of the rights of Afghan women’), citational complex modifiers (‘enormous honor’, ‘with great interest’), and what Patrick Seriot calls ‘noun phrases’ – unwieldy constructions consisting of a noun itself modified by participles, which themselves might be cited from the circular authoritative discourse, like ‘the road that has opened up before them’ [po shirikoï otkrivsheïsia pered nimi doroge].  

If one look to the content of the DOWA members’ speeches, their interpretation of Afghan history is near-identical to the way the KSZh

---

502 GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 129.
activists described Central Asian history. Class, not nation, is key; the implicit mission of DOWA activists is to push Afghan women forward as part of a universalist mission of progress. There is no mention of what a distinctively national or Islamic Afghan feminist project would look like.

Sultana Omid, the Deputy Chair of DOWA, for example, described the social conditions in Afghanistan before the April Revolution in the following terms.

The woman of Afghanistan is very courageous (muzhestvenna), very brave, very capable. Women have strengths, they carry out the hardest jobs, but the oppression of feudal and pre-feudal conditions, the general economic backwardness of the country, the totally rotten (prognivshie) social conditions and traditions, which themselves were resulting from the general economic backwardness of the country, hindered the wide participation of women in the economic life of Afghanistan.

The life of an Afghan woman was bound by the four walls of her home, and her participation in the societal life of her country was paltry. An absolute majority of women in Afghanistan, not having the opportunity to take charge of their fate, were occupied in back-breaking labor and worked for their masters—the landowners.

In our country there never existed such a region where theredid not prosper shameful, utterly backwards conditions and customs, there the order was perhaps even pre-feudal. There the husband sat at home, or in the garden, and had no other work other than relaxation, while at the same time the woman fulfilled agricultural work, other geoponic (zemledel'cheskie) work, gathered brushwood, and gathering brushwood in our country is one of the hardest kinds of work. They carried potable water for dozens of kilometers. They did the housework and raised the children.504

After the DOWA activists presented their prepared remarks, however, the KSZh activists asked them to say more about their lives. As Valentina E. Vavlina, the head of the Soviet delegation and editor of the magazine Woman Worker, said,505

We were very touched by your gratitude in your address to Soviet warriors, thank you. But you didn’t say anything about yourself. How did you become an activist? It would be very interesting for us to find out. Perhaps someone will say something about themselves in the next presentations.506

As the seminar shifted to a question-and-answer format, some of the DOWA representatives opened up. The change in their rhetoric was striking. The full

504 Sultana Omid, ‘Razvitie obschestvenno-politicheskoi aktivnosti zhenschin’, GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 130.
505 Ibid., l. 4.
506 Ibid., l. 269.
extemporaneous remarks of Aziza Dodmanesh, the DOWA chair from Jowjzan Province, are worth quoting in their entirety.

In the name of the women of the province located in the north of our country – Afghans, Turkmen, Uzbeks, female peasants and those engaged in the production of hides – allow me to pass on to Soviet women our very best wishes.

I’d like to tell you a bit about the life of women living at home (domashnikh khoziaek), about the life of women who go around in the chador, about the conditions of their lives.

The provincial soviet in the province of Jowjzan was able to organize work among women who are employed in housework, in other words, among the most backwards parts of the female population. The members of our provincial soviet go out into the further removed corners of the province, get to know the lives of women of these regions (raionov), and tell them about the activity of the organization. We tell them about the events that are going on in Afghanistan, about the real course of all of the events, about what the enemies of the April Revolution are up to. We tell them about the activity of Soviet women.

Now our women, including our female peasants, are getting to know the work experience of Soviet women and consciously take an active part in those events that the DOWA is carrying out. They consciously fight for the foundation of a new social order in the country.

Among our women there are also representatives of the Uzbek nationality. Uzbek women who wear the veil (pokryvalo), who cover their face with the chador. Together with other women, with representatives of other nationalities, united in the ranks of the provincial section of our organization, and they, too, give all of their strengths towards the defense of the gains of the April Revolution. They say, ‘We’ll never fall under the influence of the enemy propaganda, since we’ve already listened for thousands of years to what they say – we know the essence of their propaganda perfectly well.’

And they really understand the role and the meaning that the enormous contact with Soviet comrades had, the help of Soviet warriors in warding off the aggressors, in putting pressure on all of the hearths (ochagov) of the counter-revolution in the country, and in part in the province of Jowjzan. Afghan women meet with Soviet warriors, and they are grateful for the help that they have provided on the ancient land of Afghanistan.

In our province the women, the majority of whom are peasants, support the policy that our party and government is carrying out. Carrying their weapons with them (s oruzhiem v rukakh), they defend the gains of the April Revolution, they are grateful to the women whose sons arrived in Afghanistan in order to defend the Afghans against the aggression of imperialism.507

This discourse for talking about feminism and women’s rights differs markedly from the authoritative discourse that coursed through Nahid’s and Omid’s speeches. Dodmanesh has not abandoned the terms of authoritative discourse; several complex

507 GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 263-265.
modifiers dot her remarks (‘consciously fight’, ‘consciously take an active part’). And towards the end of her remarks, she describes her struggle as one in alliance with Soviet soldiers against ‘imperialism’. But in general, she frames her feminist project differently from the KSZh or DOWA activists. She frames her struggle not in terms of class or as part of a universalist mission, but in at least two different ways. For one, she describes her support for the PDPA in terms of the struggle in Jowzjan; this is a *provincial* struggle that happens to receive the support of Kabul and a foreign power that happen to think that they are carrying out a ‘socialist internationalist’ mission.

Second, Dodmanesh says that the struggle for women’s rights in Jowzjan is taking place not against *class* foes, but ‘enemies’ who have been active for thousands of years. These counter-revolutionaries must be defeated, but it is *Afghans* – veiled Afghan Uzbeks at that – who have the proper historical experience (*not* ‘class consciousness’) to do so, since they have ‘already listened for thousands of years to what [the enemies] say’. This sounds more like a long-standing national struggle than a class-driven one. By highlighting, moreover, that veiled women can, indeed, play a role in the struggle Dodmanesh deflates one of the core myths of Soviet feminism, namely the *hujum*, and, more precisely, that unveiling was an essential step for Muslim on their journey towards progress and autonomy.

One of Dodmanesh’s colleagues, Narsiya Hussein, also spoke about the relationship between the Revolution and unveiling. This twenty-one year old young woman offered more information on her life than did any of her colleagues:

I was born in the province of Laghman, in a family of middle income, not a wealthy family. I was born in 1961. In the province of Laghman the dejection, the tyranny was very visible, all of the class contradictions were immediately obvious (*byli nalistso*).
The squalor, the dismal conditions of life among the residents of the providence of
Laghman, the outrage, the suffering that the people (narod) tolerated, convinced me of the
fact that I should fight for a better future for them.

I have ten brothers. They belong to the PDPA party. One of them died during the period of
the fascist dictatorship of Amin. We want to fight for a bright future of the nation (narod)
of Afghanistan.508

Hussein, who like Dodmanesh framed her struggle within a provincial not a class context,
described her work at home and in Kunar Province.

I myself am from Laghman Province. I want to say a few words about another province,
Kunar Province, where I go for work among the women of this province.

The women’s movement of Laghman Province began before the victory of the April
Revolution, during the period of the dictatorship of Amin. The movement was paralyzed,
since women could not carry out meetings or any other different forms of work.

Many representatives of the women’s organization were liquidated, as were the
representatives of other social organizations.

Many of our women, prior to the revolution, spent their time on the whole sitting at home
and never left home for anyway. Fortunately, after the second stage of the Saur Revolution
we could carry out great work in Laghman Province. The conditions in which our
organization formed were difficult, but we could organize, and now in Laghman Province
210 women belong to our organization, 143 of whom are illiterate. They participate in
literacy courses that were formed for them, they participate in special clubs. We could
organize special women’s clubs with the help of Party organs, clubs where women actively
participate in the work of our organization.

We succeeded in carrying out successful work among the women of this province, and the
representatives of Party organizations helped us. Several women left their own families and
declared that they want to give their lives for the just cause (pravee delo) of the
Revolution.

Our province is located next to Pakistan, where the gangs of bandits (bandy) gather, and
women take an active part in the provision of security, they staff the posts along with the
armed forces of Afghanistan, they carry out controls and monitoring of cities and the
countryside. […]

I’d like to say a few words about the work among the women of Kunar Province. In our
province the percent of literate women is not great. The living conditions in this province
are very difficult. Even in a chador, a woman does not have the right to go out far from her
own home. In spite of this, 95 women living in Kunar Province are members of the NPDA,
are Party activists.509

Hussein’s remarks resemble those of Dodmanesh. Her speech is almost devoid of

508 Ibid., l. 270.
509 GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 266-268.
authoritative discourse. (‘Almost’, indeed: note the catalogue of meaningless numbers of illiterate women in the province.) For her, as for Dodmanesh, the main issue is less the veil than women being forced to remain at home. Hussein is committed to the revolutionary cause, but she does not frames any of her ambitions in terms of class. In spite of having traveled to the hub of the Soviet imperium, her focus remains squarely on the Afghan provinces she knows well. And though she is grateful to the USSR for its assistance, she directs her thanks not to the KSZh feminists, but to their sons who are fighting on the front lines with Afghans. ‘I have to say’, she said,

that the members of our organization were carrying out great preparatory propagandistic-agitational work among the population. Immediately prior to the entrance of a limited contingent of Soviet forces into Afghanistan, we were advised to undertake additional measures, but ran out of time (ne uspeli). The population of this province [Kunar] went out towards the Soviet forces and brought them everything that they had at home. They did this according to the tradition of hospitality – one always has to give one’s best items to the guest, one has to offer the finest delicacies to him – Afghan walnuts, walnut cookies (oreshki) which resemble cedar cones. The warmest reception that I ever saw given to Soviet soldiers was given [i.e. by the DOWA women] to these Soviet forces.510

It was, of course, an ironic reversal of the actual situation in Moscow, whither KSZh had invited DOWA.

