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Intelligence Systems Failures in Responding to Threats from Afghanistan

by

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Abstract

The Soviet Union and United States wars in Afghanistan are widely considered disastrous affairs. The involvement of both states in Afghanistan resulted from intelligence systems failures, characterized by issues related to trust that caused a power imbalance between the intelligence community and the decision maker. In this thesis, I examine both the Soviet and American intelligence systems, testing the effectiveness of intelligence production and intelligence consumption. I further analyze the character traits of key members of the intelligence systems, the levels of bureaucracy, and the relationship between the intelligence community and decision makers, emphasizing an analysis of the levels of trust. I conclude that these two case studies represent instances when intelligence systems failed because decision makers placed too much or too little trust in the intelligence community.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When intelligence systems fail to function effectively, disaster may ensue. Although failures of intelligence systems are interesting to explore in and of themselves, it is more important to analyze and determine why they fail in an effort to improve the systems' success rates and consequentially improve state security. Specifically, what elements function effectively or ineffectively, what effect does this have on the overall system, and in general what does this indicate about failures of intelligence? Are different elements responsible for the failure of a system in different situations, and can other elements of the system function as a back-up mechanism? This thesis examines the different components of the intelligence system and analyzes how they function in two case studies of intelligence failure, thereby suggesting systemic weaknesses and possible areas of improvement.

Intelligence systems are very complex: they include both a production and a consumption phase that must work cohesively to provide a positive result; ultimately a decision that satisfies the goals of the state. Each phase includes several actions within a complex environment, which shapes success or failure. This thesis examines the processes and factors influencing the production of intelligence information by the intelligence community, as well as the consumption of intelligence information by decision makers.

The intelligence community, responsible for producing intelligence information, acts as a translator by turning raw information into analyzed intelligence that can provide decision makers with an adequate foundation for decision making. The translation of raw information into final product requires significant analysis that includes understanding

the context in which the information exists and what is required by consumers. Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman suggest in “Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases” that individuals rely on “a limited number of heuristic principles which reduce the complex tasks of assessing probabilities and predicting values to simpler judgemental operations [which are in general] quite useful, but sometimes lead to severe and systematic errors.”¹ These heuristic principles help guide the intelligence community in producing relevant intelligence for decision makers. Although generally the intelligence community is correct in their analysis of information based on these principles, sometimes they are not, which can create unreliable intelligence information and constitute a failure within the production phase.

The production of intelligence is further complicated by the intelligence community’s need to create a product that meets the requirements of consumers. The translated product only exists to guide the formulation and execution of policy and therefore must address policy needs: its function is as a force multiplier, allowing a force, military or otherwise, to operate more optimally. If it does not do so it is irrelevant. The intelligence community must produce intelligence based on the direction provided by decision makers and on other elements of the decision making environment, balancing policy needs with security threats. The importance of analyzed intelligence is in providing decision makers with enough appropriate knowledge about their environment to make better decisions.

¹ Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases.” *Science, New Series* 185 (1974): 1124.

Decision makers control the relationships within the intelligence system. They are responsible for consuming translated intelligence information in deciding policy questions. By doing so, they trigger the feedback loop that guides intelligence production. They are similarly responsible for implementing policy or directing other entities, such as the military, to implement decisions. Decision makers also have strong biases that affect their consumption: Roberta Wohlstetter argues in *Pearl Harbour: Warning and Decision* that decision makers rarely have all of the correct information at a given time and therefore tend to “pay attention to signals that support current expectations of enemy behaviour.”² Wohlstetter’s discussion of American reactions to intelligence regarding the impending attack on Pearl Harbour indicates the influence of psychological factors, including biases and perceptions, on decision makers’ willingness to consider contradictory evidence. Richard K. Betts also concludes that “confronted by differing analyses, a leader mortgaged to his policy tends to resent or dismiss the critical ones, even when they represent the majority view of the intelligence community, and clings to the data that support continued commitment.”³ Decisions are not, therefore, based exclusively on available intelligence information, but on a combination of available information and the intended trajectory of decision makers.

To function effectively, an intelligence system must incorporate a series of feedback loops in which both producers and consumers inform the production process. Failure to engage in direction setting by either side has severe consequences: failure by the intelligence community may result in a lack of warning, and failure by decision

² Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 6

³ Richard K. Betts, “Analysis, War, and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable.” *World Politics* 31 (1978): 64

makers may result in insufficient guidance and therefore the loss of potentially useful information.⁴ Understanding how both decision makers and the intelligence community direct production, and how decision makers consume intelligence information is crucial to understanding how the intelligence system functions. Although both phases must be successful for the system to function, the relationship between the two, and specifically between producers and consumers, is tantamount to success.

In this thesis, I analyze the efficacy of intelligence systems by examining their constituent elements and the functionality of each phase (production and consumption). To determine the causes of failure, I examine the system's elements in two case studies in which the intelligence system clearly failed. The case studies each consider sophisticated superpower states' involvement in Afghanistan: first the Soviet Union's involvement in 1979 prior to their December invasion, and second the United States' lack of involvement in 2001 prior to the attacks of 9/11 and their October invasion. I argue that these case studies examine instances when *intelligence systems fail because an imbalance of trust between decision makers and the intelligence community occurs, resulting in an inappropriate balance of power*. Trust, which includes confidence in the capabilities of the parallel organization, is fundamental in the allocation of power within the system and therefore the determination of action. In the Soviet case study, too much trust is placed in the intelligence community by decision makers, giving the intelligence community excessive control over decision making, while in the American case study the opposite is

⁴ Amanda J. Gookins, "The Role of Intelligence in Policy Making." *SAIS Review* 28 (2008): 67

true such that the intelligence community does not have enough influence over decision making. In both cases, the system fails.

This thesis is divided into three sections: chapter two outlines the literature that has been written on intelligence and intelligence systems, and the methodology used in this thesis. I next examine the aforementioned case studies by investigating the Soviet intelligence system's experience in Afghanistan in chapter three and the American intelligence system's experience in chapter four. Finally, chapter five concludes the thesis by comparing the two case studies and outlining the relationship between an imbalance of trust within the intelligence system and the intelligence system's failure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology

Intelligence is not a force. Its only function is to multiply the effect of a military force or improve the capacity of a political decision making body. It therefore must be analyzed in the context of the force or body it affects, traditionally the military in times of war. The increasingly complex nature of warfare since the nineteenth century, when war “could no longer be improvised,” has resulted in a parallel increase in the importance of intelligence in preparing for war.⁵ This trend has since intensified. Although Michael I. Handel, who suggested that “the increased complexity of warfare necessitated detailed planning *before* the outbreak of war” was referencing the need for military commanders to have and utilize intelligence, the same principle must be applied to the increasingly complex decision making environment surrounding decisions to engage in war.⁶

This chapter first examines the relevant intelligence literature, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the corpus, and the key concepts necessary for this thesis. The second half of the chapter introduces the case study methodology and outlines the variables I consider in this thesis.

2.1 Intelligence in the Literature

Despite its increasing importance, the academic literature on intelligence is small. Although a surge in academic writing on the topic occurred in the late twentieth century, this mainly focussed on military intelligence. Literature discussing the interplay between intelligence and policy affecting military action is a rapidly growing product of the twenty-first century. As such, there exist only three categories of intelligence literature,

⁵ Michael I. Handel, “Leaders and Intelligence.” *Intelligence and National Security* 3 (1988): 3.

⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

each linked to a particular time period. Table 2.1 presents these categories, their temporal foci, and the period in which they were emphasized in scholarship:

Table 2.1 Intelligence Literature

Category of Intelligence Literature	Temporal Focus	Period of Emphasis in Scholarship
Military Intelligence (Tactical & Operational)	~1914-1945 (predominantly)	Late twentieth century
The Intelligence Community	~1945-2005	~2000-2010
Intelligence System (Intelligence and Policy)	2000-present	~2000-present

Neither the temporal focus nor the period of emphasis are static. Often the categories bleed into other time frames. Table 2.1 indicates general temporal themes for each category, which tend to be the result of technological and organizational advances in the case of temporal focus, and the result of world events in the case of period of emphasis. The impetus for each category develops out of perceived failures in each period of the temporal focus and the desire to address these failures. The result is a broad spectrum of intelligence literature that addresses perceived failures within particular categories of intelligence: the military intelligence system, the intelligence community, and finally the intelligence system. This section outlines the scope and purpose of literature within each category of intelligence.

Military intelligence, occurring predominantly at the tactical and operational levels, was the first area of interest for academics during the late twentieth century. Tactical and operational intelligence has existed in warfare since at least Sun Tzu, but the importance of intelligence in determining the outcome of war was not widely realized until the Second World War when technological revolutions in the form of Turing

machines peaked the interest of academics, many of whom were involved in the development of revolutionizing intelligence techniques in the Second World War. Prior to 1945, intelligence was predominantly carried out by the military with members of the diplomatic corps participating in peacetime. The military's intelligence units during this period relied on observation techniques to determine the enemy's position: initially physical sightings and later using technology advances in the form of radio. Intelligence in this period was used for the sole purpose of making war occur more efficiently.

Intelligence studies on this period are widely varied, predominantly focused on the challenges of information collection and communication to commanders. As the intelligence process during this period was focussed on war, so too is the intelligence literature. Academic writing on pre-Second World War intelligence occurs generally within the context of military history, determining why particular campaigns succeeded or failed. Some of this writing also includes pre-war intelligence, examining the role of diplomats in avoiding or creating the conditions for war, but viewing the diplomats as independent arms of the state, rather than as decision makers of the state. The academic literature on this period continues to grow as more documentation becomes available, but it is restricted to the military intelligence apparatus with little linkage back to the state.

The second category of literature begins to appear following the Second World War and the creation of intelligence organizations outside of the military. Until roughly this period, intelligence was conducted primarily by the military during wartime, and by diplomats during peacetime. Beginning during the Second World War, states began to develop intelligence communities – the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, predecessor to the CIA) in the United States, Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in

Great Britain, and others around the world. The purpose of these intelligence communities was to incorporate new technologies and civilian developments, as well as create a more structured apparatus between the state and the military. The literature in this category examines the development of intelligence organizations, theories of intelligence operation, and interactions between the intelligence communities and governments or militaries. Works by Loch K. Johnston, Allan Dulles, and other practitioners are key elements of this subsection of intelligence literature, allowing for intersections between practitioners and academe. The result is a more thorough examination of the development, successes, and failures of intelligence communities.

This subsection of literature is not only descriptive but also prescriptive, suggesting possible improvements for the intelligence community's practice of intelligence and how it cooperates with other actors. The literature in this category stems primarily from failures by the intelligence communities to predict events, to respond effectively to information, and to provide decision makers with timely and accurate intelligence. The literature tends not to focus on the decision makers or flaws within the consumption phase of the intelligence system; it emphasizes the production phase with some acknowledgement of the full intelligence process at a strategic level.

The third category of literature incorporates both elements of the intelligence system and analyses contemporary intelligence issues. This most recent section of literature tends to focus on how intelligence influences security decisions at a policy level. It developed both out of a recognition that intelligence communities are not decision makers and that the academe did not address these issues. In response to a number of intelligence system crises in the early 2000s, several anthologies appeared

including *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence* and the *PSI Handbook of Global Security and Intelligence*. These anthologies recognized that the role of intelligence had changed, resulting in an “important, and relatively new, discipline that focuses on the hidden side of government: those secret agencies that provide *security-related information to policymakers* and carry out other clandestine operations on their behalf” (emphasis mine).⁷ The interactions between an intelligence community and decision makers were becoming more pronounced and having a greater effect on both foreign and domestic policy. The academic literature needed to address these changes.

Within this subsection the literature focuses on policy level decisions and occurrences but none at the stage of conflict. Anthologies in this grouping focus on the “current strategic environments” and states’ “perceptions of threats,” analyzing how intelligence is used to develop these perceptions.⁸ The literature is less focused on how intelligence influences decisions about engaging in conflict and more interested in how intelligence shapes the policy environment.

