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Case Study: Negotiation

Soviet Conciliation with Mujahideen

The Soviet Union's resolution to disengage from the Afghan war and pursue negotiations was a demonstration of both social certainties on the frontline and political adjustments in Moscow. When Mikhail Gorbachev took power in March 1985, the Afghanistan conflict had reached an impasse, and leaders in Moscow had started doubting the possibility of conquering the insurrection through a conventional war (Taylor). Aligning with his "new thinking" foreign policy, Gorbachev settled on concluding with Afghanistan and advised his Afghan colleague to reunite with the opposition in a power-sharing administration.

Even though the withdrawal of troops did not commence until February 1988, Kremlin's demands elicited strong reactions across the Afghan regime, whose existence relied on financial backing and the Soviet military. Consequently, on the 30th of December 1986, the president of Afghanistan, Mohammad Najibullah, declared a national resolution strategy to gather public support for the state and initiate peaceful bargains with Mujahideen (Taylor).

To confirm that his diplomatic recommendation was sincere and not a mere illusive mantra, Najibullah singly presented significant agreements with Mujahideen. This included providing the opposition with 50% of government positions, enforcing economic reforms to value private property, endorsing a new constitution that acknowledged Islam as the religion of the state, offering exoneration to opposition leaders, initiating a multiparty and electoral system,

releasing 16,000 political detainees, and incorporating announcing a six-month unilateral truce (Taylor). Moreover, the administration restrained its misinformation regarding Mujahideen, and national radio started to refer to them as Mujahideen beradaran narazi (dissatisfied brothers) rather than Ashraar (extremists).

To implement the plan, the government established the Extraordinary Supreme Commission for National Reconciliation that managed the activities of 10,000 reconciliations commissions (Taylor). Every local committee was made up of government representatives, outstanding local leaders, and former mutineers. The committee was given the responsibility of forming peace councils to apply conventional conflict resolution strategies to incorporate local armed units.

The administration earlier sought a dual strategy: it communicated with the mediators and the middle tier in the militant group to separate the opposition, and, concurrently, it sustained reinforcing its defense forces to tackle the irreconcilables. Since there was no visible progress, Najibullah later communicated with the senior Mujahideen field commandants that were comprised of Jalaluddin Haqqani of Hizb-e Islami Khalis, Ismail Khan (the most prominent commander in the west), and Ahmad Shah Massoud of the Jamiat-e Islami party.

He proposed to ensure that they will be independent leaders and to eradicate Soviet troops from their regions if they embraced peace. Encouraged by the Soviet's withdrawal of soldiers, the opposition heads overruled the administration's suggestion and promised to persist with armed Jihad till the takeover of the atheistic government, the founding of a sovereign Islamic Afghanistan, and the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops.

Initially, the administration's reconciliation plan had some achievement. According to Soviet documents, in the first seven months, 164,000 opposition associates approved the

proposal. Furthermore, more than 600 factions with a combined power of 53,000 men were having consultations with Kabul (Taylor). It is challenging to ascertain these numbers autonomously, but even if they are correct, the mediators excluded important Mujahideen leaders.

There are many reasons to explain why the resolution failed. To begin with, the pronouncement of the Soviet withdrawal increased the insurgent's conviction in a military triumph and presented them with few motives to embrace peace. The Mujahideen were aware of the deliberate attempt's by the Soviet government to pull-out troops from Afghanistan. The insurgents could not be content with the partial rule, having knowledge that it can attain full power in the future. The Mujahideen were convinced that the Kabul administration would crumble instantly following the troops' withdrawal from their country.

What is more, the opposition doubted Moscow and Kabul. They could not agree to resolve because if they conceded to the resolution process, all control would go to the generals that were assisted and instructed by Russia resulting in the disregarding of the Mujahideen. Moreover, massive foreign financing and a comprehensive support network in Pakistan deterred the Mujahideen from a negotiation.

Secondly, there was no agreement on reconciliation within each of the opposing factions. The conceptual groups in the government assumed that power-sharing with the adversary disputed the party's ideologies and objectives. Even though Najibullah ignored or banished several despots, interparty disagreements continued to destabilize the administration, leading to extensive absconding. Also, there was a split in the Soviet faction, for instance, when Soviet military commanders attempted to reach an agreement with Massoud, the KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti) allied with Najibullah to disrupt the struggle (Taylor).

Again, the Mujahideen were not a reliable unit. Royalists and traditionalists such as the National Islamic Front for Afghanistan (ruled by Sayed Ahmad Gilani), and the Afghanistan National Liberation Front (headed by Sebghatullah Mojaddedi), showed commitment to having talks. Still, the hard-liners, who were the larger part of the Mujahideen (Jamiat-e Islami, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, Hizb-e Islami, headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) rejected compromise (Taylor). When the Soviets started to leave, internal squabbles between the seven insurgent groups deepened.

Additionally, a lack of political will and concern by the international community to ensure peace in Afghanistan resulted in the failure. Moreover, none of the external parties to the conflict were genuine regarding a negotiated resolution. On the 14th of April, for instance, the Soviet Union, the United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan endorsed the Geneva Accords that necessitated that Moscow pulls out its troops within nine months and that Islamabad halts intrusion into Afghan matters (Taylor). Even though Moscow adhered to the consensus, Pakistan infringed upon it by enhancing support for the insurgents to overthrow the Kabul government. Eventually, not only was the resolution strategy unsuccessful in creating peace, but it also destabilized the government and enabled opportunities for its demise. For an uninterrupted withdrawal, the Red Army sought out agreements with opposition leaders who allowed the troops a secure route but continued to resist the administration.

Moscow and Kabul believed that the Mujahideen would become more concerned with resolution after the Soviet troops left. However, the reverse was the case, as the encouraged insurrection and its advocates in Pakistan accelerated violence to annex Kabul. What is more, the government’s support system enabled motivations for local reservists to continued changing loyalties since they were enthused by financial rewards instead of a sincere desire to collaborate

with the administration. In 1992, General Abdorrashid Dostum, the most revered militant commander united with Kabul, became part of the rebellion and deposed the government (Taylor).

Conclusion

Negotiations with the Taliban are known to be full of dishonesty and chicanery. Over the last 20 years, they have utilized negotiation as a strategy to obtain military and political benefits instead of resolving conflicts. Following the departure of the troops, the insurgent group seems to be more assured about triumph and has fewer reasons to negotiate with sincerity. The Taliban's tactic appeared to be patient till the Soviet forces left and then attempt to topple the Kabul administration. Till then, suicide attacks persisted in inhabited regions to destabilize the government and project power. Still, by merely stating vague assurances, the Taliban was evidently trying to inspire Washington to heighten troop withdrawal and reject sustaining their forces in the country. The Afghan government, the United States, the United Nations, and NATO ought to be particularly vigilant regarding reconciliation and suspicious of the Taliban's intentions.

Works Cited

Taylor, Alan. "The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979 - 1989." *The Atlantic*, 4 Aug. 2014, www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/08/the-soviet-war-in-afghanistan-1979-1989/100786/. Accessed 3 July 2017.