Women like Dodmanesh and Hussein had re-appropriated the Soviet feminist project’s narrative for the ironic uses that the historical situation demanded. In the view of KSZh activists, the experience of the hujum provided feminists around the world – whether in Afghanistan or Mongolia – with the lessons they needed to resolve the ‘woman question’, hence the title of the seminar. Such an assumption, at least, had become baked into Soviet authoritative discourse by the late 1950s. In reality, however, as the Afghan DOWA activists showed in their extemporaneous remarks, the international situation, and, with it, the situation that women’s activists faced globally, differed

510 Ibid., l. 268.
dramatically from what Soviet activists had faced in Central Asia in the 1920s. Many Third World women’s activists, like the DOWA members cited above, thought of their struggle not in terms of a secular overcoming of capitalism and imperialism, but in deeply parochial (in the positive sense of the word) terms. They were glad to appropriate the material and moral support that the Soviet intervention provided to their provincial feminist projects, but they remained far away from internalizing the framework that Soviet authoritative discourse cast for them. That DOWA activists were either re-appropriating or abandoning this discourse to frame their feminist project spoke not only to those activists’ creativity, but the stagnation of the official Soviet women’s movement.

*Concluding Thoughts: From Soviet Women’s Rights to Human Rights?*

The DOWA-KSZh vision for the women of Afghanistan failed. As the previous chapter demonstrated, building effective, popular local women’s organizations and encouraging women on the ground in occupied Afghanistan was nigh-impossible. Promoting women’s issues in a countryside marked by the husks of Soviet tanks and the napalm-charred corpses of Afghan villagers was an illusion from the start. Indeed, for all of the focus on discourse in this chapter, the sheer violence inflicted on Afghan women as a result of the PDPA’s utopian vision and the Soviet occupation cannot be understated. Working in Pakistani refugee camps in 1984, one American social scientist captured the plight that millions of Afghan women faced a result of years of war:

A group of black-clad women, their faces marked with weariness yet full of dignity faced me one hot day in May 1984 on a dusty plain filled with tents one and a half miles from the Afghan border. They communicated to me through sign language their plight of having been raped and having lost between ten and twelve members of their families at the hands of the Soviet occupiers of their country. […] They also related the ordeal of the flight from their homes one hundred miles away, walking for days with so little access to water that
they were reduced to eating mud to obtain what moisture they could.\textsuperscript{511}

Some Afghan women who left the country attempted to fight back against groups like DOWA. One group, the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) succeeded in building women’s institutions (hospitals, schools, orphanages) in Afghanistan and the refugee camps of Pakistan. But the region’s soon chaos consumed RAWA. The leader of the movement was assassinated in a operation carried out jointly by the KhAD and \textit{Hezb-i Islami}, and financed and approved by the ISI.\textsuperscript{512} Any visions for ‘women’s rights’ were lost in the bloodshed and terror.

When Soviet women actually traveled to Afghanistan, moreover, war underscored the gap between Soviet feminist talk and reality. When Viktor Korgun, a pupil of Iuriǐ Gankovskiǐ who traveled to Afghanistan as a lecturer for Soviet Army officer groups, he saw how the war exposed the moral bankruptcy of Soviet claims to stand on the avant-garde of women’s causes. Recalled Korgun:

\begin{quote}
… Then there was prostitution, what a mess. [Laughs] There was a girl I knew there. She went around with a general. Some guy occupying some big position in Tashkent. Central Asian military … this girl was a medic, a nurse. One day I went over to her place – this was when I still didn’t know anything, we were still getting to know one another – and I was coming over to her place, for some reason or another. And I was heading over there, when on the stairwell I see that there’s already a line to her door. [Laughs] Afterwards I found out about all of the prices. How much a girl costs in Kabul, Kandahar, in Kabul it was the cheapest – help yourself (pozhaluístsa). A lot came there. And a lot of our women, by the way, came there in the first place to get married, and second to earn money, in prostitution.\textsuperscript{513}
\end{quote}

Korgun was far from a contemporary women’s rights crusader, but even as a peripatetic career academic with lady friends in Moscow, Tashkent, and Alma-Ata alike, he felt disgusted. One evening in Ghazni remained seared into his memory:

\textsuperscript{511} Kathleen Howard-Merriam, ‘Afghan Refugee Women and the Struggle for Liberation’, Paper for MESA Conference, San Francisco, California, 28 November to 2 December 1984, Arthur Paul Collection, University of Nebraska-Omaha.
\textsuperscript{512} For more see RAWA’s website at: \url{http://www.rawa.org/index.php}
\textsuperscript{513} Author Interview, Viktor Korgun, Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 October 2012.
Anyway, when I was with [Vyacheslav] Nekrasov that evening, there was a group going out … not a big one, maybe seventy or eighty, a spetsnats group. They went up into the mountains around Ghazni, where there were groups of mujahedin. They went into battle, there was a big clash. They brought back one of their own who was badly wounded at one in the morning. We told them to hurry over to the medical tent, which operated around the clock. They went to the tent and there was no one there, only an old man. And over at the nurses’ tents there was a line of soldiers [for sex].

The stories that the KSZh activists had told themselves – about saving Afghan women, and, perhaps more bitterly, what agency Russian women really had, was coming apart. Korgun, for instance, recalled walking into a heated meeting between Soviet Army officers and their superiors (nachal’stvo). The older men were straight to their subalterns: ‘I wasn’t the one that sent you here’, one shouted. It represented a far cry from the KSZh representatives’ stories of Russian soldiers as the virtuous saviors of Afghan women. The dream of vaulting Afghan women forward in time had become a nightmare.

Yet perhaps more meaningful in the long run for the collapse of KSZh and DOWA’s vision for the women’s movement, however, was how international discussion of women’s issues changed during these very years. Between the original Mexico City Conference and the July 1985 World Conference on Women in Nairobi ten years later, the number of NGOs and independent activists participating alongside state delegations like DOWA and KSZh at such conferences soared, rising from approximately 4,000 total participants in Mexico City to more than 15,000 in Kenya. Even as the USSR and DRA stifled non-state-sponsored civil organizations, the idea that the state was not the sole legitimate representatives of the interests of all of the women living inside a particular country’s gained traction outside of the socialist bloc.

A new American tack had its effect, too. If a bewildered Betty Friedan had been

taken aback by the aggressive anti-imperialist, anti-American, and anti-Zionist tone of at Mexico City, a new Administration – represented in Nairobi by Maureen Reagan and Alan Keyes – no longer tolerated what it viewed as the hijacking of the women’s rights project by a tendentious obsession with apartheid, Israel, and national self-determination. The US delegation to Nairobi, for example, expressed its disapproval with a paragraph in the Nairobi Conference’s final report that singled out the needs of Palestinian and South African women, the only two such national groups isolated for such special attention.515

What accelerated this global shift further was the rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachëv. One of the crucial changes of perestroïka, as Yurchak suggests, was the way it encouraged the return of a ‘meta-discourse’ on Soviet authoritative discourse.516 It became possible, even encouraged, for Party flunkies to meditate in official settings on whether the Party’s citational rhetoric was true. The answer to this question had long been obvious to almost anyone living in the Soviet Union, of course. But whereas reflecting on the need to talk differently about the socialist project had once been considered act of dissidence, after 1986, Party secretaries, were encouraged to engage in ‘real self-criticism’, to admit ‘real problems’, and to propose a ‘creative approach’ to social problems in a way that went beyond the old ‘experiments’ of the 1970s or the stratagems Giorgadze had proffered in Jalalabad four years earlier.

After 1986, for example, the urge to re-discover ‘the pure word of Lenin’ in order to re-ground the socialist project became ubiquitous in official discourse.517 One popular

---

516 Yurchak, 292-296.
517 Ibid., 294.
poster of the era, ‘Let Lenin Speak!’, depicted Lenin jotting down notes while next to a lectern with the Soviet emblem on it. The implication was innocent enough: if Party activists could simply find ‘the real Lenin’, then socialism – or the Soviet feminist project – could find its footing, in spite of the huge changes of *glasnost*. But the belief that the key discursive anchors of Soviet Communism could be made democratic so quickly proved to be folly. As Yurchak notes,

The tight narrative structure of authoritative discourse meant that with the undermining of one master signifier, the whole system was undermined, and quite soon the discursive field began crumbling.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 23: ‘Let Lenin Speak!’ A Soviet poster from the late 1980s naively underestimated the destabilizing consequences of dismantling the ‘authoritative discourse’ that had underpinned late socialism.*

This becomes clear if one looks at how KSZh activists framed their project to the Third World in the late 1980s. Stories of liberated Central Asian women were still the key
tropes. But both the citational, authoritative style and the obsession with class disappeared from KSZh delegates’ speeches, something that expresses itself in the remarks of delegates to a 1988 conference with Indian women’s activists in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Consider the following for background: throughout the 1960s and 1970s, sculptors depicting Lenin (one of the ‘master signifiers’ of the authoritative discourse) were beholden to citing from a certain number of fixed images to which artists attached definite names: ‘Our Il’ich’ (‘Lenin as a common person’); ‘Squinting Lenin’ (‘a witty Lenin’), etc.  As with speechwriters who deployed the same Lenin quotes throughout speeches ad nauseam, professional artists and painters became specialists in painting ‘concrete details of [Lenin’s] image’: his nose, his suit, his shoes, and so on. The thought of a freehand, individually inspired sketch of the master signifier was unthinkable. Consider, then, the remarks of Z.E. Timofeeva, an editor at Soviet Woman who uses informal language, not authoritative discourse, to ‘quote’ Lenin:

At that time Lenin instructed the Party: ‘We need Communist work among the female masses. But political work includes a meaningful piece (znachitel’nyi kusok) of educational work among men. We should remove the old, slaveholding point of view, down to its very last piece, from both the Party as well as the masses.’

Timofeeva’s framing of the relevance of Central Asian women to the non-Soviet world also reflected this shift. Reflecting on the 1920s in Central Asia, she said that

at the time, our magazine told about one Turkmen women from Ashgabat – Kurban-Guzel Aliya. She subsequently became an important Party worker. But then she was an illiterate woman, fearing everything. She came to the women’s club. They selected her for the Presidium of the group. She refused to go there if her husband didn’t come with her. Her husband was a communist and knew that he had to strengthen in this woman the belief in herself as a person. And only when her husband sat down beside her did Aliya sit calmly in the Presidium. This woman became an important Party worker. That’s how it started.