The academic literature on intelligence is quite small and varied across time periods, technological and organizational developments, and contemporary environments. The emphasis within the literature correlates directly to the events related to intelligence occurring at the time of writing: in the post-World Wars period the writing focused on military developments. As intelligence organizations grew, the literature began to analyze these developments. Finally, when intelligence and policy began to interact more clearly

⁷ Lock K. Johnson, “National Security Intelligence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence*, ed. Loch K. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 3

⁸ Peter Gill, introduction to *PSI Handbook of Global Security and Intelligence*, vol. 3, ed. Stuart Farson, Peter Gill, Mark Phythian, and Shlomo Shpiro (Westport, CT: Praeger International, 2008), 1-2

the literature began to address these questions. It is only now that the literature is beginning to consider intelligence in light of the organizations it directly affects; it is within this subsection of literature that this thesis exists.

2.2 Key Concepts from the Literature

The intelligence literature includes several key assumptions about how intelligence ought to function. These assumptions, often developed by former practitioners, provide a foundation for any analysis of intelligence. Below, I outline the key assumptions from the literature that influence the methodology used in this thesis.

Perhaps one of the most commonly cited works in the intelligence literature is Judith Meister Johnston and Rob Johnston's "Testing the Intelligence Cycle through Systems Modeling and Simulation" which outlines the intelligence cycle and some of the inherent issues within that model. To understand the intelligence process it is necessary to understand the intelligence cycle. The cycle represents the interactions between producers and consumers of intelligence and consists of five phases, each of which relies on the product of the previous phase.⁹ The simplified cycle begins with planning and direction, which is determined by the decision making body, often based on political preferences.

⁹ Although much of Johnston and Johnston's chapter outlines the problems with and some solutions for the Intelligence Cycle, this section will focus on examining the model as such. Judith Meister Johnston and Rob Johnston, "Testing the Intelligence Cycle through Systems Modeling and Simulation," in *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community: An Ethnographic Study*, ed. Rob Johnston (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2005), 45-60

Gregory F. Treverton and Charles Wolf, in an analysis of the “Real Intelligence Cycle,” suggest that planning and direction ought to occur in consultation with the intelligence community, explaining that

Policy officials seldom have the time or patience to articulate their information requirements precisely. Nor do most of them know enough to task intelligence operators effectively should they find the time to try. . . The intelligence cycle is more likely to be impelled by what intelligence can collect and what it can infer about the needs of policy. The cycle is driven by intelligence “pushing,” not policy “pulling.”¹⁰

As a result, the cycle must be malleable enough to incorporate feedback from the intelligence community. Re-evaluation of the planning and direction phase ought to occur consistently; communication between phases of the cycle is fundamental to its success.

The second portion of the cycle includes the production elements: collection, processing, and analysis. These elements are conducted by the producers, the intelligence community, to create reports for decision makers. In theory, this portion occurs internally to the intelligence community. In reality, it needs to include a series of feedback loops back to decision makers to update the direction, modify targets, and determine whether the pace of intelligence production is sufficient.

The final section of the cycle is dissemination which concerns consumers of intelligence. Predominantly decision makers, consumers also include a second tier: the implementers of actions based on policy, such as the military, diplomats, and others. Given that these groups often interact directly with the targets of intelligence, feedback loops must also exist between the dissemination phase, the planning phase, and the production phase.

¹⁰ Gregory F. Treverton and Charles Wolf, *RAND Studies in Policy Analysis: Reshaping National Intelligence for an Age of Information* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 105-106

The intelligence cycle is complex. In theory, it has the capacity to ensure that each group knows and understands relevant information and can adjust their actions accordingly. In practice, the cycle involves significant communication of sensitive information, often simultaneously. In time-sensitive situations this can easily break down. In this thesis, only the decision makers as consumers will be discussed and the communications between producers and decision makers will be analyzed. An analysis of implementers is one area of further research that is outside the scope of this project.

Within the intelligence community, the analysis phase is particularly important as it determines the importance of raw information and contextualizes it into a consumable product. This phase is the focus of Richards J. Heuer Jr's *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, which explains some of the limitations to analysis and the importance of individual perception in determining the value of information.¹¹ Raw information has limited utility to decision makers, and is often too voluminous for decision makers to digest themselves. As such, analysts must both determine what is and is not necessary information, on the basis of planning and direction, and then determine how the useful information fits into the context of the intelligence project. Heuer Jr suggests that stereotypes and other moderated biases help manage the analysis of information: as it is not possible to read and conduct an analysis on all information entering a system, the analysis must be targeted to address the most pressing issues in the most efficient way. Analysis is difficult and is often to blame for mistakes in the intelligence cycle. Although analysis occurs at a lower operational level than this thesis discusses, the effectiveness of

¹¹ Richards J. Heuer Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2009)

its resulting product will be examined in the discussion of the production phase in each case study.

Finally, the relationship between the decision maker(s) and the intelligence community is fundamental to any analysis of an intelligence system. As Mark M. Lowenthal states, “providing intelligence analysis to policymakers is the essential function of the overall intelligence process” because “intelligence serves policymakers [and has] no meaningful function beyond this relationship, no independent existence. Thus, it is not a relationship of equals.”¹² The relationship between the intelligence community and decision makers is beset by an inequity that forces the intelligence community to be reliant upon decision makers but excuses decision makers from relying upon, or even considering, the work of the intelligence community. The result of this systemic inequity is a tendency by the intelligence community to politicize intelligence information, a practice that often results in a decline in trust between the two organizations.¹³ This hierarchy is key in understanding the relationship between producers and consumers: it is the balance of inequity that determines success or failure in an intelligence system.

The relationship is further complicated by a distinct difference in policymaking culture and intelligence community culture. Cultural differences and personality conflicts between the two communities are triggers for misunderstanding and relationship tension that causes a decline in trust, according to John McLaughlin.¹⁴ A major element of this

¹² Mark. M. Lowenthal, “The Policymaker-Intelligence Relationship” in *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence*, ed. Loch K. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 437

¹³ *Ibid*, 438-439

¹⁴ John McLaughlin, “Serving the National Policymaker,” in *Analyzing Intelligence: Origins, Obstacles, and Innovations*, ed. Roger Z. George and James B. Bruce (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP, 2008), 72

culture clash is the eternal optimism of policymakers and the strength of belief in the validity of the policy they are pursuing, often regardless of what intelligence suggests.¹⁵ The result is a misuse or lack of use of intelligence information that causes the effectiveness and efficiency of the system to become immaterial.

The key concepts in the literature identify important elements of the intelligence system that must be considered in analyzing where and why failures occur. The intelligence cycle, though not specifically tested in this thesis, indicates how intelligence information needs to be communicated, while Heuer Jr., Lowenthal, and McLaughlin articulate potential areas for failure within the system. These concepts help develop the metrics used in evaluating intelligence systems failures.

2.3 Methodology

Evaluating an intelligence system's performance requires understanding its key elements and inputs, and how these interact with each other. The complexity of intelligence systems necessitates outlining the scope of analysis for each phase, the factors considered within each phase, and the extraneous variables that influence the system's functionality. This section outlines the methodology used in testing how and why intelligence systems fail.

In addressing the questions of how and why intelligence systems fail, I test the phases of the intelligence system in two case studies. Doing so allows for an analysis of common factors and provides possible inflection points. In both case studies, the 1979 lead up to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the 2001 lead up to the American

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 72

invasion, the intelligence system failed in different ways, resulting in decision makers responding in the same way. This method provides an opportunity to examine constant, extraneous, and test variables. The constant variables are Afghanistan, as the source of raw intelligence and the invasion destination, and the final decision outputs of the systems – to invade and overthrow the governing regime. Extraneous variables include the governing apparatus of the state making the decision, the contemporary and historical context of intelligence activities surrounding Afghanistan during the lead up to the invasion, and the catalyst for decision. These variables are extraneous in that they differ in each case study but provide important information regarding the context of decision-making that influences the functionality of the system. Although in most cases the inclusion of extraneous variables problematizes the conclusions, the requirement of intelligence systems to respond to these variables means they must be addressed.

Finally, test variables are the measurable components of each phase of the intelligence system. Given the relative absence of literature on intelligence systems, these metrics are not readily available and must be adapted from metrics used to measure military intelligence operations. Michael Handel, in *Intelligence and Military Operations*, outlines a variety of metrics for analysis of military operations' use of intelligence.¹⁶ However, as the military exists as a single defined organization of command and control, an intelligence system comprises multiple organizations functioning with different rules, cultures, and priorities. As such, these metrics are not in themselves sufficient for use in this thesis. For example, Handel specifically discusses the “contribution – actual or

¹⁶ Michael I. Handel, “Intelligence and Military Operations,” in *Intelligence and Military Operations*, ed. Michael I. Handel (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1990), 1-32

potential – of intelligence to the military leader’s decisions in battle.”¹⁷ As neither intelligence system is engaged in battle during the period I analyze, and I do not discuss the role of the military as implementers of decision making, this metric is not effective. However, the “contribution – actual or potential – of intelligence” to decision makers’ policy actions is fundamental in understanding the effectiveness of the production phase and the relationship between production and consumption entities. In order to appropriately scale Handel’s most prominent metrics, I have outlined seven metrics and determined whether they belong to the production or consumption phase of the intelligence system, as outlined in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Tactical/Operational Intelligence Metrics

Intelligence Production			Intelligence Consumption			
Reliability of Intelligence ¹⁸	Availability of Intelligence ¹⁹	Potential Value and Limits of Intelligence	Character of commander (risk taking, flexibility, speed of reaction)	Capacity for adaptation to rapid changes	Flexibility and control over forces	Belief of commander in the credibility of intelligence ²⁰

Scaling Handel’s metrics to the intelligence system requires using the aforementioned intelligence literature and Carl von Clausewitz’s theories from *On War*. Von Clausewitz’s articulation of the vertical alignment between policy and war suggests a method for scaling Handel’s metrics: “war [should] always [be thought of] as an *instrument of policy*” rather than acted upon as something “alien to its nature.”²¹ Thus,

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 3

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 10

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 12

²⁰ *Ibid*, 50-51

²¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1984), 88

each element referencing the military can be used to reference the policy/decision making stratum. This is particularly apt for the production phase in which the metrics remain the same but reference individuals at a higher stratum. Furthermore, these metrics can also be aligned with this stratum in the consumption phase. The intelligence literature suggests that metrics at a policy/decision making stratum in the consumption phase must include elements of communication, cultural differences and relationships between the intelligence community and decision makers. Table 2.3 presents the scaled version of Handel's metrics:

Table 2.3: Intelligence System (Strategic Intelligence) Metrics

Intelligence Production			Intelligence Consumption		
Reliability of Intelligence	Availability of Intelligence	Potential Value and Limits of Intelligence	Character of Decision Maker(s) and Intelligence Community Director	Level of Bureaucracy	Relationship between Decision Maker(s) and Intelligence Community

These metrics incorporate elements of operational intelligence but emphasize the importance of relationships and the balance that must exist between producing and consuming organizations. Below I outline each strategic intelligence metric indicating what it is as well as how it will subsequently be used to evaluate the intelligence system in each case study:

2.3.1 Reliability of Intelligence

The reliability of intelligence is of particular importance as it often determines the effectiveness of a course of action based on intelligence. Unreliable intelligence also causes organizations and individuals to lose trust. While raw intelligence information is

often unreliable and reports are often contradictory, the intelligence analyst must be able to, on the balance of probabilities and based on context, appropriately produce reliable intelligence for decision makers. In evaluating the reliability of intelligence I evaluate the accuracy of intelligence reports presented to decision makers based on what we now know to be true.

2.3.2 Availability of Intelligence

The availability of intelligence can be a key consideration in determining a course of action. Although availability does not directly affect the relationship between producers and consumers, consistent unavailability of desired intelligence may negatively affect the relationship. Furthermore, unavailability of intelligence to function as a warning mechanism can erode trust. As such, I focus on evaluating whether or not a reasonable amount of intelligence information is available to producers and whether this is translated into sufficiently available intelligence reports for consumers. I rely upon open-source documentation and historical hindsight in assessing the availability of intelligence.

2.3.3 Potential Value and Limits of Intelligence

The potential value of intelligence is derived from its utility in addressing the concerns of decision makers: it can only be as valuable as it is present, reliable, and relevant. The limits are also measured by utility: intelligence is limited if it cannot aid decision makers in their current course of action or if it suggests undesirable decisions. This metric fundamentally evaluates the levels of trust and cooperation between producers and consumers. Producers must ensure that the intelligence they provide is

relevant to decision makers and have built a rapport in order to gain trust. Conversely, decision makers must be willing to accept that the intelligence is necessary and complete, and to re-evaluate their planning and direction on the basis of the intelligence product. In evaluating this metric, I analyze the applicability of produced intelligence to decision makers and the willingness of decision makers to integrate intelligence into their decision making process.