518 Yurchak, 55.
519 Ibid., 56.
520 Z.E. Timofeeva, Untitled Talk, GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 7033, l. 28.
521 Ibid., l. 28-29.
The story of Central Asian women was the same, but the authoritative discourse that was once so solid had melted into thin air. By 1990, the preoccupation with Central Asia as a site of revolution had disappeared entirely. By that point, KSZh was sending female activists as delegates to conferences in Geneva to discuss Kazakhstan – but only to discuss the after-effects of nuclear testing in the steppe on pregnant women.522

Yet the shifts inaugurated by Gorbachëv were not just discursive, to say the least. Under Gorbachëv’s foreign policy of ‘new thinking’, patience towards the wishes of Third World delegations to blame their problems on Israel or South Africa while also demanding Soviet subsidies went into decline. Gorbachëv moved away from reliance on the Third World, seeking rapprochement with Washington. The old Third World obsession with the state was in decline, a trend that the Soviet Union’s Law on Public Organizations, passed in October 1990, only accelerated. Even as it imposed registration requirements and regulated almost every aspect of their existence, the Law recognized non-governmental organizations for the first time in Soviet history. Nor was this a trivial step. It constituted a recognition, in the words of contemporary calls for a ‘Second General Assembly’ of NGOs at the United Nations, of the fact that

human beings exist not only as citizens of sovereign nation-states and as members of other separate groupings, but also as individuals.523

By May of the next year, cities like Frunze were being repurposed as conference sites for joint Soviet-UNESCO seminars on child literacy.524

Moscow had reversed its position on whether the Soviet state, or its Third World

524 GARF, f. 7928, o. 3, d. 7471, l. 110.
counterparts, really had the right to claim a monopoly over society. Women’s issues seemed less and less like something that only nation-states could guarantee, and more and more like something that hung in the spaces in between the state, national NGOs, and international NGOs. Yet if there was ‘no such thing as society’ – only individuals, families, and NGOs – what was the role of the Communist Party, much less GONGOs like KSZH? If Soviet citizens were, in fact, ‘sovereign individuals’ whose diverse interests eluded representation by any one party or organization, it was difficult to justify why the CPSU merited special treatment. In March 1990, Gorbachëv abolished the Article in the Soviet Constitution that granted the CPSU a ‘leading and guiding force in Soviet society.’

In Gorbachëv’s quicksilver mind, the idea appears to have been that former Communist organizations could coexist with the growing number of non-Communist NGOs, which themselves would be regulated at the SSR level. KSZH’s archives provide some idea of what such a reformed organizational order might have looked like. In the fall of 1990, KSZH officials met with representatives from the United Nations Development Fund for Women to discuss the possibility of a two-week training course with a UNDP labor economist

to assist you in developing a training programme for the Training of Trainers for Women Entrepreneurs. These women would thereafter modify the training programme to suit the needs of the different Republics and other regions in the USSR, and themselves, train women entrepreneurs.525

Bigger developments in Moscow, however, would render such possible trajectories for groups like KSZH moot. The Soviet dissolution, in addition to being economically devastating for women, financially gutted organizations like KSZH and

525 GARF, f. 7928, o. 3, d. 7662, l. 10.
bequeathed many of the illiberal Soviet successor states with the registration and oversight bureaucracy that the October 1990 Law on Public Organizations had unintentionally provided. Ironically, the reform process of *glasnost*’ not only destroyed the institutional possibility for an authentic *Soviet* women’s movement. It also created the laws that (among others) the Uzbek, Turkmen and Belarusian states could later parade in front of visiting foreign delegations as example of their liberal intentions, while using the same laws to shut down the activity of NGOs, women’s organizations included, as soon as the planes left the runways for Washington or Brussels.

The winner of these unexpected processes was the Western, and more specifically, American women’s rights movement that sought to re-locate women’s rights away from the state to the individual. Much of the intellectual and bureaucratic lifting had been done by an eclectic combination of American legal academics and Reagan Administration officials throughout the late 1970s and 1980s.\(^{526}\) Still, it was really thanks to processes outside of American control – the explosion in NGOs, Gorbachëv’s abandonment of the Third World, and the Soviet collapse – that the two major alternatives to the Western women’s rights vision became exhausted, and the human rights vision won by something of a default. With the self-determination obsession and proletarian internationalism dead and buried by the early 1990s, at least outside of Tehran and Havana, the United Nations became a forum where Western leaders could unproblematically present themselves as part of a women right’s vanguard. It was a striking sign of how much had changed when, twenty years after Soviet and Chinese delegates had harangued Betty Friedan in Mexico

---

City, an audience of international delegates applauded Hilary Clinton – the spouse of the leader of the imperialist power – when she declared at the 4th UN Conference on Women in Beijing that ‘human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights once and for all’. 527

Hence, the Soviet women’s movement became a footnote to the bigger global revolution in women’s rights that took place during the 1980s and which has yet to be understood on its own terms. Soviet activists were proud of their past achievements in Central Asia, but because their discourse became so enthralled to these past achievements and their class meaning, they, and some of their Afghan colleagues, too, became oblivious to the changing world around them. They became rhetorically unprepared to adapt to a world in which neither ‘the Revolution’ or ‘the state’, but rather a matrix of independent groups buoyed by the idea of universalist women’s rights, became the real vanguard. When the rhetorical boundaries of their world did change, they were left, after so much endless authoritative discourse, speechless.

Visit Dushanbe or even Moscow today, however, and it should be clear that the institutional and discursive shift that took place in women’s rights in the 1980s and early 1990s in the West has not taken anywhere close to full effect in the cities or countryside of the former Soviet Union. Whether the challenge is entrenched misogynist attitudes, the idea that all NGOs are covers for espionage activities, or the byzantine registration requirements that face such organizations, the gap between Clinton’s dream and reality in the majority of former Soviet states – to say nothing of Afghanistan – remains great. Nor

is there much evidence to believe that the gap is shrinking. One may offer good will to the today’s instantiations of the Moscow seminar: NGO- and GONGO-led seminars for Afghan, Iraqi, or Pakistani women that speak a language of universalist women’s rights and the constructive roles NGOs have to play in creating a new institutional order for the defense of women around the world. One hopes, too, however naïvely, that the project of wedding military interventions with the protection of Afghan women bears slightly more fruit in its present incarnation than it did in the days of Korgun’s travels around Afghanistan. However impressive the rhetorical shifts and institutional achievements of the women’s rights-as-human rights project, finally, one hopes that today’s equivalents of the KSZh activists remain mindful of the contingent – some would say precarious – ideological journey the women’s rights project has made to reach its current heights.
CONCLUSION

The USSR was not a possible object of admiration, but it was an object of solidity. Its defining feature was its permanence. It was an inevitable part of the planet’s architecture: obsolete but immovable. And then it did move, and when it went its going suddenly disclosed a set of hidden linkages that pulled various aspects of my familiar, home experience away after it. [...] This was the biggest intellectual change of my lifetime – the replacement of one order of things, which I had just had time to learn and to regard as permanent, with a wholly different one, in radical discontinuity with it.\textsuperscript{528}

When the Soviet Union completed its military withdrawal across the Amu-Darya River on 15 February 1989, Afghanistan lay in ruins. Millions of Afghans, including almost all of the country’s professional class, had fled the country or been killed. The Najibullah regime maintained its grip on power thanks to Soviet military aid, food aid, and piles of new Afghan banknotes flown in from Moscow, ‘the distribution of which by the container load generated a high rate of inflation.’\textsuperscript{529}

Kabul’s patron was not long for this world, however. After a flummoxed August 1991 coup attempt against Gorbachëv, several Union Republics declared their independence. By the end of the month, Gorbachëv himself resigned as General Secretary, while the Supreme Soviet banned CPSU activity on Soviet soil. Soon, however, Gorbachëv – acting as President of the USSR – had no country to govern. On 8 December 1991, the leaders of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian Republics met in the Bialowieża Forest in Belarus to dissolve the Soviet Union without the consent of Gorbachëv or any of the Union’s other constituent Republics. In the matter of just a few months, the CPSU had been stripped of its authority and the USSR had become a union

\textsuperscript{528} Francis Spufford, ‘Response: Part I’, Crooked Timber Blog, available online at: \url{http://crookedtimber.org/2012/06/11/response-part-i/}

without members. On Christmas Day, 1991 – twelve years after the invasion of Afghanistan – Gorbachëv resigned as President of the USSR. That evening, the Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin for the last time.

Now Najibullah was truly on his own. After the strategic points of Bagram and Charikar in the plains north of Kabul fell to mujahedin commander Ahmad Shah Mas’ud, Najibullah tried to flee for India on 15 April 1992. The attempt failed, prompting the former Watan Party leader to seek shelter in a United Nations compound, from which he would spend the next four years fruitlessly seeking asylum in Delhi. 530 Yet the battle for Afghanistan had only begun. The power-brokers who had stood behind the Watan government soon defected to various mujahedin factions. But the sack of Kabul on 23 April raised an awkward question: who was in charge?

No answer to that question emerged. Commanders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Bernahuddin Rabbani still lacked the legitimacy of Zahir Shah, were the seventy-seven year old King to return from exile, and no single commander controlled an overwhelming amount of Afghanistan’s territory. Some power-sharing agreement seemed necessary. The one commander who might have led a national government, however, Mas’ud, deferred to the other Peshawar-based parties and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to design the framework for an interim government, the Peshawar Agreement of 24 April 1992. 531 Rebelling against his former Pakistani masters, however, Hekmatyar refused to sign the Agreement and launched one last military bid for power.

The ensuing civil war turned Kabul to rubble and provided an opening for the

531 For the full text of the Accords, see the appendix to A. Saeed, ‘Afghanistan, Peshawar and After’, Regional Studies (Islamabad) 11:2 (1993): 103-158.
Pakistani-supported Taliban movement, originally based out of southern Afghanistan, to launch an improbable offensive themselves. Throughout the early 1990s, the Taliban and its militias controlled territory further and further north from Kandahar, until they captured Kabul on 27 September 1996. This, however, inaugurated a second phase of the civil war, one between the Pashtun-dominated Taliban and the ‘Northern Alliance’ composed primarily of Rashid Dostum’s Uzbek armies and Mas’ud’s primarily Tajik forces. Still, by the late 1990s, Taliban commanders had managed to conquer most of the north and the Hazara-populated center of the country, frequently leaving pogroms of Shi’as behind. Only small patches of northeast Afghanistan, like Masu’d’s native Panjshir Valley, remained outside of Taliban control. Unversed in the courtship with outside donors that Afghanistan’s prior ‘professional rulers’ had mastered, however, and suspicious of outsiders in any event, in the summer of 1998, Taliban leaders closed the Kabul offices of NGOs and humanitarian organizations, which provided assistance to more than half of the capital’s 1.2 million denizens.532 ‘We Muslims believe God the Almighty will feed everybody one way or another’, said Taliban Planning Minister Qari Din Mohammed. ‘If the foreign NGOs leave, then it is their decision.’533 Former dreams of modernization had become replaced by a hunt for survival.534

This dissertation has shown how this journey – from Afghanistan as developmental hothouse to war zone – was possible. Chapter One showed how the Soviet Union learned in the postwar period to see countries like Afghanistan – sovereign territorial states in Asia and Africa – as objects of ‘development’ and ‘modernization’.