2.3.4 Character of Decision Maker(s) and Intelligence Community Director

The character of individuals, particularly the leaders of the decision making branch of government and of the intelligence community, is critical: strong characters may over represent particular positions or ideas, while weaker characters are often lost in the minutia and rapidity of the process. As both the decision maker(s) and intelligence community director are positions of leadership, the individuals occupying these positions should display individual rationality, good judgement, and confidence. The supporting cast may have stronger or weaker personalities that create an imbalance within the system. In evaluating the characters of both decision making and intelligence community leaders, I assess the character strength of each in relation to the character strength of their counterparts. I also assess the influence of those in support positions.

2.3.5 Level of Bureaucracy

One of the greatest challenges for any organization with decision making capabilities is the level of bureaucracy. While a certain level of bureaucracy is important in ensuring effective checks and balances, and the completion of multiple simultaneous

tasks, over bureaucratization unnecessarily limits the organization's capabilities.²² In an intelligence system, ineffective and burdensome bureaucracy introduces stovepiping of intelligence information that removes the context, limits effective communication between departments, and reduces the overall utility. In analyzing the bureaucracy, I consider the complexity of the intelligence community and the quality and frequency of interaction between intelligence community director and decision maker(s).

2.3.6 Relationship between Decision Maker and Intelligence Community

The relationship between decision makers and the intelligence community is the critical nexus between the production and consumption phases of the intelligence system. Although many of the metrics reference elements of the relationship, it must be examined independently to determine the willingness of producer and consumer to listen and engage with each other. Furthermore, it is within the analysis of the relationship that the balance in hierarchy can be determined: while the decision maker must have greater authority over the intelligence system than the intelligence community, a shift too far in either direction becomes problematic.

In the evaluation of the relationships between organizations, other metrics are referenced: the relationship fundamentally affects how intelligence is perceived and received, how direction is received and implemented, and ultimately how organizations interact within the system. Within this metric I analyze the frequency and results of interactions between the organizations. I also measure the balance of trust. Trust, considered a feature of relationship quality, functions as a “determinant of

²² James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (Washington: Basic Books, 1989)

communications between parties,” and can only exist in a relationship between two organizations if both “belief and behavioural intention” are present.²³ Both organizations must believe the other to be trustworthy and be willing to rely on the other. In evaluating trust, I examine the actions of both organizations relative to the suggestions and actions of the other.

2.4 Conclusion

The literature on intelligence is growing rapidly. However, it does not address why intelligence systems fail or the factors involved in how they fail. As a result, metrics for evaluating failures at this level must be adapted from military operations and include intelligence communities and decision making organizations. These metrics, outlined in Section 2.3, reflect important elements of analysis for both phases of the intelligence system and provide a foundation for determining how and why intelligence systems fail.

By using two case studies to test the aforementioned variables, I compare and contrast different intelligence systems tasked with similar objectives, which ultimately made the same decision. In both case studies, the decision to invade Afghanistan resulted in disastrous consequences. The comparative case study approach allows me to test the variables and determine which aspects of each system functioned ineffectively. From this analysis, I conclude that trust between organizations in the intelligence system was lacking and caused otherwise sufficient systems to become ineffective in their primary role: providing security to the state.

²³ Christine Moorman, Gerald Zaltman, and Rohit Deshpande, “Relationships between Providers and Users of Market Research: The Dynamics of Trust within and between Organizations.” *American Marketing Association* 29 (1992): 315 (314-328)

In successive chapters, I outline the context for each case study, including providing a brief outline of the Afghan context, and explore the extraneous variables before analysing the test variables. My analysis of the test variables includes a suggestion of the intelligence system's level of effectiveness and the reasons for its level of effectiveness.

Chapter 3: The Soviet Intelligence System

The Soviet intelligence system functioned throughout the Cold War to aid in perpetuating Soviet-style Communist ideology. In its final years, the system suffered from weak decision making leadership and a strong intelligence director. The relationship between decision makers and intelligence community was complicated by an excess of trust in the intelligence community that inverted the hierarchy and caused the system to fail.

In this chapter, I evaluate the Soviet intelligence system's overall effectiveness in responding to the threats emanating from Afghanistan in 1979. I begin by outlining the extraneous variables of the Soviet case study: the Soviet system of government, the historical and geopolitical context of 1979 Afghanistan, including previous Soviet involvement, and finally the catalyst for decision. By examining these variables, I provide a foundation for the analysis of the six test variables and the conclusion that the system failed before the decision to invade was made as the result of an inverted decision making hierarchy. The status of the intelligence system in December 1979 prevented the Soviet Union from properly preparing for the invasion and ultimate war.

3.1 Extraneous Variables

3.1.1 Soviet Governance

The 1970s Soviet system of government developed out of a reaction to the ineffectiveness of Stalinism. By the early 1960s, the Leninist/Stalinist concept of a single ruler for party and country was no longer considered appropriate. Nikita Khrushchev,

who sought to rule in the same manner, thus frustrated the Politburo.²⁴ Khrushchev's centralization of power and nepotism encouraged senior Party members to seek a collective leadership. In 1964, the Central Committee plenum received Khrushchev's forced resignation and elected Leonid Brezhnev to the position of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.²⁵ In consolidating his power, Brezhnev introduced formal collective leadership, dividing the individual powers of the First Secretary among the General Secretary, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Premier, taking the third rank, General Secretary, for himself. Despite appearing to promote a collectivity of leadership, Brezhnev slowly began to re-centralize the powers of state into his own portfolio, becoming "first among equals."²⁶

By 1973, Brezhnev had become the unchallenged leader of the Soviet Union, and facilitated the election of key security individuals into the Politburo as full members, including the Foreign Minister, Defense Minister, and KGB chief, for the first time since Stalin's death.²⁷ This further consolidated his power by incorporating like-minded individuals into the key decision making apparatus, though it continued to appear as though he was expanding the collectivity of leadership. However, Brezhnev's declining health in the late 1970s resulted in an increased reliance on collective leadership and the development of the post First Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to manage governmental affairs.²⁸ By 1979, Brezhnev's role in the government was

²⁴ Edwin Bacon, "Reconsidering Brezhnev," in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, ed. Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 13

²⁵ *Ibid*, 13

²⁶ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Soviet Leaders and Intelligence: Assessing the American Adversary During the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown UP, 2015), 37.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 50

²⁸ Bacon, 15

highly influential but reliant upon a small committee of decision makers, including KGB chairman, Yuri Andropov. The supreme decision making body of the Soviet Union, the Politburo, was thus controlled by the intelligence community.

3.1.2 Geopolitical Context

The overarching importance of controlling spheres of influence during the Cold War influenced the Soviet-Afghan relationship before the 1979 invasion. Afghanistan's position at the southern border of the Soviet Union made it a logical Cold War battleground for both the Soviets and the Americans. The Afghan government effectively functioned as an authoritarian constitutional monarchy in which King Zahir Shah reigned with the assistance of Prime Minister Daoud Khan and other appointed officials who conducted the business of government. During the 1950s and 1960s, Afghanistan sought significant social and economic reform with limited success.²⁹ Daoud Khan, with the support of the Soviet Union, also sought to resolve the issue of Pashtunistan: an area occupied by ethnic Pashtuns along the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pashtunistan represented a major territorial contest between the two countries that undermined diplomatic relations and left the border unsecure.³⁰

During the 1950s and 1960s, Afghanistan became increasingly pro-Soviet as the Soviet Union slowly began providing financial loans and military armaments while the KGB developed a strong presence in Kabul.³¹ Daoud Khan accepted this aid, entrenching

²⁹ M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 7-8

³⁰ *Ibid*, 9

³¹ *Ibid*, 39-40

the Politburo in Afghan politics.³² This shift toward the Soviet Union increasingly concerned American officials, who undertook policies to “minimize [Afghanistan’s] reliance on the Communist bloc for military training and equipment” in its dispute with Pakistan over Pashtunistan.³³ Thus, Afghanistan became an important part of the Cold War. The Soviets were content with the status quo under Daoud Khan as it satisfied their strategic regional objectives. Daoud Khan’s fall from power in 1963, a result of his unpopular insistence on the development of a Pashtunistan, fundamentally altered Afghan politics: the implementation of a stronger constitutional monarchy with centralized regal power by Emir Zahir Shah, providing him the mandate to rule and reign, shifted Afghanistan rapidly toward the American sphere of influence.³⁴

Zahir Shah’s renewed constitutional monarchy developed in concurrence with Brezhnev’s rise to power. During the Brezhnev era, the Soviet Union’s defence policy suggested that “war must be avoided, peaceful coexistence must prevail, and there should be détente between the capitalist and socialist countries.”³⁵ This policy required a sustained increase in military spending that would allow the Soviet Union to be seen as an “equal superpower” and thus improve its political influence, capacity for détente, and success in regional struggles.³⁶ The potential loss of Afghanistan to the American sphere of influence was contrary to the aims of détente and prompted an aggressive Soviet response.

³² Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 93-95

³³ *Ibid*, 94

³⁴ *Ibid*, 96-97

³⁵ Garthoff, 37

³⁶ *Ibid*, 38

Meanwhile, Communism was quietly developing in Afghanistan with covert Soviet assistance.³⁷ To combat the democratization of Afghanistan and ignite a return to the Soviet sphere of influence, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) formed in 1965.³⁸ According to its charter, the PDPA's "ideology is the practical experience of Marxism-Leninism, is founded on the voluntary union of the progressive and informed people of Afghanistan: the workers, peasants, artisans, and intellectuals."³⁹ The PDPA aimed to increase "ideological awareness and learning the political theories of Marxist-Leninists," and "propagate[e] the thoughts of scientific socialists."⁴⁰

Unofficially, the PDPA's mandate throughout the 1960s was to ensure that Zahir Shah's government – an apparent liberal "pseudo-democracy" experiment – failed.⁴¹ Although the PDPA split into two factions (Parcham and Khalq) in 1967, they were always united in contempt for the monarchy and desire to overthrow Zahir Shah. They were joined in this desire by many political elites who were frustrated with his leadership and unwillingness to devolve powers. The PDPA became the perfect instrument for overthrowing the constitutional monarchy system, which it accomplished in the 1973 coup that returned Daoud Khan to government.⁴²

Following the PDPA's success in eliminating the constitutional monarchy, essentially rejecting American influence and ideology, the Soviets hoped to gain

³⁷ Kakar, 12

³⁸ The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, trans. and ed. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress (Lawrence, Kansas: UP of Kansas, 2002), 8

³⁹ *Constitution of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan* (American Embassy in Kabul, 3 July 1973),

<http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/nsa/documents/AF/00297/all.pdf>

⁴⁰ "Constitution of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan"

⁴¹ Tomsen, 105

⁴² Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination, 1964-91*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire, CT: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd, 1992), 65

additional influence in Afghanistan that could spread to the region. Soviet involvement in “national liberation movements and civil wars” was not limited to Afghanistan; it formed part of Brezhnev’s policy to improve Soviet global influence.⁴³ By orchestrating a coup to bring Daoud Khan, the “one member of the ruling elite with a pro-Soviet orientation,” to the newly-created role of President, the Soviets had every reason to believe their influence in Afghanistan had returned.⁴⁴ However, Daoud Khan himself stymied any influence the Soviets could have gained. Not a member of the PDPA, and therefore not bound by PDPA objectives, and perhaps also aware of previous instances in which the Soviets abandoned their allies, Daoud Khan began to concentrate power in his own hands,⁴⁵ remove PDPA members from government positions, and undertake his own policies that contradicted Soviet goals.⁴⁶

Daoud Khan’s presidency was contentious: his land reform policies, and neglect of “the positive aspects of ethnolinguistic or tribal differences within Afghan society” in the 1977 Constitution created division amongst his own supporters and dissent throughout Afghanistan.⁴⁷ For the Soviets, his presidency was disastrous: not only did Daoud Khan refuse to cooperate with Soviet initiatives, he was very clear during his April 1977 state visit to Moscow that “we will never allow you to dictate to us how to run our country and whom to employ in Afghanistan.”⁴⁸ Intent on increasing its global influence, it became impossible for the Soviets to “sit back and contemplate losing