532 Rashid, Taliban, 72.
534 Barfield, Afghanistan, 323.
Chapter Two showed how, by the mid-1950s, events outside of Kabul’s control forced Afghan élites to alter their strategy for the modernization of their country, courting foreign powers to realize the project of a territorial Afghan state and economy.

Chapter Three moved the story into the 1970s and 1980s, showing how later ill-conceived modernization projects were visited upon the country: first, one by radical Khalqist Communists to realize a utopia of Pashtun nationalism and re-appropriation through through ruthless violence; and second, one that combined the hardware of the Soviet military-industrial complex with the Soviet administrative system to complete Afghanistan’s transformation into a socialist territorial state. Yet this attempt to impose the Soviet matrix of the state, the economy, and the Party onto Afghanistan began as the Soviet administrative system came apart in the USSR itself. As Chapter Four showed using the lens of women’s issues, in the 1980s, ideas about the role of the Communist Party (whether with respect to women’s issues, the economy, or administration) were changing. As Soviet women’s activists discovered when they tried to speak in unison with their Afghan colleagues, the discursive regime that held up socialism was fraying.

By exploring these themes, this dissertation made a new and significant contribution to the historical literature on development, the Soviet Union in the world, and Afghanistan through the use of new sources and new methodological approaches. The conventional narrative about Afghanistan centers around the country’s role as a ‘graveyard of empires’, but this dissertation showed how the modern history of Afghanistan must be understood in terms of the project to build a territorial Afghan state and economy in a post-imperial world. If the conventional approach to Soviet history sees
the Soviet state as an ideological mistake and historical outlier, this dissertation argued that ‘Soviet history’ constitutes an essential part of the story of the latter half of the 20th century that historians are beginning to tell – one centered less around ‘the Cold War’ and more around themes like development, de-colonization, human rights, and the secular economic shifts of the 1970s. This dissertation engaged with the first of those themes and showed how even as Soviet policy intellectuals thought about development in different ways from their American or West German counterparts, all were engaged in a common project of re-thinking the shape of the territorial state and its ‘national economy’ in the postwar, post-colonial conjuncture of the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than viewing institutions like VLKSM or KSZh as sui generis, this dissertation suggested that our understanding of the history of development remains incomplete without treating the Soviet phenomenon as just one instantiation of this global trend.

The Soviet experience stood at the core of this dissertation, but this dissertation also grappled with themes that remain relevant to our intuitions about states and economies today. This conclusion, therefore, pulls some of the threads that the dissertation developed into the 1990s and 2000s, asking what the Soviet collapse meant for the trajectory of the idea of development into the last decade of the 20th century. What befell the USSR in Afghanistan, the conclusion will suggest, might be read less as another instance of ‘graveyard of empires’, and more as the most spectacular example of a global age of fracture, wherein old ideas about territorial states and national economies surrendered ground to a more kaleidoscopic, atomistic vision.

*From Perestroika to ‘Failed States’*
As Chapters Three and Four showed, the end of the Soviet developmental mission in Afghanistan coincided with attempts toward economic reform in the USSR. Following Gorbachëv’s calls for a ‘re-structuring’ (perestroika) of the economy, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed two economic reform acts, the Law on State Enterprise (July 1987) and the Law on Cooperatives (May 1988). The first Law allowed enterprises to adjust their outputs and priorities based on consumer demand, rather than plan targets, and also absolved the Soviet government of responsibility for subsidizing unprofitable firms. Workers, rather than private investors, retained ownership of the firms. The law marked a significant devolution of control from Gosplan, and from the planned economy to the market. The second Law, however, went even further, permitting cooperative ownership of private businesses.

The Laws were designed to modernize the economy, but many firms stood ill-equipped to adapt. More than that, because the reforms also took place at a time when SSR and regional Party leaders withheld revenues from Moscow (the so-called ‘War of Laws’) or even declared their independence, they short-circuited economic networks across Eurasia, leading to widespread goods shortages even in Moscow and Leningrad.535 Soviet citizens were blindsided as hyperinflation, combined with the collapse of consumer banking, obliterated decades of savings. Most Soviet successor states saw year-on-year GDP growth only in the late 1990s.

The surprise was crueler, however, for countries dependent on Soviet aid or which failed themselves to navigate the process of market reforms. In Afghanistan, the end of

---
Soviet aid in December 1991 transformed Kabul into a frozen, unlit war zone. Life in the USSR’s other Third World client states – Angola, Cuba, Ethiopia – became similarly nasty, brutish, and short. North Korea descended into a famine between 1994 and 1998 during which close to a million people are supposed to have died from starvation or diseases related to undernutrition. In Cuba, the end of Soviet oil shipments plunged the country into an extended economic crisis. Hunger became an everyday feature of Cuban life, and GDP contracted by a third. By the end of the 1980s, the ‘survivors’ in the socialist camp were few indeed. The Communists in Mozambique joined the World Bank and the IMF in 1984 and reached out to Pretoria for a truce to end the civil war in the former Portuguese colony. Following China’s lead, Vietnam shifted to a ‘socialist-oriented market economy’ in 1986. By the end of the decade, where the gulag archipelago that still stood in Northeast Asia or the Caribbean had not discredited socialism, the garbage archipelago of unreformed socialist economies did.

Yet what precisely had been discredited? Scholars have recently posed the question of whether the Soviet (and, later, Yugoslav) collapse is best understood not as the inexorable collapse of a doomed system, and more as a failed attempt at élite-led market liberalization.\footnote{Christopher Miller, a graduate student at Yale University, is currently researching a dissertation on the history of Soviet reformist economic thought in the 1980s that explores this question. For Yugoslavia, see Johanna Bockman, \textit{Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).} The problem, they suggest, was not too much socialism, but too much market, and too fast. The best way, they argue, to understand \textit{perestroïka} may be more as a botched attempt by Gorbachëv, Iakovlev, Cherniaev, and others to transform the Soviet Union into something close to Mitterand’s France after the 1983 \textit{tournant de la rigeur} – a social democracy seeking to reconcile the principles of a European Left with
the new ‘capital rules’ unleashed by Bretton Woods II.

Yet as the socialist block cracked up, the man of the hour was Francis Fukuyama, then an obscure State Department analyst, who argued in a summer 1989 essay that events in Eastern Europe represented ‘the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution’ towards democracy and markets.537 Whether ‘The End of History?’ was the best-timed magazine article in American history remains up for debate, but what is certain is that it was one of the least well-understood. Fukuyama stressed that the United States had not ‘won’ some Hegelian struggle: hence the question mark in the title of the essay. Soviet-style socialism might have collapsed, he wrote, but it remained far from clear to Fukuyama whether the United States, European social democracies, or even states per se could successfully reconcile Man’s desire for liberty and recognition with technological and economic change in the long run.

The gaggle of policy intellectuals and academics nesting around Washington, however, ignored Fukuyama’s nuance to take up different concerns in the early 1990s. And for good reason, too. Whether from the perspective of former Soviet Studies PhDs like Fukuyama or then-Stanford assistant professor Condoleezza Rice, or planners in the Pentagon, the ‘peace dividend’ promised by the Soviet collapse threatened to terminate a lucrative, prestigious, and mostly interesting world of defense contracts, think tank fellowships, and named chairs. Dictators like Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, and Suharto were annoyances, true, but they did not justify a chain of military bases from Djibouti to Diego Garcia in the same way that the Soviet ideological and military spectre had.

Soon, policy intellectuals re-invented the Third World as a security threat. Unlike in the 1950s, when attention centered around states that leaned towards Moscow, whatever their internal stability (Egypt, India, or Afghanistan, for instance), now, scholars devoted their attention to so-called ‘failed states’ like Somalia or Zaïre – states that, while *de jure* sovereign actors, provided limited ‘governance’ or ‘rule of law’ within their internal territory.\footnote{Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).} An influential 1992 article further popularized the notion, and within a few years, scholars demanded interventions to protect the West from the threat of failed states in Africa and Asia.\footnote{For the original 1992 article, see: Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Rather, ‘Saving Failed States’, *Foreign Policy* 3 (1992). See also: Robert D. Kaplan, ‘The Coming Anarchy’, *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994), and Paul Johnson, ‘Colonialism’s Back – and not a Moment too Soon’, *The New York Times*, 18 April 1993.} Nor was the concept the exclusive domain of policy nabobs. In 1993, the CIA began to fund a project to assess the vulnerability of states around the world, the post-Soviet states included, to collapse and revolution.\footnote{‘PITF Reports and Replicant Data Sets’, Center for Global Policy, available online at: \url{http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/political-instability-task-force-home/pitf-reports-and-replicant-data-sets/}} The 2002 National Security Strategy of the George W. Bush Administration placed such countries at the center of its foreign policy, arguing that ‘America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.’\footnote{2002 United States National Security Strategy, Part I (‘Overview of America’s International Strategy’), available online at: \url{http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss1.html}}

A window of opportunity to rethink concepts about the state, and development had closed. The myopia of the ‘failed state’ framework resembles nothing less than that of mid-century like Nathan, Paul, and the Gosplan team, only now with the excuse of hindsight that those men lacked. As Chapter Two emphasized, some of what we call, for lack of a more precise vocabulary, states like Afghanistan thrived during periods of
empire. Others have thrived after empire in an age of territoriality, especially after Bretton Woods II and shifts in international ‘capital rules’ created a world of liberalized capital flows and floating currencies. The ‘failed states’ paradigm, however, remains enthralled to the conviction that the territorial state and economy represent the only possible unit of analysis. It remains transfixed by the image of the tax-farming, tariff-free state, as opposed to the opposite model that Zabuli pursued for Afghanistan’s unique geographical and historical position. And it covers up a lack of historical and regional knowledge: empires in the region that today comprise Pakistan and Afghanistan – to take two commonly cited cases of ‘failed states’ – have never had a centralized system of taxation, a corruption-free bureaucracy, or the ability to militarily subdue tribal rebellions. Without more sustained attention to institutional history, as opposed to the autistic public choice models that dominate today, Western political scientists’ ability to manage, much less understand, political order in changing societies will remain neutered.