⁴³ Garthoff, 57

⁴⁴ Tomsen, 105-106

⁴⁵ Hyman, 63

⁴⁶ Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby. *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1998), 119

⁴⁷ Hyman, 70

⁴⁸ Kakar, 14

Afghanistan to the new foreign policy of the over-confident,” and anti-Soviet Daoud Khan.⁴⁹

Daoud Khan’s non-socialist policies threatened the Soviet presence that had been built up over twenty-five years and the feasibility of expanding Soviet-style Communism in Afghanistan.⁵⁰ Concerned that Afghanistan might become a symbol of Soviet failure, the leadership nurtured Parcham and Khalq negotiations throughout early 1977, hoping a reunited PDPA would have the same revolutionary effect on the Afghan government as it had in 1973.⁵¹ As Babrak Karmal would explain in 1980, “Russia wanted that there should be a revolution here.”⁵² In July 1977, the two factions of the PDPA, with Soviet encouragement, once again merged, re-instilling Soviet confidence in Afghanistan.⁵³

In April 1978, the PDPA led the Saur Revolution, which removed Daoud Khan from the presidency and brought the PDPA to power. The factionalism that previously plagued the party re-emerged nearly immediately, causing instability within the government. This lack of unity, in addition to unpopular policies that contradicted Afghan culture and religion, formed a political battleground that increasingly worried the Soviet leadership.⁵⁴ Communism had finally risen to power in Afghanistan but its hold on government was tenuous. With a 120-mile long border along the Soviet Union’s predominantly Muslim Socialist Republics and a fragile government that could either

⁴⁹ Panagiotis Dimitrikas, *The Secret War in Afghanistan: The Soviet Union, China and Anglo-American Intelligence in the Afghan War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 9

⁵⁰ Magnus and Naby, 121

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² *Ibid*

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ Land reform and gender equality, cornerstones of Socialism, were the most egregious changes as they directly contradicted traditional Afghan culture and Islamic religion.

Tomsen, 130-135

support or reject Soviet-style Communism, Afghanistan became a significant threat to Soviet regional hegemony when it became apparent that Moscow could not control the government in Kabul.

3.1.3 Catalyst for Decision

The 1970s fractured the Soviet Union's perceived sphere of influence. The Sino-Soviet split and strengthening China-United States relations, developing Islamic radicalism in Pakistan and Iran, and expanded nuclear missile deployment in Europe all contributed to Soviet security and hegemony concerns. As the southern border became increasingly chaotic, the Soviets were compelled to respond.⁵⁵ Political intervention and increasing military armament to appease the unstable PDPA government of Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin from 1978 had already proved ineffective by fall 1979. The intelligence system was in large part responsible for this problem having failed to sufficiently understand the country and develop an appropriate course of action. When Amin assassinated Taraki in October 1979, the catalyst for military action, the Soviet intelligence system was already in disarray. The decision for a military engagement, although made by and in consultation with members of the intelligence system, was not the product of a functional system.

The extraneous factors within the Soviet decision to invade, suggest a complex environment for both intelligence production and consumption. While it is evident that the situation in Afghanistan was uncomfortable for the Soviets, the context does not make clear the necessity for an invasion and removal of Amin's government. Although the

⁵⁵ Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 3

Soviets needed to react, a functional intelligence system may have been able to provide more nuanced and appropriate options. It is within this context that I evaluate Soviet intelligence production and consumption leading up to the December 1979 invasion.

3.2 Soviet Intelligence System in Afghanistan

Soviet interest in Afghanistan throughout the Cold War stemmed from a grand strategy of political hegemony over the Eastern Hemisphere. Intelligence was an important element in measuring the success of that strategy and determining whether additional action was required. Intelligence production, which necessarily focussed on diplomatic and open relationships, was a crucial component in the Soviet understanding of their influence in Afghanistan. Intelligence consumption by senior Politburo leaders was an integral element in the decision making process. Combined, an analysis of both production and consumption phases indicate the intelligence system's weaknesses during 1979 and how these weaknesses caused the system to fail in advance of the October assassination.

In this section, I examine both production and consumption metrics together over three key periods of 1979: summer, fall, and December. The intelligence system functions with different levels of success during each period, stemming primarily from the decline in Brezhnev's capabilities as leader and the subsequent inversion of system hierarchy. This inversion of power, wherein KGB chairman Andropov controlled the decision making process, suggests that too much trust was placed in the intelligence community. In each period, I examine the six test variables, indicating their effectiveness within the overall system.

3.2.1 Summer 1979

Intelligence Production

Intelligence production during summer 1979 appears strong: Andropov's reforms, focusing on improving standards of analysis to ensure that the KGB could "inform the political leadership" of potential foreign threats, were clearly effective.⁵⁶ The Soviet leadership was communicating regularly and effectively with their PDPA counterparts and generally understood events in Kabul. The 28 June 1979 Draft Instructions to the Soviet Ambassador in Kabul signify the success of Soviet intelligence production: the instructions are clear and detailed, providing evidence that information was communicated clearly and effectively to Soviet leadership.⁵⁷ Statements such as "we share your concern that the domestic situation in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan continues to remain complex and tense" indicate that significant and accurate open-source intelligence information was available regarding PDPA stability.⁵⁸ Covert intelligence was not yet necessary given the willingness of the PDPA Politburo to communicate openly with the CPSU Politburo about revolutionary matters.⁵⁹

Diplomatic intelligence regarding actions of the PDPA and the instability of the government was readily available to the CPSU Politburo during the summer and was communicated effectively by the intelligence community. Amin's public July pronouncement that "Taraki [was] responsible for the government's failures," was

⁵⁶ Garthoff, 40

⁵⁷ "Draft instructions to the Soviet Ambassador in Kabul with Appeal of the CC CPSU Politburo to the CC PDPA Politburo," June 28, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Translated by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113036>

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁹ For ease of distinction, the PDPA Politburo references the key decision making body of Afghanistan's PDPA party and the CPSU Politburo references the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Politburo

quickly reported by Ambassador Puzanov to the CPSU Politburo.⁶⁰ This type of information provided insight into the ongoing feud between Taraki and Amin, indicating the seriousness of the situation. What was not available was intelligence information regarding the intentions of the Afghan government or Amin's faction. This constitutes a minor production failure: while important for the intelligence community to provide predictions to decision makers regarding events, the information that was available was highly accurate and ought to have prompted decision makers to probe the intelligence community for additional analysis. Given that intelligence information was not questioned by decision makers, it is clear that the intelligence community occupied a position of strong trust within the system. The level of trust in the intelligence community allowed Andropov flexibility in directing Afghan intelligence production.

Soviet intelligence information during summer 1979 was valuable as it was often received directly from President Taraki and communicated effectively through the system. Furthermore, the utility of the information was high, as the Soviets had ample opportunity to act on information and respond to events occurring in Afghanistan.⁶¹ Intelligence production was efficient and effective during the summer months, making it highly valuable to decision makers.

⁶⁰ Kakar, 36

"Record of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan A.M. Puzanov and H. Amin," July 21, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Notes by O.A. Westad.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113275>

⁶¹ "Excerpt from Minutes N° 156 of the CC CPSU Politburo meeting," June 29, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Translated by Gary Goldberg.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112514>

Intelligence Consumption

Intelligence consumption during summer 1979 was also robust. The character flaws of Brezhnev and Andropov that would affect the intelligence system had not yet become apparent in the Afghan operation. Brezhnev, a strong-willed and adept politician during his early career, built around himself a Stalin-esque cult of personality.⁶² Focused on attaining power within the Soviet system, Brezhnev understood Soviet politics: recognizing Khrushchev's errors in consolidating power, Brezhnev undertook to ensure that a perception of collective leadership existed.⁶³ Meanwhile, he "led from the middle" to encourage his colleagues to participate in leadership and allow him to gain their trust.⁶⁴ Considered a team player who consistently engaged in consultation with his colleagues, Brezhnev strengthened his position within the collective leadership by delegating to subordinates and eliminating those in more powerful positions.⁶⁵ The forced retirement of President Podgorny in 1977 gave Brezhnev additional power as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, effectively functioning as executive president. The only other individual with comparable power to Brezhnev was Premier Alexei Kosygin, who had unintentionally aided Brezhnev in his rise to power by proposing unpopular economic reforms and sidelining himself in 1965.⁶⁶ As such, although Brezhnev and Kosygin continued to govern the Soviet Union from a triangle of power, Brezhnev was the de facto leader and held the support of the Politburo.

⁶² William J. Tompson, *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev* (London: Pearson/Longman, 2003), 15

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ Archie Brown, "The Power of the General Secretary of the CPSU" in *Authority, Power, and Policy in the USSR*, ed. T.H. Rigby, Archie Brown, Peter Reddaway (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1983), 151-2

⁶⁵ Bacon, 14

⁶⁶ Tompson, 15-16

Brezhnev was the “oldest and most infirm Politburo member at the time of the communist coup in Afghanistan, [whose] poor health had sapped his leadership capabilities,” leaving him unable to lead the Soviet Union without significant aid.⁶⁷ Despite his powerful position, he was forced to rely heavily on a council of advisors, including Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Minister of Defence Dmitriy Ustinov, Second Secretary of the CPSU Mikhail Suslov, and Yuri Andropov. As his health declined, his trust in these individuals to guide decision making increased. Despite his failing health and inability to “effectively challenge the claims of the much younger and more adept Andropov, nor to question intelligence reports,” Brezhnev continued to enjoy the support of the Politburo.⁶⁸ As the situation in Afghanistan worsened, so too did Brezhnev’s condition, prompting the rise of the ambitious Andropov as both intelligence director and lead decision maker.

Andropov, like Brezhnev, was clearly motivated by power. His eventual rise to the position of General Secretary only days after Brezhnev’s death, suggests that even as KGB chairman he was manipulating the Politburo to gain power and influence. This colours Andropov’s actions during the 1970s and the lead up to the Afghan invasion. Yuri Glasov suggests that Andropov, in order to reach his prominent positions, needed significant “strength, flexibility and intelligence” and required strong interpersonal skills to attain the “consent of his numerous colleagues and the Party in general.”⁶⁹ Andropov’s skill sets allowed him to become an effective intelligence chief, but his desire for power influenced his motivations. Adept at recognizing opportunities, Andropov clearly

⁶⁷ Tomsen, 137

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ Yuri Glasov, *The Russian Mind Since Stalin’s Death* (Rotterdam: Springer Netherlands, 1985), 181

understood the need to ingratiate himself into a permanent place in Brezhnev's inner circle. His desire to ensure that Brezhnev trusted him went beyond the typical bureaucratic relationship. To ensure that reports did not anger Brezhnev or contradict his own suggestions, Andropov often politicized intelligence: he doctored intelligence reports or filtered out those reports that were not personally beneficial.⁷⁰ These character qualities indicate Andropov's willingness to deceive his own intelligence system and his self-serving capacity. Given the positive influence he had on Soviet intelligence during his tenure as KGB Chairman and the consistency of reports that supported his suggestions, it is unsurprising that he was widely trusted by decision makers and given increased control over the decision making process.

While several other individuals, including Ustinov, Gromyko, Suslov, Podgorny, and Kosygin, all influenced Soviet decision making to varying extents, the dominance of Brezhnev as leader throughout the 1970s and the trust that Andropov gained within the system ensured that little debate existed within the Central Committee, and less within the Politburo.⁷¹ Each of these individuals contributed in minor ways to the Soviet intelligence system's power structure in 1979, but given the Soviet system of government it was not possible for any to truly object without losing all their influence within the system. The dominant character traits of both Brezhnev and Andropov controlled the intelligence system in 1979, with Andropov becoming increasingly powerful as Brezhnev's capabilities declined. The influence of other individuals in the system had

⁷⁰ Garthoff, 41

⁷¹ Although the Politburo is ultimately responsible to the Central Committee, it makes the majority of decisions

become irrelevant in earlier years and no one other than Andropov acquired influence through the development of the Afghanistan issue.

Soviet bureaucracy is complex to understand as it did not function according to its rules, but according to the political game in which presenting certain information would lead to a promotion or maintenance of position while presenting other information could cost one's career. The result was a number of steps that existed to determine what intelligence information was brought to Brezhnev and other leaders' attention: intelligence was "subject to bias in selection as well as slanting performed by the intelligence services."⁷² KGB General Kalugin suggests that "the opinion of intelligence was usually ignored or not even seen by political leaders deciding most important foreign policy questions."⁷³ Although the frequency of intelligence reporting to the Central Committee and the Politburo was high – Andropov "stressed brevity in reports and initiated a daily intelligence digest" that improved efficiency in translating intelligence information – the quality of this intelligence varied, indicating a significant problem that would plague Soviet decision makers throughout 1979.⁷⁴

The Soviets were willing to react to intelligence information during the summer months, responding to the recommendations for Soviet activity in Afghanistan outlined in General Kalugin's report and assembling a four-person Special Commission on Afghanistan.⁷⁵ The relationship between the CPSU Politburo and the intelligence community, vis-à-vis the Politburo's Special Commission on Afghanistan (Afghan

⁷² Garthoff, 49

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 40-41

⁷⁵ Feifer, 17

Commission), was amicable.⁷⁶ The Afghan Commission had a direct line to the CPSU Politburo and to Brezhnev. As such, the system of communication between producers and consumers was effective: lines of communication were short and direct with no bureaucratic hurdles to overcome once Andropov, a member of the commission, received the reports. The 29 June CPSU Politburo meeting, which attaches the 28 June Instructions, exemplifies this effectiveness: both documents outline the information that had been received and suggest immediate actions, thereby indicating that the appropriate and relevant information was communicated effectively.⁷⁷ Interactions between the intelligence community and decision makers were sufficiently frequent during summer 1979 and the results of these interactions were effective; suggestions made by either organization were taken into consideration and implemented relatively quickly.

The relationship between the CPSU Politburo and the KGB was highly trusting. Although not a traditional form of trust, the two organizations clearly relied on each other throughout summer 1979; both organizations appear to have a belief in the capacity of the other and a recognition that behavioural intention to protect the Soviet Union existed. In the political environment of the Soviet Union, this trust was not commonplace but clearly developed out of previous successes and a belief that future successes would occur. During summer 1979 there appeared to be a balance of trust between the two organizations. This balance is explained by the lack of decisions that needed to be made and the lack of clear, immediate threat. The intelligence system was, in the context of

⁷⁶ Tomsen, 136

⁷⁷ "Draft instructions to the Soviet Ambassador in Kabul with Appeal of the CC CPSU Politburo to the CC PDPA Politburo," June 28, 1979

"Excerpt from Minutes N° 156 of the CC CPSU Politburo meeting," June 29, 1979

Afghanistan, still in a period of stasis; it was not yet fully engaged and therefore not yet capable of either success or failure.

Throughout summer 1979, Soviet intelligence consumption was generally effective. While the character profiles of both Brezhnev and Andropov would eventually lead to difficulties within the system and influence the relationship between the two organizations, the static nature of the intelligence system in summer 1979 eliminated any potential failure at this time. The intelligence system was not yet in a position to make decisions or influence behaviour, merely to accept intelligence information and begin planning. Although this in itself would prove problematic as the system could not mobilize quickly enough, there was no reason to assume during this period that the system needed to be more engaged in answering the Afghan question.

3.2.2 Fall 1979

Intelligence Production

In fall 1979, the intelligence information from Afghanistan became less effective: the PDPA became increasingly less willing to cooperate and Soviet intelligence production stagnated due to a lack of effort in maintaining or improving the intelligence system. A failure to improve the intelligence system, in combination with the 17 September arrest and subsequent assassination of President Muhammad Nur Taraki and divergence of Soviet and Afghan interests under Amin's presidency, provided the Soviets with substantially less access to reliable and timely intelligence information.

During the first half of September 1979, the Soviet intelligence system provided detailed information regarding the deteriorating relationship between Amin and Taraki.

Documents dated 13 September and 15 September indicate the Soviet leadership's attempts to reconcile the rift between Taraki and Amin, suggesting that Soviet intelligence production was timely and reliable, with strong communication to consumers.⁷⁸ Intelligence information regarding the threat to political stability in Afghanistan was timely, fulsome, and accurate. The 15 September report from Gromyko, Ustinov, and Tsyigun indicates precisely what the Soviets knew about the leadership situation in Afghanistan hours before it occurred:

According to recent information, which was picked up by our representatives during a conversation with Amin, a plenum of the PDPA CC is supposed to be convened on 16 September. Taraki will be advised to give up all his posts voluntarily on the grounds of ill health, and even if he does not agree, a decision to this effect will be adopted.⁷⁹

Intelligence production was functioning at an optimal level: not only was information available and reliable regarding this threat, it was highly valuable and communicated immediately to those who required the information.

Following Taraki's assassination, the environment in which the Soviet intelligence system operated within Afghanistan changed dramatically. Although the Soviets had convinced themselves that Amin "intends to continue the course of expanding the revolution, on strengthening cooperation with the Soviet Union and

⁷⁸ "CPSU CC Politburo Decisions on Afghanistan (excerpts)," September 13, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, from notes taken by A. Dobrynin Translated by D. Rozas. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111561>

"Cable from Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko to Soviet Representatives in Kabul," September 15, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, A.A. Lyakovskiy, The Tragedy and Valour of the Afghani (Moscow: GPI "Iskon", 1995) Translated by Gary Goldberg <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111563>

"CPSU CC Politburo Decision with report by Gromyko, Ustinov, and Tsvigun," September 15, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111565>

⁷⁹ "CPSU CC Politburo Decision with report by Gromyko, Ustinov, and Tsyigun" September 15, 1979

socialist collaboration,”⁸⁰ the reality was a staunch insistence that Afghanistan remain independent of foreign powers.⁸¹ The desire for independence from the Soviets was tempered by a need to develop Afghanistan, which required Soviet credit and technical assistance; it became a dilemma for Amin that resulted in seemingly unpredictable relationships with Soviet representatives.⁸² The shift meant an abrupt change in the intelligence available to the Soviets as well as the reliability and value of intelligence that was available. From 17 September to the end of November 1979, the record of Soviet documents regarding Afghanistan is sparse.

During the remainder of fall 1979, it became increasingly clear that the relationship between the Soviets and Amin was deteriorating: Amin’s decision to execute Taraki on 8 October was not shared with Soviet representatives, who were thus forced to resort to other methods of intelligence collection, none of which had been practiced by the KGB in the Afghan context.⁸³ The result was a decline in the reliability of intelligence information that necessarily limited its potential value. It was at this time that intelligence collection operations appear more sophisticated, emerging from traditional diplomatic intelligence gathering to espionage and erudite analysis. The Afghan Commission report on 29 November indicates the Soviet intelligence system’s capacity to determine Afghan deception:

In words he and those closest to him are in favor of a further expansion of collaboration with the Soviet Union in various fields, but in fact they permit actions which run counter to the interests of this collaboration. Outwardly

⁸⁰ "Information from the CC CPSU to GDR leader Honecker," October 01, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive Translated by Carter-Brezhnev Project.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111571>

⁸¹ Kakar, 42

⁸² *Ibid*, 43

⁸³ Panagiotis, 54

agreeing with the recommendations of Soviet representatives, including about the issue of preserving unity in the PDPA and DRA leadership, and declaring readiness to strengthen friendship with the USSR, in practice Amin does not only not take steps to put a stop to anti-Soviet sentiments but he himself actually encourages such sentiments. In particular, at his initiative a story is being spread about the supposed involvement of Soviet representatives in “making an attempt” on him during the 13-16 September events. Amin and his closest circle do not stop at slanderous inventions about the participation of Soviet representatives in repressive actions being conducted in Afghanistan.⁸⁴

This report indicates the nascent strength of the Soviet intelligence system. However, as the system was too reliant on traditional diplomacy-collection techniques in Afghanistan, it was slow to react to changing circumstances. The report’s timeliness is indicative of the newfound difficulties associated with the availability of intelligence information and also suggests a decline in value to decision makers. Despite apparent reliability, overall intelligence production value declined sharply in fall 1979.

Intelligence Consumption

Events in Afghanistan occurred very quickly in fall 1979, testing the Soviet intelligence system’s capacity to utilize information. The strong production of intelligence information in September 1979 allowed the system to consume intelligence effectively: the CPSU Politburo was able to respond almost immediately to events occurring in Afghanistan as a result of the direct lines of communication and minimal bureaucracy.

⁸⁴ Although more sophisticated intelligence operations may have been occurring in Afghanistan prior to this, none are referenced in the available documents. As such, it is possible to conclude at the least that November proved a turning point in what was openly reported, and therefore likely that more espionage and analysis activities were occurring during this time than in previous months.

"Report on the Situation in Afghanistan, Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, and Ponomarev to CPSU CC," November 29, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive As cited in A. A. Lyakhovskiy, *The Tragedy and Valor of the Afghani* (Moscow: GPI “Iskon”, 1995), p. 102.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111576>

Following Taraki's arrest on 15 September, the decision making bureaucracy on matters related to Afghanistan was further simplified. Andropov and Brezhnev, their strong personalities becoming increasingly apparent, decided to "reduce the number of decision makers on Afghan policy to a 'troika' of three: Andropov, Ustinov, and the pusillanimous Gromyko."⁸⁵ Given the subservience of both Ustinov and Gromyko to Andropov, the effect of this reduction was to further empower Andropov, who already controlled most of the activities in Afghanistan. From a strictly bureaucratic communications perspective, this reduction would have served the Soviets well in reducing the time required between intelligence entering the system and decisions leaving the system. However, the reduction to effectively one voice resulted in a reduction of critical thinking and decision analysis; crucial components of effective decision making. Furthermore, it concentrated power outside of the political system and inside the intelligence community, further corrupting the system and limiting the objectivity that is necessary for decision makers.⁸⁶

The events of 15 and 20 September suggest the varied effectiveness of Soviet bureaucracy within the intelligence system. The report by Gromyko on 15 September indicates effectiveness of production,⁸⁷ and the CPSU Politburo's decision later that same day, suggests a high capacity for consumption of intelligence information.⁸⁸ Although neither document arrives from Afghanistan, it is clear from the historical record that the CPSU Politburo is responding nearly immediately to events occurring during this period.

⁸⁵ Tomsen, 156

⁸⁶ Jack Davis, "The Kent-Kendall Debate of 1947" *CIA Centre for the Study of Intelligence Studies Archive Indexes* 35, 98 <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol35no2/pdf/v35i2a06p.pdf>

⁸⁷ "Cable from Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko to Soviet Representatives in Kabul," September 15, 1979

⁸⁸ "CPSU CC Politburo Decision with report by Gromyko, Ustinov, and Tsvigun," September 15, 1979

This timeliness indicates not only the efficiency of communication and manageability of bureaucracy, but also the unity and trust between the KGB and CPSU Politburo. The relationship between the two organizations, in part due to the personalities of Andropov and Brezhnev, allowed the two to function as a single unit: Gromyko, who “deferred to Andropov during leadership meetings” and was considered “‘comrade yes’ to his superiors” appears to have been heavily influenced by the KGB in drafting his report.⁸⁹

The 20 September 1979 CPSU Politburo meeting however, indicates that the Soviet intelligence system was not able to provide decision makers sufficient knowledge in a timely enough manner to take action to effect the strategy. Brezhnev reports in this meeting that “events developed so swiftly that essentially there was little opportunity for us, here in Moscow, to somehow interfere in them... Right now our mission is to determine our further actions, so as to preserve our positions in Afghanistan and to secure our influence there.”⁹⁰ The ultimate measure of success for intelligence consumption is the effectiveness of the strategic outcomes associated with the intelligence operation. As such, knowledge of a situation or insight into events do not equate to overall success. The bureaucratic steps, primarily the harbouring of intelligence information, seem to have had an adverse effect on decision making capabilities. Had the intelligence system been able to provide information regarding the possibility of Taraki’s arrest earlier, or make predictions as part of their analysis, decision makers may have been able to act on that information or at the very least prepare themselves for such an event.