But there may be a darker side to the sustained attention that ‘failed states’ receive today. Such an approach is likely to highlight government breakdown while averting attention away from the institutions – multinational corporations or international financial institutions – that frequently play a more crucial role in the governance of countries like Chad, Niger, or Angola than does the actual government. As James Ferguson observes,

countries with raging civil wars and spectacularly illiberal governments have on a number of occasions proved to be surprisingly strong performers in the area of economic growth. The point, Ferguson continues, is that

544 Ferguson, Global Shadows, 226.
high levels of violence and disorder are more compatible with certain sorts of capital investment than is usually acknowledged, and that capitalism is flexible enough to adapt to a surprisingly wide variety of environments.

In 2011, for example, some of the top recipients of foreign direct investment outside of the rich world included Angola (ranking 37th), Nigeria (44th), Pakistan (67th), and Libya (74th). Relatively stable and populous Tanzania did not crack the top one hundred.\footnote{CIA World Factbook, information for foreign direct investment available online at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2198rank.html} Such countries, far from failed, may actually represent a model for the Third World. As engineering advances allow more and more petroleum (to take the case of Angola) to be extracted offshore, national élites may conspire with oil companies and financial institutions in a quid pro quo. While these kleptocrats receive their share of oil profits, they run up huge deficits in their countries’ budgets, forcing them to turn to high-interest commercial loans to finance day-to-day government operations. Petroleum companies, protected in territorial exclaves by private militias, do good business, while financial institutions invest in these countries’ debt based on the prospect of more resource rents.

Because the ‘failed state’ model holds up as the norm a national ‘grid’ of legibility and development, it struggles to articulate the role that countries like Libya, Angola, or Nigeria may play in such ‘private empires’ that unite multi-national corporations, global finance, and the development industry itself.\footnote{Steve Coll, Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power (New York: Penguin Press, 2012); Ferguson, The Anti-Politics Machine: ‘Development’, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).} As Ferguson suggests, the new implicit model is one wherein ‘the economy’ is excluded with transnational capital as a ‘government by NGO, often in a humanitarian mode’, carries out the ‘day-to-day work of providing rudimentary governmental and social services,
especially in areas of crisis and conflict.’\(^{547}\) One fears that the ‘failed states’ discourse, rather than helping to diagnose and analyze the economic, humanitarian, and environmental catastrophe apace in many Third World countries, may actually mask the new form of governance that makes the human calamities of our times possible.

*From Industrialism to Atomized Development*

It is striking to recall how as recently as the late 1960s and 1970s mainstream discussions of economic development were fixated with large-scale capital investment. For much of the twentieth century, people associated micro-lending with loan sharking. Industry, not payday loans and kiosk economies, was what powered Western, Soviet, and Japanese economies, according to the conventional wisdom. Leaders like Nehru, Nasser, or the Shah wanted economies built upon steel mills, nuclear power plants, and automobile factories, not fruit stands. Whether developing countries were petitioning the Soviet Union or United States for capital projects, or asking advisors like Arthur Paul about how to capitalize an industrial development bank, their focus remained squarely on large capital investments. Good evidence supported these views, moreover. Experiments with microcredit, like those carried out in Comilla, East Pakistan by the economist Akhtar Hameed Khan and USAID researchers, suggested that both clients and banks would fall into default in the long run.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, development economists like Raymond Goldsmith and Edward Shaw encouraged attention away from a concern with monetary policy and large-scale capital investment and towards the problem of private

savings. Back in South Asia, meanwhile, even if Khan’s initial experiments in lending outside of Dhaka failed in the 1960s and 1970s, perspicacious bankers like Muhammad Yunus learned from these mistakes. By the late 1970s, organizations like Yunus’ Grameen Bank and the Association for Social Advancement began successful programs of microcredit loans to businesses that had traditionally struggled to obtain credit from commercial lenders. Development micro-economists at the Ohio State University, having studied agricultural credit and peasant savings in Latin America, emphasized the need for better microcredit instruments to stimulate growth. Others at the University of Wageningen highlighted the important role that the informal sector and small-scale private banking might play in development. Theoretical macroeconomists like Joseph Stiglitz and Andrew Weiss, meanwhile, refined models of how banks could determine interest rates in imperfect markets like the ones that the Ohio State or Wageningen economists had observed in the field.

By the late 1980s, the turn away from the industrial state and to the NGO, or increasingly, the ‘social entrepreneur’ as a key developmental actor was clear. As the Soviet industrial, administrative, and discursive matrix cracked up, micro-finance institutions thrived across Latin America and South Asia. In 1992, PRODEM, a Bolivian micro-finance NGO, was legally permitted to become BancoSol, a regulated commercial bank; throughout the 1990s, new institutions like Corposol (Columbia), Caja Los Andes

---

549 See, for example, Frits Bouman, Small, Short, and Unsecured: Informal Rural Finance in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).
(Bolivia), Financiera Calpiá (El Salvador), and Banco ADEMI (the Dominican Republic) prospered. Accolades poured in. The United Nations declared 2005 the ‘International Year of Microcredit’, and Yunus was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. In the meantime, technology barons founded junkets like the Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship and the TED Conference, which enforced discipline on respectable opinion about social change. Attendees at such events came predominantly from NGOs, venture capital firms, or multinational corporations. Compared to them, the bureaucrats, ministers, and trade unionists of yore seemed about as paleolithic as the eccentric diets of the technocrats that frequent such events. The speakers who presented at such events branded themselves as ‘global changemakers’ or ‘social entrepreneurs’, not denizens of actual countries with discrete traditions, histories, and institutions that date back for decades, if not centuries.

Yet how intellectually robust is this consensus? In the last decade, development economists like Dean Karlan, Jonathan Zinman, and Jonathan Murdoch have scrutinized micro-finance using randomized control trials. Their work has thrown the benefits of such programs into doubt, suggesting how sectarian, racial, or caste mistrust may color local lending decisions, and how the interest rates charged by micro-finance institutions are abusively high and leave debtors in bondage. 551 The seduction, meanwhile, of the coat of many colors that social entrepreneurs don remains obvious. Compared to the Soviet model of working for years in steel plants, labor unions and VLKSM, being a human rights activist the one day, an international lawyer the next day, a technologist the next day –

551 Karlan has authored several papers on this subject, primarily with Dartmouth economist Zinman. For Morduch, see Jonathan Morduch and Beatriz Armendariz, The Economics of Micro-Finance (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005)
and a slave to fashion every day – is seductive. Yet the most dynamic ‘social entrepreneur’ cannot build the institutions – judiciaries, regulatory agencies, or police departments – that promote the common good, as opposed to the needs of the boutique identity groups of the moment. Still less likely are NGOs to protect the exploitation of the natural resources of the countries in which they operate from Western and Chinese firms which boast lavish amounts of capital, the ability to isolate resource extraction off-shore (as in Angola or Aceh), and private armies.552 Indeed, as Ferguson writes,

the role played by NGOs in helping Western ‘development’ agencies to ‘get around’ uncooperative national governments sheds a good deal of light on the current disdain for the state and celebration of civil society that one finds in both the theoretical and the policy-oriented literature right now.553

The devolution of development out of the hands of the state, and into the hands of sprightly ‘social entrepreneurs’, may boost the latter’s self-esteem, but it may prove still more beneficial to multinational corporations with rather different ambitions.

What defines our moment is the extent to which the preoccupation with the territorial state, on the one hand, and non-governmental actors, on the other, constricts the vocabulary one might use to speak constructively about the role of the state in promoting economic welfare. Intellectuals on the Left, like Ivan Illich, Majid Rahnema, Wolfgang Sachs, and Bill McKibben argue for ‘post-development’ – the idea that ‘development’ is a Western construct of power imposed on the Global South – or the need to abandon growth to avoid environmental collapse.554 Yet few of these thinkers have offered a

compelling vision of how the state could advance these post-development visions. While scholars like Ferguson and Timothy Mitchell go far beyond the old obsession of total national sovereignty that defines some residual Left opposition to American foreign policy today, it is also difficult to see how the rich spatial imagination that informs their works might inform some new system for the governance of former colonial states that better corresponded to local wishes. The obsession of the Right with ‘the market’ and the demonization of ‘the state’ has, meanwhile, rendered classical liberals an endangered species in some Western countries. Having divorced the neoconservatives following the Iraq War, even the prophet of the ‘End of History’ has voiced concern. What the Right needs now, writes Fukuyama in a summer 2012 essay, is a conservative vision devoted to ‘private property and a competitive market economy’, yet which sees ‘the state as a facilitator rather than an enemy of these objectives.’

The intellectual situation today accounts for the ironic lens through which one can view Natalia Vasil’evna Ianina and her group of VLKSM advisors. To us, they represent the last moment when people accepted the legitimacy of the state as a constructive actor in economic development. This is far from how they understood themselves, of course: VLKSM was a sub-organ of the Communist Party, rather than the Soviet state per se. They sought, in theory, to make possible an Afghanistan in which the state could wither away. The difference between their developmental vision then, on the one hand, and how we may remember it today, on the other hand, highlights less any inherent flaw in what

---


VLKSM sought to accomplish, and more how the collapse of Communism transformed what one expects from ‘development’. Few would wish back the matrix of smokestacks, factory floors, and the Party that marked the world of Komsomol, but it is unclear whether our present preoccupation with ‘failed states’ and atomized development constitutes an ‘end of history’ any more than did Marxism-Leninism.

_The Death and Life of Soviet Development_

Travel to the Vostriakovskoe Cemetery in suburban Moscow, enter through the gates, walk to Plot 24, and if the timing is right, you may find a small gathering of middle-aged men laying wreaths and flowers at one of the tombstones that line the walk.\textsuperscript{556} The men, some of the eighty-odd living alumni of the VLKSM advisors, have made their way to Vostriakovskoe to pay their respects one last time. Scattered around the former Soviet Union from Petrozavodsk to Dushanbe, these former colleagues and friends struggle to reunite frequently. Yet when they can, they meet, usually in Russia, to recall their past adventures or to inquire to see if one of them is in need of help.\textsuperscript{557} Some years, at least, some meet in the Russian capital to make a pilgrimage to the grave of the woman who changed their lives. These men’s journeys have diverged since Afghanistan, but for at least one cold autumn morning, they gather together to ‘remember this spiritual and courageous human being who played a noticeable role in the fates of every one of us.’ Natalia Vasil’evna died more than a decade ago – 27 September 1999 – but as long as these representatives of the last Soviet generation are still alive, they return to honor her.

\textsuperscript{556} Mushavery (Moscow: Nauka, Tekhnika, Obrazovanie, 2005), 8.
\textsuperscript{557} Author Interview, Vladimir Struchkov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 23 October 2012.
More than three decades had passed since the first advisors touched down in occupied Afghanistan. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many leveraged their VLKSM connections to forge new lives for themselves. Iusuf Abdullaev, a propaganda advisor for the Central Committee of DOYA from 1980-1983, became Rector of Samarkand State University, a post he held until 2005.\textsuperscript{558} Alikhan Amirkhanov, an ethnic Ingush who had been born in Frunze and worked in Herat, became a representative in the Duma of the Russian Federation and ran, unsuccessfully, for President of Ingushetia in 2005.\textsuperscript{559} Many now head their local Afghanistan veterans’ organizations, while Aleksandr Belofastov and Aleksandr Rebrik run an organization for the VLKSM advisors in

\textsuperscript{558} Mushavery, 52; Artur Samari, ‘V Samarkande mitinguiut studenty: yvstupleniň takovo mashtaba ne nabludaloś’ v Uzbekistane uzhe bolee desiaty let’, February 21, 2005, available online at: \url{http://iwpr.net/ru/report-news-%D0%B2-%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BA %D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B5-%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD %D0%B3%D1%83%D1%8E%D1%82-%D1%81%D1%82%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD %D1%82%D1%8B}

\textsuperscript{559} Mushavery, 61.
Moscow. In Tajikistan, at least one of the VLKSM advisors, Muboraksho Makshulov, has re-invented himself as a Vice-President of a commercial bank. Close to half of the academics at the Institute of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan are former translators who now pursue research on topics related to South and Central Asia. Others, like Zaidullo Dzhunaïdov, who now works for Germany’s international aid agency, have found new institutions through which to pursue the mission of development.

Ianina’s choice of them for the mission had changed their lives. ‘I can’t find the words to talk about her’, said one. Advisors recall how ‘she was so pure’ (*besyar pak bud*) that she kicked two would-be advisors out of Chirchiq when they threw away uneaten bread; she could not trust them to live up to Soviet standards when working alongside Afghans. They recall how she spent weeks during the scorching Dushanbe summer visiting wounded Soviet soldiers in hospitals, writing letters back to the veterans’ local VLKSM *obkoms* and *gorkoms* to secure them the wheelchairs and three-room apartments they were entitled to as ‘internationalists.’ For many, Ianina embodied the best in the Soviet Union. She lived up to those virtues that had captured Viktor Samoilenko’s imagination years ago in the Tashkent airport: ‘the Soviet person as a patriot and internationalist.’ For men who came from a milieu of simultaneous cynicism and idealism, Ianina embodied the best in the Soviet project.

Others’ reflections on their time in Afghanistan were more somber. Vladimir Snegirëv, a VLKSM advisor and correspondent for *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, wrote in the early 2000s of his friendship with a young Pashtun man from Herat. In the spring of

560 Author Interview, Abduzahir Zakhirov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 31 July 2012.
561 Ibid.; Author Interview, Nadmidin Shohinbodov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 28 July 2012.
1981, Snegirëv recalled, he heard from the VLKSM advisor there of

a local 16-year-old girl who had recently been killed in the fight with the dashman. Her name was Fazilya. She became inspired by the ideals of struggle and joined the rows of the young defenders of the Revolution.’

Snegirëv sensed a story. ‘Finally, here we had a real case of heroism and self-sacrifice. We had to write a piece [ocherk] for Komsomolskaia Pravda at once.’ Snegirëv flew to Herat, where he met with Fazilya’s brother, Mukhtar,

an officer, a captain by rank who was serving in the 17th Infantry Division. We talked with him for several hours. Mukhtar was about thirty years old, but much of his black hair had already turned grey. When we started to talk about his sister, he began to cry. Never again did I see a Pashtun crying. As it turned out, he felt guilty for the death of his sister, since it was from him that Fazilya had first heard about the Revolution, the Soviet Union, about the possibility of living without poverty or want.

It was a journalistic coup. Snegirëv interviewed Mukhtar and wrote the piece.

‘On 27 April 1981’, he wrote,

my piece, ‘Fazilya’s Last Fight’ appeared in the Komsomolskaia. All the major Afghan papers reprinted it. One of the leaders of DOYA, Farid Mazak, wrote a poem, ‘Sister of Victory’, and a little while later they set the lyrics to music, and so there was born a song about Fazilya that they often performed on TV in Kabul. In Herat, they renamed a street after the girl.563

The Fazilya legend provided a certain professional security for Snegirëv. Upon his return to Moscow, Snegirev wrote a book on his Afghan experiences, Gunpowder-Seared Dawn, featuring a story about Fazilya, that was later translated into Dari.564

Yet as Snegirëv grew closer to Mukhtar on return trips, he grew to appreciate the young man and Fazilya less as myths and more as actual people – as friends. They became role models for him as a Communist. Mukhtar, recalled Snegirëv
told me that to this day he held with him the most important desire of his childhood – to feel full after eating, if only once. A handful of boiled corn grains or a dry piece of bread could be considered a luxury in his family.

Compared to the Afghans with whom Snegirëv spent most of his time, Mukhtar

563 For the newspaper article, see ‘Poslednyi boi Fazili’, Komsomolskaia Pravda, 27 April 1981, 3.
564 Vladimir Snegirev, Opalennyi porokhom rassvet (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1984)
was the first person that I encountered in my journey that you could really consider a conscious revolutionary. It’s true, of course, that I had met others prior to him — smart, sympathetic, brave, convinced fighters — but as a rule they were occupying the one official post or the other, were functionaries; in other words, they were receiving money or privileges for their work. They drove around in their automobiles, said what they were supposed to say, attended the right protests, almost every one of them was attached to an advisor from the USSR. But Mukhtar had only served in the Army. Membership in the Party didn’t give him any dividends. He avoided highfalutin phrases and wasn’t ashamed of his tears when he spoke about Fazilya. From my first meeting with him I found him imbued with sympathy.

Speaking with former advisors today, one can feel struck how few joined the Party or Komsomol out of conviction. For many of them, ‘Party work’ or ‘Komsomol work’ was just a job, something they accepted without much reflection at the time. Others were just attracted to the prospects for higher salaries. Encounters with people like Mukhtar, however, challenged the terms of idealism and cynicism which prevailed at home. The difference between the mission these Soviet men had signed up for, and the lives of the Afghans they worked with, became trenchant. ‘So what’s the point?’, asked Snegirev.

Why am I remembering all of this now? Am I ashamed of that piece in the newspaper and that book? Times have changed, we all have changed, we have rejected things, denied things … but at the end of it there’s still that girl who took the AK-47 into her hands and went off into battle – because she heard stories from her brother about social justice and believed in those bright ideals. She’s still there. And there’s still her and my own belief in the idea that the world could be built according to the rules of social justice. So that everything would be OK.

Of course, it’s easier to acknowledge my prior convictions, to wave them away, and strike them out from my memory. But it doesn’t work, striking them out and forgetting. That past is a part of every one of us.\textsuperscript{565}

It had been a life-changing journey for these men. A country that, for many, had once been part of the vague Eurasian ‘there’, had been in their lives so long that it became hard to remember anything before. As Vasilii Kravtsov reflected one cold October evening, ‘21 June 1979 … the day I first heard the word “Pashto” (\textit{Den’ 21 iunia 1979 ia pervy\v{i} raz uznal slovo pushtu});’ all ‘before’ and ‘after’ in Kravtsov’s life

referred to that moment. Yet as the annual pilgrimage to Ianina’s grave underscores, today the legacy of Ianina and the VLKSM advisors has more to do with the men’s life stories than any tangible accomplishments. Cultural centers built in the 1980s still stand in Fayzabad, Badakhshan, but the halls of the Institute for Young Cadres and the House of Soviet-Afghan Friendship in Kabul are as deserted today as they were by the spring of 1989. As for Snegirëv and the Afghan girl Fazilya, even if his article for Komsomol’skaia Pravda had exploited Fazilya’s death, it moved an Soviet Azerbaijani reader enough for her to name her newborn daughter in the girl’s memory. Twenty-five years later, the Azerbaijani Fazilya is married to a Turkish man. Mukhtar has traveled to Baku to visit this former Soviet family who pays tribute to his murdered sister. But it is only a visit. ‘I’ll remain loyal to my homeland’, Mukhtar says to his old friend Snegirëv, before boarding the flight to Kabul.

More than just the flight approach separates the journey Mukhtar makes today from the one that Viktor Samoĭlenko embarked on from Tashkent thirty years prior. Two days after the Taliban seemed to have scored a major coup against its Northern Alliance foes when two suicide bombers assassinated Mas’ud, Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda, one of the few international organizations that Taliban leaders had tolerated, claimed responsibility for the terrorist attacks that killed thousands in New York City, Washington, and rural Pennsylvania. Less than a month later, the United States began a campaign to oust the Taliban from power and to capture or kill bin Laden. NATO troops and their Northern Alliance allies captured Kabul on 13 November, while the former

---

566 Author Interview, Vasiliĭ Kravtsov, Moscow, Russian Federation, 23 October 2012.
567 Author Interview, Zaidullo Dzhunaidov, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 31 August 2012.
568 Author Interview, Vladimir Snegirëv, Moscow, Russian Federation, 22 October 2012.
Taliban stronghold of Kandahar fell a month later. That December, American and Afghan troops came tantalizingly close to capturing bin Laden near Tora Bora, in the same hills that Giorgadze and Maudzudin had stalked three decades prior.

Yet what had started as an operation against al-Qaeda became, in the ensuing decade, a largest developmental intervention that dwarfed all others in Afghanistan’s history. Particularly since the military and civilian ‘surge’ of 2009-2012, thousands of new State Department and USAID employees, along with even more private contractors, bloated the Afghan capital. Many had few concrete assignments and were rarely let out of the Embassy compound. Even the regional experts drafted into the office of US Special Representative Richard Holbrooke were rendered ineffective by the marginalization of Holbrooke within White House turf battles and the reams of paperwork demanded by the State Department’s bureaucracy.\(^{569}\) In the field, the ‘counterinsurgency’ doctrine championed by General David Petraeus faltered among the pomegranate orchards and cotton plantations of Helmand Province. Those State Department political commissars who spent the most sustained time in the Afghan countryside, like Kael Weston, remain skeptical about what, if anything, they actually accomplished. Those who devoted hours to learning Pashto, meanwhile, have been criticized for ‘slacking off’ from writing their reports – a lack of discipline that could derail a young political officer’s career.\(^{570}\) How much had really changed from the days of the ‘formalism’ of VLKSM reports?