⁸⁹ Tomsen, 139

⁹⁰ "Excerpt from transcript, CPSU CC Politburo meeting," September 20, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, APREF, from notes taken by A. Dobrynin Translated by Daniel Rozas. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111568>

Throughout the remainder of the fall, the CPSU Politburo continued to receive adequate intelligence about the situation in Kabul as it unfolded.⁹¹ Although the CPSU Politburo itself was no longer directly responsible for decision making, the presence of intelligence reports indicate the continually positive relationship between that entity, the KGB, and the decision making troika. While the relative decline in documents seemingly available to the CPSU Politburo may indicate a decline in information available during the fall compared to the summer months, the reality is likely a result of the declining involvement by the CPSU Politburo, and particularly Brezhnev, on matters related to influencing Afghanistan. It is likely that the increased control of the situation provided to Andropov, in combination with his dominating personality, meant that the available intelligence information did not change as significantly as a quantitative analysis of documents might suggest, but rather that the end point within the consumption phase of the intelligence system had changed, thereby changing the nature of reporting to the CPSU Politburo.

As the relationship between intelligence community and decision makers evolved during fall 1979, it became increasingly clear that particular individuals were beginning to overtake the system. Brezhnev's decline in capability, combined with an increasing level of trust in Andropov's abilities and decision making capacity, inverted the intelligence system. The ultimate power of decision that ought to reside with the decision makers was slowly eroded during fall 1979. Not only did reporting to the CPSU Politburo by the intelligence community decline, but even the number of individuals involved in

⁹¹ "Information from CC CPSU to GDR leader E. Honecker," September 16, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Translated by Carter-Brezhnev Project
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111566>

making decisions about Afghanistan was reduced to three, two of whom functioned as “yes men” to Andropov.

Overall, the intelligence system in fall 1979 had clearly begun to deteriorate; while intelligence information was still collected and processed at a rapid rate and the consumption phase was functioning effectively, the system was not able to accomplish what it needed to within the Afghan context. Furthermore, the decline in organizational structure and clarity of roles between the KGB and the CPSU Politburo began to shape the path of intelligence information away from the de facto decision makers, which further undermined the system.

3.2.3 December 1979

Intelligence Production

December 1979 continued to present collection challenges for the Soviet intelligence system. Amin’s disdain of the Soviet Union negated potential diplomatic intelligence collection, amplifying the problems the Soviets had begun to experience in the fall. The lack of intelligence sources furthered the decline in reliability and availability of intelligence: the final report from Gromyko, et al on 29 November suggests that Amin’s

Conduct in the area of relations with the USSR ever more distinctly exposes his insincerity and duplicity. In words he and those closest to him are in favor of a further expansion of collaboration with the Soviet Union in various fields, but in fact they permit actions which run counter to the interests of this collaboration. Outwardly agreeing with the recommendations of Soviet representatives, including about the issue of preserving unity in the PDPA and DRA leadership, and declaring readiness to strengthen friendship with the USSR, in practice Amin

does not only not take steps to put a stop to anti-Soviet sentiments but he himself actually encourages such sentiments.⁹²

The result was limited intelligence information available to Soviet decision makers, furthering the reliance on opinions and biases regarding Amin's behaviours. Although the KGB became more deeply embedded in Afghanistan throughout the fall and early December, the production of intelligence became further reflective of KGB goals: "KGB political assessments praised KGB operations. KGB analysts skewed events to 'prove' a preferred outcome, which invariably was hard-line conservative and geared to preserve a KGB monopoly over Soviet Afghan policy formulation and execution."⁹³ The result of increased manipulation of intelligence by the KGB was a sharp decline in the reliability and value of intelligence, the extent of which was unknown to the CPSU Politburo. The breakdown in intelligence production during this critical month removed the foundation for intelligence-based decision making and forced the Soviets to rely on heavily biased information.

Intelligence Consumption

While the intelligence producing phase became less effective during December 1979, the intelligence consuming phase changed little; that a decision to invade would be made became increasingly clear, and the intelligence system functioned simply to support that decision. The complicated inversion of the system hierarchy in December means that the distinction between the three consumption variables are more difficult to distinguish.

What is clear is that the characters of Brezhnev and Andropov overwhelmed the

⁹² "Report on the Situation in Afghanistan, Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, and Ponomarev to CPSU CC," November 29, 1979

⁹³ Tomsen, 167

intelligence system, undermining the functionality of the bureaucracy and skewing the relationship between the two organizations.

The 1 December memorandum from Andropov to Brezhnev epitomizes the problematic effectiveness of the Soviet intelligence system: the memorandum outlines the situation in Afghanistan and suggests specific actions to “decide the question of defending the gains of the April revolution, establishing Leninist principles in the party and state leadership of Afghanistan, and securing our positions in this country.”⁹⁴ This direct line of communication between the intelligence community and the formal decision makers within the Soviet Union confirms that the intelligence community had a means by which to bypass bureaucracy when a quick decision needed to be made and implemented. The memorandum also indicates that the KGB had unlimited influence over the decision makers: it served to convince Brezhnev to agree to the KGB’s desire to conduct a coup against Amin by alleging that Amin was undertaking secret meetings with the Americans,⁹⁵ and simultaneously “assured other readers that the general secretary had [already] approved a Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan.”⁹⁶

In hindsight, it is clear that the KGB were generally correct in their assumptions about Amin’s desire to control Afghanistan. Allegations that he was moving Afghanistan into an alliance with the United States are not supported by the evidence available, though he was more willing to interact with American diplomats than many of his

⁹⁴ "Personal memorandum Andropov to Brezhnev," December 01, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, APRF, from notes taken by A. F. Dobrynin Translated by Daniel Rozas. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113254>

⁹⁵ Panagiotis, 57

⁹⁶ Tomsen, 166

predecessors.⁹⁷ Amin was also much more interested in working with the leaders of other Muslim countries in an effort to resolve the issue of Pashtunistan and secure his north-eastern border.⁹⁸ Soviet concerns about the Islamist threat to their own southern border prevented the KGB from interpreting Amin's movements as beneficial for their own security: instead, the KGB assumed Amin to be negotiating an uprising that would unbalance the region.⁹⁹ Incorrectly, the KGB assumed that by removing Amin and inserting a puppet government they could control the rise of the Islamist movement, protect their border and influence in the region.

The 1 December memorandum is only the first indication of CPSU Politburo subservience to the KGB: the much shorter messages and available documentation during this period suggests that many more decision making meetings happened in secret and that records were not kept. The decision making process had become a function of formality: a 12 December "extraordinary meeting in Brezhnev's Kremlin office" authorized the troika to undertake the execution of "measures in Country A".¹⁰⁰ These measures, proposed by the troika, could further be amended if of a "non essential character" by the troika who were only required to keep the "CC Politburo informed on the status of the execution of the outlined measures."¹⁰¹ This secrecy also included the stovepiping of intelligence information from the KGB, at the exclusion of all other

⁹⁷ Kakar 44

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

⁹⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁰ Tomsen, 167

"CC CPSU Politburo Resolution # 176/125, Concerning the Situation in "A" [Afghanistan]," December 12, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, [cited by Archive-Information Bulletin, 1993 as RGANI, op. 14, d. 31, ll. 1, handwritten original, special file, CC].

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113675>

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*

available information, through to the CPSU Politburo, and the Central Committee. This indicates a preferential relationship between decision makers and the KGB intelligence community, but also suggests missing links in the decision making – Politburo – and implementation – Red Army – chains; problematic given the necessity of feedback loops between decision makers and implementers as part of effective intelligence consumption.¹⁰² Thus, although the bureaucracy was limited, it was too small to be effective, thereby limiting the communications opportunities from intelligence producers other than the KGB, and between decision makers and implementers.

Although not formally part of this analysis, it is important to recognize that the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence service that would be responsible for the implementation of the invasion, was missing from much of the conversation. Despite procedures developed to mitigate interagency competition, the rivalry did significantly impede overall policy effectiveness.¹⁰³ “The GRU was not informed or asked for an assessment, and no Foreign Ministry official except Gromyko was aware” of the December 12 decision to invade Afghanistan.¹⁰⁴ That the third branch of the intelligence system was this uninformed suggests bureaucratic and relationship issues within the intelligence consumption phase of the system. The narrowing of decision makers to three and the inverted hierarchy in which the intelligence community reigned in all but name, clearly constitutes a failure of the system.

¹⁰² Tomsen, 167

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 146

¹⁰⁴ Garthoff, 60

In addition to an inversion of the intelligence system hierarchy, documents suggest that the intelligence consumption and production phases were also inverted such that intelligence information was based on the decisions being made:

"We will reestablish the entire eastern Islamic system [islamizm] against us", said Ogarkov, "and we will lose politically in the entire world. Andropov cuts him off: "Stick to military affairs! We, the Party, and Leonid Il'ich will handle policy!" Ogarkov tried to object: "I am Chief of the General Staff", but again Andropov stopped him: "No more". The KGB Chairman was supported by K. U. Chernenko, M. A. Suslov, D. F. Ustinov, and A. P. Kirilenko. Then L. I. Brezhnev has his word: "Yuriy Vladimirovich should be supported".¹⁰⁵

This particular memory suggests that either a decision had been made without taking into account all of the intelligence, such as that which Ogarkov refers, or made discounting such intelligence as unimportant given the greater concerns of losing influence in Afghanistan. In either case, it is clear that the decision was made to support specific objectives and that the intelligence included in reports to the committee was informed by the decision.

This meeting further indicates the integration of the intelligence and decision making organizations. It thus becomes difficult to distinguish between the two branches of government. It is clear that the decision makers had by this time provided the intelligence community with more control than necessary and more control than ought to be centralized in any element of the system. The intelligence community received this control directly from the decision makers who were too trusting of the KGB, their analysis and suggestions, and not critically considering the recommendations of

¹⁰⁵ "Summary of a meeting on Afghanistan," December 10, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, A. A. Lyakhovskiy's "Plamya Afgana" ("Flame of the Afghanistan veteran", Iskon, Moscow, 1999; Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111780>

Andropov. It is here that it becomes clear that the intelligence system, although working effectively, was too centralized and that not enough checks and balances existed on the power balance within the system.

The months leading up to the December invasion of Afghanistan suggest that the intelligence system the Soviets were using in Afghanistan shifted dramatically. Overall, Soviet intelligence production throughout 1979 was effective in providing generally accurate and detailed information upon which to base decisions. However, as the situation became intelligence dependent, the collection and analysis processes used by the Soviets became inadequate and ineffective. The result was seemingly reliable intelligence information that was generally untimely, if existent at all. The potential value for the Soviet decision makers was negated while the potential risk rose dramatically.

The Soviets were also able to consume intelligence information effectively throughout 1979: the lines of communication between primary intelligence producers and primary decision makers were always short and clear, indicating a limited bureaucracy. This, combined with a good relationship between the KGB and the CPSU Politburo, meant that the Soviet intelligence system was able to overcome some of the most difficult obstacles associated with intelligence. However, the personalities of two key individuals in Andropov and Brezhnev meant that the system was subject to over-centralization, a lack of critical thinking and debate, and most importantly, was susceptible to the biases of one man. The system itself was not inherently flawed but the combination of a weak leader in Brezhnev and a strongly motivated intelligence chief in Andropov resulted in a disastrous decision to invade in December 1979.

3.3 Conclusion

Despite all of the positive intelligence information that the Soviets were able to garner throughout summer and fall 1979, the intelligence that was received in December begins to read as questionable: the bias toward sending troops into Afghanistan becomes increasingly clear throughout the month and the intelligence seems to justify this position rather than inform the development of a position on the issue.

Given that the Soviet Union was clearly not in favour of sending troops into Afghanistan during the previous months, the sudden shift in thinking is curious and begs interrogation. The recollection of the decision to send troops to Afghanistan by Alexander Lyakhovskiy, a Soviet Army Major General, suggests that the decision to send troops into Afghanistan was made by a small number of engaged individuals who had been working closely on the Afghanistan file for many months.¹⁰⁶ These individuals were the same ones who were responsible for providing the majority of the intelligence to the CPSU Politburo during summer and fall 1979; yet the intelligence provided by these individuals during those months is consistent with other accounts of what was occurring in Afghanistan and does not support the position of sending troops into Afghanistan.

The question then, is why the motivation behind the intelligence changed and what caused these individuals to analyze the information such that they could conclude that the best option would be to send troops into Afghanistan? The Soviet intelligence system itself does not appear to have changed during this period, nor did the actors within

¹⁰⁶ "Alexander Lyakhovskiy's Account of the Decision of the CC CPSU Decision to Send Troops to Afghanistan," December, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, A. A. Lyakhovskiy's "Plamya Afgana" (The Tragedy and Valor of Afghan) (Moscow, 1995), p. 109-112. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115531>

the system change from a Soviet perspective. However, the change in Afghan actors and thus external motivations clearly must account for the shift in thinking about the situation in Afghanistan. The external factors that motivate individual actors to make certain decisions fall outside the scope of this research project, but do suggest that, while the intelligence system does illuminate important intersections between the intelligence community and decision makers, each of these operate independently, and can operate in silos with disastrous consequences.