We have more to learn from the Soviet experience in in Afghanistan than the sudden end to the Cold War has led us to think. The concepts and institutions we use to


understand and carry out economic development have changed since the collapse of Soviet development, yet in the wake of the most recent developmental intervention in Afghanistan, few would argue that Western development has proven more successful in its mission to build a territorial state and Afghan economy than Soviet development. Nor can one feel particularly confident that the concepts and frameworks that have crystallized in Western development thought since the collapse of the Soviet Union will prove of much help in managing the catastrophe that many predict to follow a military withdrawal from Afghanistan. As in the closing days of Afghanistan’s developmental moment, faith in the power of social science interventions is low, replaced increasingly by a confidence in surgical technowarfare to ‘manage’ conflict and ‘pacify’ restive populations in such places as the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands. The idea of summoning developing powers to forge a territorial Afghan state and national economy may have been yesterday’s dream, but it is swiftly becoming today’s nightmare.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Percentage of total government spending among selected Asian nations broken down by purpose, c. 1950 and c. 1960. Afghanistan devoted a significantly greater percentage of its public sector spending towards development than any other country in its region. Source: Economic Bulletin for Asia and the Far East 3 (1962), 33.

Figure 2: International Aid to Afghanistan, c. 1955 – early 1970s. ‘PL 480’ refers to American food aid programs, as distinct from cash grants or loans. Source: Maxwell J. Fry, The Afghan Economy: Money, Finance and the Constraints to Economic Development (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

Figure 3: The Turko-Persian arena: a largely unpopulated space that nonetheless hosted competition between the merchant élites of centers like Herat, Mashhad, Qandahar, Shikarpur, Kabul, Bukhara, and Peshawar. (Map by author.)

Figure 4: Percentage of total customs duties recorded by Royal Court in Kabul, 1927-1928 trading year. Source: N.M. Gurevich, Vneshniaia torgovlia Afganistana (Moscow: 1959).

Figure 5: Tax revenues going into the Shah’s treasury from selected provincial centers of the Durrani Empire, circa 1790, with post-1947 Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan borders superimposed. Size of dollar sign represents scale of income. As Soviet scholars were well aware, the Durrani incarnation of the Afghan state was based on extraction from the Punjab and Sindh to compensate for a lightly taxed, poor, Pashtun core. From Iuriĭ Gankovskiĭ, Imperiia Durrani: ocherki administravnoi i voennoi sistemy (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo vostochnoĭ literatury, 1958), Chapter Five.


Figure 9: Food for Trees: Pashtun farmers in Paktia receiving American corned beef and wheat in exchange for planting trees, c. 1970-1972. Photograph courtesy of Christoph Häselbarth.

Figure 10: Christoph Häselbarth’s sketch of the Paktia afforestation scheme, courtesy of author. Figures demonstrate how tree saplings were planted in micro-drainage basins between 15 and 20 meters square, fed with small canals, and stabilized by stones and dirt at the bottom of ditches. Drawing courtesy of Christoph Häselbarth.

Figure 11: The four major forest regions of Paktia – Jaji, Mangal, Chadran, and Charuti – as well as the Mandaher State Forest. By the late 1960s, almost all of Paktia’s forests had been destroyed. (Author Map).

Figure 12: Districts of Paktia Province (Jaji, Chamkan-Gabr-Lescher, Khost, Setekanda, Zeruk-Spera, Mercaka-Gardez-Sorauza, Urgun-Gomal, Waziri) colored according to percentage of surface area with sustainably harvestable forests. Checkered area is Mandaher State Forest; dotted area in Waziri District is area of known cedar forests, although no measurements were taken. Data from ‘Waldinventur der Provinz Paktia / Waldinventur’, 1 January 1970, Bundesarchiv Koblenz B213/2838.

Figure 13: The nine ‘zones’ into which Afghanistan was divided by the DOYA bureaucracy: North (light green), Northeast (red), East (yellow), Southeast (light purple), South (khaki), Southwest (black/grey), West (royal blue), Northwest (turquoise), and Center (dark purple). From RGASPI, fond M-3, opis’13, putevoditel’ (guide to fond).

Figure 14: Map of Eastern Afghanistan and Northwestern Pakistan (Author Map).


Figure 18: Kunar Province and Northeastern Afghanistan (Author Map).

Figure 19: European modernity for Afghan women? Zeynab Enayet Saraj, the Vice-President of Da Mermeno Tolana. From Von Taschkent nach Kabul, np.

Figure 20: One Soviet presentation of the liberated women of Uzbekistan, a 1980 book entitled To Each Their Glory (U kazhdoi svoia slava). The book, published in a Dari translation here, presents fourteen profiles of successful Uzbek women. The caption on the right reads: ‘The book that you have in your hand is about the women of Uzbekistan – cotton-pickers, ballet dancers, teachers, engineers, composers, and others. This book provides information about the subject of how one of the Soviet republics developed in the years of Soviet power, and how women were freed by the victory of the October Revolution, as well as how women participated in the field of industry.’

Figure 21: Origins of DOWA Women at the Moscow Conference. Based on GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 5.

Figure 22: Women’s clothing as progress or backwardness: a photograph of three Afghan women. Given the diversity of Afghan society, it is important to underline – in spite of the value of the 1982 stenogram – how unrepresentative it can be. Photograph from Afghanistan Today (Kabul: Bihqy, 1981).

Figure 23: ‘Let Lenin Speak!’ A popular Soviet poster from the late 1980s naively under-estimated the destabilizing consequences of dismantling the ‘authoritative discourse’ that had underpinned late socialism.

Figure 24: The tombstone of Natalia Vasil’evna Ianina at Vostriakovskoe Cemetery, Moscow, Russian Federation. Author Photograph, 20 October 2012.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTERVIEWS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Abdulazizov, Abdulwakhov. Worked as a lecturer in Persian language and literature at Tajik State University. Worked as a translator for VLKSM advisors in Kabul from 1980-1985 before returning to work as a scholar at Tajik State University. Interviewed conducted in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 21 August 2012.


Dzumashev, Askar. Director of the Historical Section of the Karakalpakstan Academy of Sciences. Interview conducted in Nukus, Uzbekistan, 12 September 2012.

Häseltbarth, Christoph. Worked as lead agricultural advisor for the Paktia Projekt for the West German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation in Paktia Province in the late 1960s and early 1970s before moving on to further development work in Sumatra, Indonesia. Later quit career in development work to devote himself to evangelical Christianity. Interview conducted in Strittmatt, Germany, 14 April 2012.

Hassanov, Hassan. Former military translator for the Soviet Army in Afghanistan; presently director of the Association of Veterans of the Afghan War in Samarkand,
Uzbekistan. Interview conducted in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 20 September 2012.


Korgun, Viktor. Studied Dari and Afghanistan in university, taught Dari at Moscow area universities in the late 1960s, and later attended the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR from 1971-1974. Visited Afghanistan numerous times in the 1970s, serving as an advisor to the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education and translator in 1978-1979 while also authoring numerous books on the history of the country. While working in Sektor Afganistan
(Afghanistan research group) at IV AN SSSR in the 1980s, conducted research on internal politics in Afghanistan and traveled to the country numerous times as an advisor to Soviet institutions. Interview conducted in Moscow, Russian Federation, 15 October 2012.

Kravtsov, Vitalii. Born in rural southern Belarus in 1951. After serving in the Soviet Army, was invited to take intensive Pashto and Dari courses at the KGB’s institutions of higher education in Moscow. Served as a trainer in the languages and cultures of Afghanistan for KGB agents outbound to Afghanistan from 1980-1987. Served as an advisor for tribal affairs in the KhAD from November 1987 to December 1991, coordinating DRA and Soviet support for Ghilzai tribes in southern Afghanistan until the collapse of the USSR. Later worked for the FSK (later reorganized into the FSB) on internal Russian security issues before joining the Institute for Demography, Migration, and Regional Development, a Russian NGO. Interviews conducted in Moscow, Russian Federation, 23 October 2012 and 15 November 2012.


Matveeva, Anna. Born in Moscow in the 1960s. Studied under Soviet Afghan specialists at the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences in the late 1970s and early 1980s before working for the publishing house Progress, PNILSAMO, and, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western development agencies. Interview conducted in London, United Kingdom, 18 April 2012.

Nekrasov, Vyacheslav. Born in 1954 in Ozhgikha, Sverdlovsk oblast’, Russia. After completing higher education in 1977, worked as a turner and technician in Sverdlovsk oblast’ factories and served in the Soviet Army in the Far East in the late 1970s. Worked for VLKSM from 1980 onwards and was sent as the VLKSM provincial advisor to Meymana, in Faryab Province in 1982. Since his time in Afghanistan, has written numerous books on the country, returned to Afghanistan more than a dozen times, and has held talks with Ahmad Shah Mas’ud, Bernahuddin Rabbani, and former Governor of Herat Province Ismail Khan. Now works as an advisor to the Russian Federal Assembly. Interview conducted in Moscow, Russia, 17 October 2012.

Rachabov, Habibullo. Born in Tajikistan and graduate from Tajik State University,


Scott, Dick. Worked as a contractor for USAID in Turkey in the late 1960s and early 1970s before working in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, from 1971 to 1978. Helped conceptualize, critique, and implement a drainage improvement program for Nad-i Ali and Marja in Helmand, and conducted several surveys on the socio-economic life of farmers and nomads in Helmand Province. Left Afghanistan in 1978 to continue USAID work in West Africa, but has returned to Helmand both under Taliban rule as well as after 2001 to consult on drainage, irrigation, and agricultural issues in the province. Interview conducted via telephone from Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 5 October 2012.

Sharipov, Shavlat. Graduated from Tajik State University in the 1970s before beginning graduate work at the Oriental Institute of the Tajik SSR. Worked as a translator for several institutions, first in the Panjshir Valley from May 1984 to June 1985, then in Kabul from June 1985 to June 1986. Interview conducted in Khujand, Tajikistan, 6 September 2012.