Overall, the Soviet intelligence system in Afghanistan during 1979 was not ineffective: it was able to evaluate, develop, and utilize intelligence effectively and efficiently throughout the aftermath of the Saur Revolution. The increasingly inverted decision making hierarchy, the result of character traits, destabilized the system, causing it to fail.

Chapter 4: The United States Intelligence System

The intelligence system of the United States in Afghanistan differs significantly from that of the USSR: whereas the Soviets attempted to influence Afghan policy through offensive activities, the United States pursued defensive measures. Having largely abandoned Afghanistan after the Cold War, the Americans were not keen to return given the high costs and low return of involvement. However, non-state actors who had developed a base in Afghanistan forced the United States back when al Qaeda struck at the heart of United States symbols of hegemony on 11 September 2001. This chapter analyses the United States invasion of Afghanistan and the effectiveness of the United States intelligence system in preparing the state for engaging with the threat emanating from Afghanistan, in the form of al Qaeda, and subsequently engaging in an offensive military invasion.

4.1 Extraneous Variables

Several significant events occurred in the lead up to the 2001 United States invasion that complicated the decision making process. Both the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the 1990s and the 2000 Presidential election contributed to the decision making process and the final decision. In this section I outline each of these events and suggest the extent of their influence on the final decision.

4.1.1 Islamic Fundamentalism

The founding and growth of al Qaeda and other extremist groups in the 1990s set the stage for an entirely different type of conflict in the twenty-first century. Whereas

previous centuries are defined by primarily inter-state conflict, the post-Cold War era and the new millennium ushered in a new era of conflict, defined by non-state actors, often state-sponsored, aggressing against traditional state actors.

By the mid-1990s, Afghanistan had become the perfect home for groups like al Qaeda. Even before their rise, president Najibullah prophesied that Afghanistan would become a home for radical Islamic movements, explaining that “if fundamentalism comes to Afghanistan, war will continue for many more years. Afghanistan will turn into a center of world smuggling for narcotic drugs. Afghanistan will be turned into a center for terrorism.”¹⁰⁷ The development of political Islam is a complex topic that is tangential to this project. In general, it emerged out of an intense religious struggle against an anti-Islamist government. In Afghanistan, the fight against the Soviet invasion prompted Muslims from across Central Asia and the Middle East to rise up in *jihad*. Although many came to fight for Afghanistan, the majority were not fighting for the Afghan culture or way of life and were not themselves Afghan: Saudi fundamentalist Wahhabis joined the fight as *mujahidin* intent on bringing their own brand of Islam to Central Asia.¹⁰⁸ The fundamentalist nature of the Wahhabis drove them to participate for the “exaltation of martyrdom,”¹⁰⁹ though they hoped also to indoctrinate the Afghans, who practiced a traditionally pluralistic form of Islam.¹¹⁰

Although the Wahhabis were not initially successful in indoctrinating Afghans, they did find an audience in the Pakistani *madrassas*, or Islamic schools.¹¹¹ The

¹⁰⁷ Edward A. Gargan, “Afghan President Says U.S. Should See Him as Ally against Militant Islam” *New York Times* 10 March 1992

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa’ud from Tradition to Terror* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 154-155

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 160

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 162

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

madrassas began to fill with Afghan refugees throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many had participated in the Soviet war but had become disillusioned by the subsequent civil war and tribal conflict; others had been born and raised as refugees in Pakistan.¹¹² Afghans within the *madrassas* became increasingly concerned about the future of the country and sought to “restore peace, disarm the population, enforce Sharia law and defend the integrity of Islamic character in Afghanistan.”¹¹³ The combination of self-declared *taliban* (students) and Wahhabi doctrine within the Saudi-financed *madrassas* meant that this group of inspired Afghans were motivated by fundamentalist beliefs about Islam that opposed the traditional Afghan form of Islam.

The factionalism and brutality of the civil war provided the perfect opportunity for the formalized Taliban to rapidly rise to prominence in Afghanistan, beginning in the southern province of Kandahar in late 1994. The Afghans, desperate for peace and stability, initially welcomed Mullah Omar and his Taliban who opposed the militias that raped their children and destroyed their livelihoods.¹¹⁴ While the warlords denounced the Taliban, it was not until early 1995 that it became clear how radical the group was when they implemented the “strictest version of Sharia law ever seen in the Muslim world;” the international community began to demand explanations.¹¹⁵

The Taliban quickly and efficiently overtook much of Afghanistan, aided by the nearly 12,000 students who flocked to join them in their quest.¹¹⁶ Over the next two years

¹¹² Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 2nd ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 22-23

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 22

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 25-27

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 29

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

they consolidated their power and imposed an extremist version of Sharia, providing the perfect training ground for Osama bin Laden's jihadist terrorist organization, al Qaeda.¹¹⁷

Al Qaeda developed out of the "so-called Service Bureau (*Makhtab al-Khidamat* – *MAK*) that got volunteers to Afghanistan and kept them supplied with weapons and munitions that were largely funded by donations from across the Islamic world."¹¹⁸ The organization existed to assist volunteers from the Islamic world in joining *jihad* against the Soviets in the 1980s. Following the Soviet withdrawal, al Qaeda had no explicit purpose, but continued to function by supporting *jihads* throughout the Muslim world for several years, including Bosnia in the early 1990s.¹¹⁹ As the 1990s progressed, al Qaeda became increasingly global-minded and sought to influence events throughout the world, spreading its message of militant Islam.¹²⁰

As of 1989 however, al Qaeda had no home base and was not widely recognized. Bin Laden's personal connections allowed the group to move from country to country for a time, but when Sudan could no longer harbour al Qaeda and its leader due to international pressures in 1996, they returned to their country of origin.¹²¹ Once in Afghanistan, the relationship between al Qaeda and the Taliban was not immediately formed. By 1997, Mullah Omar and bin Laden had come to an agreement on principles and cooperation.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 14-15

¹¹⁸ John R. Schindler, *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qa'ida, and the Rise of Global Jihad* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007), 118

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 118-119

¹²⁰ *Ibid*

¹²¹ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington, D.C.: 2004), 58-62

¹²² *Ibid*, 66

The cooperation between al Qaeda and the Taliban was not pre-ordained: although the two organizations had similar mandates in promoting an extremist version of Islam, they served different purposes. The Taliban focused on implementing fundamentalist Islam within Afghanistan and al Qaeda focused on imposing it on the Western world. The alliance functioned well: the Taliban allowed al Qaeda access to many resources within the country, including training camps and access to federal resources,¹²³ while al Qaeda provided the Taliban another outlet for their doctrine, prompting greater success.¹²⁴ As the millennium ended, Islamic fundamentalism had become institutionalized within Afghanistan. With the issuing of the 1996 and 1998 *fatwas*, and the attacks on the United States embassy and the *U.S.S. Cole*, it was beginning to spread outward.

4.1.2 Presidential Transition

The January 2001 transition from Bill Clinton's Democrats to George W. Bush's Republicans was not easy: the United States' federal system allows for presidential appointments to all major positions within the government, including department secretaries, the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the National Security Advisor (NSA), and others. These positions, with the exception of the NSA, require Senate confirmation following a Presidential nomination, which means that an incoming President has the power to destabilize entire government departments, particularly if his party also controls the Senate, which was the case during the first half of 2001.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 67

¹²⁴ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 15-16

Bush's victory in November 2000 was contentious: the Florida state debacle created significant doubts of legitimacy amongst the American people, which dovetailed with generalized concerns about Bush's character and intelligence. As a result, he was cautious in his nominations, selecting a number of individuals based on their track records, moderate stances, and in some cases retained personnel from the Clinton administration. While this allowed for some continuity, the changes were significant enough to stall progress on particular files, especially those requiring direction from the Secretary of Defense or the NSA, both of whom were appointed by Bush to contrast the Clinton appointees.

Sandy Berger, Clinton's NSA, spent considerable time preparing briefings on security issues for the incoming team, indicating that the "number one [issue] was terrorism and al Qaeda,"¹²⁵ but as Steve Coll notes, these "warnings did not register. The CIA briefed Bush's senior national security team about al Qaeda, but its officers sensed no deep interest . . . they were focused on missile defense, military reform, China and Iraq. Neither terrorism nor South Asia was high on the list."¹²⁶

The transition, which was half the normal transition period due to the election dispute, was a complete shift in personnel and in ideological motivation.¹²⁷ The incoming national security team had a Cold War background: Rumsfeld was also Secretary of Defense during the height of détente and was acutely aware of the Cold War missile threats, and Rice studied Cold War politics, focusing on the Soviet Union throughout her

¹²⁵ Sandy Berger, "Testimony to Joint Inquiry Committee," in *Report of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and U.S. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence - Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001*. (Washington, D.C.: 2002)

¹²⁶ Coll, 546

¹²⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 198

academic career. These intrinsic biases shaped the national security team's priorities and the way in which they approached issues of defense: during the campaign they defined the existential threats to the United States as "hostile regimes that possess or might possess ballistic missiles that could strike American cities" and iterated that China and Russia were key security threats, all of which resound of ideas about Cold War security.¹²⁸ The new team, not fully appreciative of their predecessors' warnings regarding the threats of the new millennium, namely terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, was not prepared to undertake security measures to protect against a type of warfare they did not know.

4.1.3 Catalyst for Decision

The United States catalyst for invasion was the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The attacks fundamentally altered the way in which decision makers viewed Afghanistan and the al Qaeda threat. While it had already been clear that American assets abroad were at risk, that threat was considered relatively minor and not clearly linked to al Qaeda. The attack at home was both surprising and unnerving for decision makers and the general public. The loss of nearly 3,000 lives in a single day prompted the entire nation, as well as many abroad, to respond by immediately declaring war on the terrorists, making "no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."¹²⁹ While the decision to invade was not made

¹²⁸ Coll, 547

¹²⁹ White House Archives, *Selected Speeches of George W. Bush, 2001-2008* (Washington, D.C.), 58 https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf

immediately, the decision to engage was immediate and prompted the 7 October 2001 invasion.

In conclusion, the context in which the United States intelligence system operated in 2001 was complex: threats existed in a number of areas, especially Afghanistan, but the new administration was not prepared to address many of these threats. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan that began to intensify when the Taliban took control of government provided a serious threat. Clinton's inability to effectively address this threat meant that it became a transition issue that was not properly addressed until 9/11 occurred.

4.2 United States Intelligence System in Afghanistan

The traditional state versus state conflict model allows for a particular kind of diplomatic intelligence operation that would normally accompany United States efforts in understanding potential security threats. The changing nature of threats at the turn of the century required a different kind of intelligence operation; one that focused both on state and non-state actors. The majority of the intelligence information produced and consumed by the United States prior to the 2001 invasion was not about Afghanistan. The government had determined neither Afghanistan or its harboured terrorist group was an immediate threat in early 2001 and directed the intelligence community to focus efforts elsewhere. Once the 9/11 catalyst prompted a re-direction of the intelligence system, the intelligence community focused on the non-state actor, al Qaeda, and its relationship to the Taliban, rather than the country as a whole. Unlike in the Soviet case, the primary objective was not removal of the government: the invasion was designed to remove

Taliban leadership only as a result of failed diplomacy in achieving the primary objective of weakening al Qaeda and its leadership.

The following section outlines the intelligence system of the United States throughout 2001, focusing on three time periods: early 2001, summer 2001 (pre 9/11), and fall 2001 (post-9/11). Each period assesses the production and consumption of intelligence on Afghanistan as a whole, but particularly the al Qaeda threat.