Snegirëv, Vladimir. Born in Tomsk oblast’ in 1947 and graduated from Ural State University in 1969 with a specialization in journalism. Worked Shaksterskaia Pravda, a paper in Kemerovo oblast’, before accepting a job at Komsomoľ’skaia Pravda in Moscow. Was invited in 1981 to work as an advisor for Derafshe-yi
Javanan (Youth Banner), the official paper of DOYA based in Kabul for a year, before going on to write war correspondence for Komsomol'skaia Pravda from Afghanistan for much of the 1980s. Has worked for Russian newspapers, most recently Rossiiskaia Gazeta, as a foreign correspondent form Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Interview conducted in Moscow, Russian Federation, 22 October 2012.

Struchkov, Viktor. Born in 1945 in Skopin, Riazanskoï oblast'. Worked for VLKSM in the Central Region of the Russian SFSR before becoming the head of the Section for Scholarly Youth of the Central Committee of VLKSM. Served as the lead coordinator for VLKSM advisors in Kabul from 1983-1985, following Valeriï Sidorov. Interview conducted in Moscow, Russian Federation, 24 October 2012.


Tokareva, Galina. Born in the western Soviet Union in the 1930s. After surviving imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp, went through Soviet orphanages, schools, and VLKSM to become an obkom secretary for VLKSM in several locations, eventually joining the Central Committee of Komsomol in the 1970s. Currently works at the head archivist of the Komsomol archives. Interview conducted in Moscow, Russian Federation, 19 November 2012.


Ziar, Modscharw. Born in rural Afghanistan before attending schools in Kabul on an RGA scholarship and later receiving a doctoral scholarship to study linguistics at the University of Bern with Professor Georges Redard, a specialist in Iranian languages and linguistics. Served as a research assistant on a major linguistic atlas of dialects of Afghanistan before returning to Kabul in 1972. Taught at Kabul University from 1972 to 1982 before fleeing the country. Interview conducted in Oxford, United Kingdom, 14 July 2011.
Ziar, Sakina. Born in Laghman Province in the 1950s, and attended German-language 
schools in Kabul in the 1960s. Fled Afghanistan in 1982, working with the United 
Nations Development Corporation before settling in the United Kingdom to work 
as an editor for BBC Pashto language services and with international aid 
organizations supporting Afghanistan. Interview conducted in Oxford, United 
Kingdom, 14 July 2011.

MANUSCRIPT AND ARCHIVAL SOURCES

MOSCOW, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoï Federratsii (Archive of the Foreign Policy of 
the Russian Federation)

f. 71 (Referentury po Afganistanu / Reports on Afghanistan)

Fond Gorbacheva (Gorbachev Foundation)


Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoï Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian 
Federation)

f. R-6991 (Komitet po religioznym delam / Committee for Religious 
Affairs)

f. R-7928 (Komitet sovetskykh zhenshchin / Committee of Soviet Women)

f. R-9606 (Ministerstvo srednego i vysshego obrazovaniia / Ministry of 
Immediate and Higher Education)

Rossiiskoï Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki (Russian State Archive of the 
Economy),

f. 365 (Uchrezhdeniia po vnesheknomicheckim sviaziam / Institutions 
for Foreign Economic Ties)

Rossiiskoï Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury I Iskusstva (Russian State Archive 
for Literature)

f. 2487 (Tsentral’naia studiia dokumental’nykh fil’mov / Central Studio of 
Documentary Films)

Rossiiskoï Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-Politicheskoi Istorii, Zal 
Dokumentov Molodezhnykh Organizatsii (Russian State Archive of Social- 
Political History – Documents of Youth Organizations), Moscow, Russian
Federation

f. M-3, op. 13 (Sovetniki TsK VLKSM v Afganistane / TsK VLKSM advisors in Afghanistan)

Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Mamlekettik Arkhiv Kyrgyz Respublikasy (National Archive of the Kyrgyz Republic)

f. 2705 (VDNKh / Exhibition of the Achievements of the National Economy)

Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Politicheskoi Dokumentatsii Respubliki Kirgizii (Central State Archive of Political Documentation of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan)

f. 391 (Institut sotsial’no-politicheskikh issledovaniy TsK KP Kyrgyzstana / Institute for Socio-Political Research of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan)

Berlin, Germany

Bundesarchiv-Lichterfelde (Federal Archives – Berlin-Lichterfelde)

Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen (SAPMO) (Foundation for the Archive of Parties and Mass Organizations)

DY 24 (Freie Deutsche Jugend / Free German Youth)

DY 30 (Abteilung Internationale Beziehungen / International Relations Section)

Koblenz, Germany

Bundesarchiv-Koblenz (Federal Archives – Koblenz)

B 213 (Bundesministerium fur wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit / Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation)

Omaha, Nebraska
Arthur Paul Afghanistan Collection, Criss Library, University of Nebraska-Omaha

Arthur Paul Journals

Ithaca, New York

Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

Robert R. Nathan Papers

PERIODICALS

Agence France-Presse
Aman-i Afghan
Anis
The Atlantic Monthly
Biulleten’ pressy Srednego Vostoka
Bolshevik
Caravan
Da Afganistan Kalany
The Daily Princetonian
DRA Annual
Economic Bulletin for Asia and the Far East
Foreign Policy
Financial Times
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
Hiwad
Holz-Zentralblatt
Iktesad
Islah
Komsomolskaia Pravda
Kommunist
Merman
Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn’
Millat
Mirovaia ekonomika I mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia
Mukomol’no-levatornaia promyshlennost’
Narody Azii I Afriki
The Nassau Weekly
The National Interest
The New York Times
Novoe Vremia
Ogonèk
Pravda
Rabochii klass i sovremennyi mir
Salnameh-yi Kabul
Sobesednik
Sovetskaia Kirgiziiia
Sovetskoe vostokovedenie
Spetsbiulleten’ IV AN SSSR
Time
Torgovlia Rossi s Vostokom
Transactions of the Grotius Society
Vestnik drevnei istorii
Vokrug sveta
Voprosy leninizma
Zashchita rasteni ot vreditelei i boleznei

PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES


Alekseenkov, P. Agrarnyi vopros v afganskom Turkestane (Moscow, 1933).


Brutents, Karen. Nezbyvsheesia (Moscow, 2005)

—, Tridsat’ let na staroi ploshchadi (Moscow, 1998).


Friedan, B. ‘Scary Doings in Mexico City’, in ‘It Changed My Life’: Writings on the Women’s Movement (Cambridge, MA, 1988),

Kireev, G. ‘Kandagarskii Dnevnik’, available online at: http://kireev.info/w-4.html
Khrustaliev, M. ‘Dve vetvi TMO v Rossii’, Mezhdunarodnye protsessy: zhurnal teorii mezhdunarodnykh otноsheniĭ i mirovoĭ politiki, available online at: http://www.intertrends.ru/eleventh/010.htm#17


Miarkowski, M. Na dorogakh Afghaniスタン (Moscow, 1973).

V. Melnikov, Otpusk v sentiabre (1979).

Mushavery (Moscow, 2005).

Nikoforov, V.N. Sovetskie istoriki o problemakh Kitaia (Moscow, 1970).

Samoilenko, V. Kak otkryvaesh’ stranu: Afganistan glazami ochevidstev (Novosibirsk, 1986).


Strugatskii, B. and A. Strugatskii, Piknik na obochine (Moscow, 1973).

Tarkovskii, A. Stalker (1979).

PRINTED SECONDARY SOURCES


Adas, M., Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America’s Civilizing Mission (Cambridge, MA, 2006).


Basov, V.V. ‘’Zona Plemen’’ vostochnogo Afganistana (etnodemograficheskii ocherk’’, in Stranitsy istorii I istoriografii Indii I Afganistana (Moscow: 2000).

—, National’noe I plemennoe v Afganistane. K ponimaniiu nevoennykh istokov afganskogo krizisa, ed. V.V. Kravtsov (Moscow, 2011).


—, Mnogonatsional’noe naselenie Kazakhstana i Kirgizii v epokhu kapitalizma (60-e gody XIX v. – 1917 g.) (Moscow, 1986).


Benvenisti, M. Conflicts and Contradictions (New York, 1986).


—, Von Taschkent nach Kabul (Leipzig, 1961).


Bose, S. His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s Struggle Against Empire (Cambridge, MA, 2011).

Bouman, F. Small, Short, and Unsecured: Informal Rural Finance in India (Delhi, 1989).


—, *Agrarnyi stroi Afganistana: osnovnye etapy razvitiia* (Moscow, 1967).
—, *Razvitie kapitalisticheskikh otnoshenii v zemledelii Afganistana* (Moscow, 1962).


Devji, F. *Muslim Zion: Pakistan As A Political Idea* (Cambridge, MA, 2013).


—, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, NC, 2006).


Gankovskii, I. Imperiia Durrani: ocherki administrativnoi i voennoi sistemy (Moscow, 1958).


——, Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan (New York, 2009).


Gurevich, N.M., Vneshniaia torgovlia Afganistana (Moscow, 1959).


——, Ocherk istorii torgovogo kapitala v Afganistane (Moscow, 1967).

Halfin, I., Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial (Cambridge, MA, 2003).


——, Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

Hough, J.F., The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options


Ponomarev, L.N. ‘Eto vopros tseloï epokhi: demokratiia protiv biurokratii’ (Moscow, 1990).

Reisner, I., Razvitie feodalizma I obrazovanie gosudarstva u afgantsev (Moscow, 1954).


Samari, A., ‘V Samarkande mitinguiut studenty: vystupleni takovo mashtaba ne nabliudalos’ v Uzbekistane uzhe bolee desiai let’, February 21, 2005, available online at: http://iwpr.net/ru/report-news/%D0%B2-%D1%81%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B5-%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3%D1%83%D1%8E%D1%82-%D1%81%D1%82%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8B


Shah, I.A., Trade with Afghanistan (Kabul: 1946).


—, *Naselenie kitaïskoi natsional’nosti v stranakh iugo-vostochnoi Azii* (Moscow, 1959).

—, *Ob osobennostiakh natsional’no-osvoboditel’nykh revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1968).

—, *Strany Vostoka: puti razvitiia* (Moscow, 1975).


*Xian jin di Feizhou you yi di hai yang; Zhou Enlai zong li fang wen Feizhou shi guo tong xun ji* (Beijing, 1964).


**UNPUBLISHED THESIS AND PAPERS**