4.2.1 Early 2001

Intelligence Production

Intelligence production on Afghanistan in early 2001 was minimal: the United States had no rationale to prioritize intelligence from Afghanistan over any other intelligence. While there was clearly an understanding of potential threats during the transition between Clinton and Bush, the intelligence available appears to have been minimal due to a lack of strategic direction, by both the Clinton administration during its final months and the Bush administration in January. Although the intelligence community recognized the bin Laden and al Qaeda threats, they were not ranked highly in the first few months. When NSA Condoleezza Rice asked all senior staff to identify major policy reviews or initiatives, Richard Clarke, a holdover from the Clinton administration in the National Security Council (NSC), submitted a detailed memorandum on 25 January 2001, discussing that the United States “urgently need[ed] ... a Principals level review on the al Qida (*sic*) network” to decide whether or not al Qaeda was a “first order threat.”¹³⁰ This memo and a same-day briefing of the president

¹³⁰ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 201

by DCI George Tenet on the *U.S.S. Cole* attack, indicates that the holdover members of the intelligence community understood the severity of the al Qaeda threat.¹³¹ However, a lack of conclusive intelligence on whether al Qaeda was responsible for the *U.S.S. Cole* attack negated the urgency that Clarke, Tenet, and others suggested.¹³² That the newly empowered Bush administration did not trust the analysis of these individuals suggests that the intelligence system began 2001 with an imbalance of power.

The intelligence community in the United States functions as a branch of the federal government and responds directly to the federal government's priorities. The intelligence community, through the DCI who was at that time responsible for "managing the activities of the entire intelligence community," undertakes intelligence activities of their own initiative for the purposes of national security.¹³³ The large volume of information collected by the intelligence community means that only a fraction of this information is reported to decision makers: the intelligence community also serves to filter intelligence information by means of reports that limit the amount of non-pertinent intelligence decision makers receive. The 9/11 Commission Report outlines this process succinctly:

Information is collected through several methods, including signals intelligence and interviews of human sources, and gathered into intelligence reports. Depending on the source and nature of the reporting, these reports may be highly classified – and therefore tightly held – or less sensitive and widely disseminated to state and local law enforcement agencies. Threat reporting must be disseminated, either through individual reports or through threat advisories. Such advisories, intended to alert their recipients, may address a specific threat or be a general warning. Because the amount of reporting is so voluminous, only a select fraction can be chosen for briefing the president and senior officials.¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 202

¹³² *Ibid*

¹³³ Jeffrey T. Richelson, *The U.S. Intelligence Community* (Pensacola, FL: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1985), 18-21

¹³⁴ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 254

Intelligence information not vital to the immediate security interests of the state is generally not reported to senior decision makers. The result is that intelligence information on a wide variety of areas is collected, much of it is analysed for relevance to national security interests, and then a report is compiled for key decision makers. This report includes intelligence analysis completed on any special projects, and intelligence analysis of direct, imminent threats to national security. Other intelligence information is archived for use at a later date, or else not used at all.

The intelligence community also responds directly to the interests of the state as defined by decision makers. The CIA is permitted to “secretly collect ‘significant’ foreign intelligence” related to interests outside of national security and to “conduct, within the United States, ‘special activities’ or covert actions approved by the president.”¹³⁵ The FBI is also responsible for responding to these threats insofar as they impact domestic threats to the United States.¹³⁶ In 2001, the FBI was “struggling to build up its institutional capabilities to do more against terrorism” though the Justice Department did not seem to be supportive, making it more difficult for the FBI to justify counterterrorism activities.¹³⁷ Though the 2002 fiscal budget, submitted in April 2001, included the largest proposed percentage increase in the FBI’s counterterrorism program since 1997, this did not correspond to foreign threats such as al Qaeda, but to “gun crimes, narcotics trafficking, and civil rights as priorities.”¹³⁸ The guidance by the new administration throughout 2001, particularly during the early months, did not address

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 19

¹³⁶ However, in 1986, Congress also expanded its authorization for the FBI to investigate counterterrorism to include attacks against Americans that occur outside the United States. In 1989 this was further expanded to include the authority to make arrests abroad without host country consent.

Ibid, 75

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 209

¹³⁸ *Ibid*

foreign threats and suggested priorities that contravened those of the intelligence professionals: the result was a mismatch of policy and reality that stymied efforts to collect and produce relevant intelligence information.

It is therefore impossible to determine whether or not additional intelligence may have been available, although it is likely that more could have been produced if decision makers were willing to engage in conversations about Afghanistan or al Qaeda. Given the briefings between the outgoing Clinton administration and the incoming Bush administration described in Section 4.1.2, it may have been prudent to engage in more deliberate intelligence discussions regarding these two issues during this period. As no apparent or imminent threat existed and the previous attack on United States interests had become “stale”, the interest in these threats was muted and lost in decision making bureaucracy.¹³⁹

The potential value of intelligence information in early 2001 was not high: the United States had no real interest in Afghanistan and was not motivated to engage in any form of operation to improve the amount or value of intelligence. The limits of the intelligence information available are evident: available intelligence did not indicate a direct threat to national security. Despite CIA reports of increased threats during January and February leading up the *hajj* in March, including “strong indications” that al Qaeda was “capable of mounting multiple attacks with little or no warning,” the value of this intelligence was limited by the lack of direct information and lack of direct threat to the United States.¹⁴⁰ Given the policy environment in which this information was available, its value was limited to the function of an update. It did not have the capacity to influence

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 202

¹⁴⁰ Coll, 556

decision making: the NSC could not decide how, or even if, it wanted to instigate a possible war with the Taliban over the al Qaeda issue.¹⁴¹

Intelligence Consumption

The mid-January 2001 administration change over complicated intelligence consumption: while Clinton was “a voracious reader” and read every report given to him by the intelligence community, Bush preferred verbal reports and “re-instituted the practice of face-to-face briefings from the DCI.”¹⁴² This shift in how briefings needed to be prepared, as well as the shift in foci, limited the consumption of intelligence information. Although not directly related to systems issues in early-2001, the effectiveness of the intelligence system was compromised because of the personalities, and the shift from Democrat to Republican principles, involved.

Personality characteristics and biases regarding the importance of intelligence are central elements of the intelligence system. The characters in key positions in the United States intelligence system tend to either align with the president’s political party or else balance between the two parties to satiate the opposition. This results from the president’s role in nominating the DCI and Congress’s role in affirming the nomination. In January 2001, the newly elected president had an important decision to make regarding the DCI position. Bush had been assured that the current DCI, George Tenet, was “a straight shooter . . . [he] will tell [you] what he really thinks, have the courage to disagree with you, and look you in the eye and do so” as well as keep the morale within the CIA from

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 549-551

¹⁴² National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 200

falling further.¹⁴³ A personality that Bush admired, lighthearted and not one to take himself too seriously, Tenet was given a trial period to remain as DCI in January 2001.¹⁴⁴ Tenet's character and the trust he would eventually gain amongst decision makers did not immediately affect intelligence consumption, but would become important by late 2001.

Although Tenet remained, the transition from the Clinton administration to the Bush administration meant that the personalities involved in the decision making side of the intelligence system were all relatively new, or else newly returning, to Washington as events surrounding Afghanistan began to rapidly unfold. Resolutions made during the 2000 campaign, such as increasing military and defense spending, and developing a more effective ballistic missile defense system, indicate a bias toward missile defense as a critical priority and China and Russia as major security threats, rather than South Asia.¹⁴⁵ The biases that the Bush administration entered into office with, and which ultimately transformed the decision making bureaucracy of the United States, excluded the warnings made by the CIA and the outgoing NSC about the imminent danger of bin Laden and al Qaeda. Sandy Berger, the outgoing NSA, had explained to Condoleezza Rice during the transition that she and her team were "going to spend more time during [their] four years on terrorism generally and bin Laden specifically than any issue."¹⁴⁶ Coll indicates that the CIA briefers during this time "sensed that Bush's national security cabinet viewed terrorism as the kind of phenomenon it had been during the 1980s: potent but limited, a theatrical sort of threat that could produce episodic crises but did not jeopardize the

¹⁴³ Coll, 545

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁵ Mark Oliver, "George W. Bush Key Policies: Special Report: U.S. Election Race" *The Guardian* 13 December 2000.

Coll, 547

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 546

fundamental security of the United States.”¹⁴⁷ This kind of attitude toward terrorism and briefings by CIA officials and members of Clinton’s government, who had been experiencing the security paradigm of the new millennium, indicates a clear bias indicative of the political influences within the intelligence system. The 25 January memo from Richard Clarke to Rice, suggesting covert aid to Massoud – the leader of the Northern Alliance and the American’s best chance to overthrow the Taliban and neutralize al Qaeda – and the development of a regional policy on South Asia, exemplify these biases: the memo was ignored and the issues in Afghanistan were deprioritized.¹⁴⁸

From a decision making perspective, the most important and obvious personality involved in the system was President Bush. Although widely considered inarticulate and uneducated concerning matters of foreign affairs, Bush was, according to Rumsfeld, inquisitive, confident and showed good judgement in National Security Council (NSC) meetings.¹⁴⁹ This opinion was not shared by members of the intelligence community in 2001.¹⁵⁰ Despite these leadership characteristics, Rumsfeld does note that Bush did not “always receive, and may not have insisted on, a timely consideration of his options before he made a decision” and “did not always end [NSC meetings] with clear conclusions and instructions.”¹⁵¹ Bush’s leadership style caused confusion, misdirection, and inefficiencies.

As an advisory committee to the President, the NSC was also composed of four other important members: the Vice-President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 547

¹⁴⁸ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 213

¹⁴⁹ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel Press, 2011), 319

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 318-319

Defense, and the NSA. These personalities also played important roles in determining decision making in 2001. For example, Vice-President Dick Cheney's unwillingness to disagree with the President during formal meetings meant continual deference to the president's decisions.¹⁵² Although he asked important questions in meetings that ensured other viewpoints were considered, it is not clear that fulsome consideration was articulated amongst the advisors.¹⁵³ Without dissenting opinions or challenges to the majority point of view, the system did not undergo the much-needed debate and discussion that is necessary of any democratic governance system. Although not entirely Cheney's responsibility, his unwillingness to instigate debate did not serve the intelligence system well.

The Secretaries of State and Defense also played an important role in the decision making process throughout the Bush administration, and particularly the decision to invade Afghanistan and retaliate against al Qaeda. Secretary of State Colin Powell, selected in part to improve the perceived legitimacy of the Bush administration and secure confidence in its foreign policy, was a strong personality: his tenure began, and ended, with a reversed power dynamic between himself and the president such that "it was impossible to imagine Mr. Bush ever challenging or overruling Mr. Powell on any issue."¹⁵⁴ Although Powell and his department were often skeptical of the President's decisions, evidence suggests that Powell was not particularly outspoken in NSC meetings and as such, did not wield as much influence as he could have given his experience and title.¹⁵⁵ This deference to the President perpetuated the issues of majority mentality.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 320

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 320

¹⁵⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, "The Powell Perplex," *New York Times*, 18 December 2000

¹⁵⁵ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 322-323

Conversely, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, another man with significant experience, seems to have been much more forceful in his opinions, both at NSC meetings and in general. His consistent memoranda regarding what he believed to be improvements to process are clear examples of his willingness to make an impression and express his own viewpoints.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Rumsfeld's strong personality seems to have greatly contrasted the personalities of other NSC members. His dominant personality also meant that his opinions were often given preference, particularly those on foreign policy. The failure to critically examine his recommendations and the dismissal of issues led to over-efficiency in decision making that ultimately caused the United States' policy on al Qaeda and Afghanistan to be too little, too late.¹⁵⁷

NSA Condoleezza Rice "enjoy[ed] the trust and confidence" of the President, which permitted her to attend NSC meetings and be heavily involved in NSC decision making.¹⁵⁸ Unlike most NSAs, Rice was given the opportunity to impose her own foreign policy views on a seemingly deferential NSC.¹⁵⁹ While not a traditional role for the NSA, Rice's personal mandate was to resolve interagency conflict through a bridging approach that often did not resolve key issues.¹⁶⁰ This bridging was not an explicit attempt to improve bureaucratic red tape or to negate stovepiping, but to resolve conflicts between agencies before they reached the NSC or the President. The result was not only a distraction from analyzing threats and issues, but also a coalescing of opinions and assessments that once again negated debate and critical discussion by the NSC. Rice's

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 324

¹⁵⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 213

¹⁵⁸ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 327

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*

academic background as Stanford Provost clearly instilled a sense of conflict resolution that, though helpful in preventing negative animosity, also prevented constructive disagreement. Her interventions within the system caused significant turmoil as the agencies themselves rejected organizational changes, causing significant tension within the system and preventing it from focusing on threats during the transition period.¹⁶¹

Overall, the personalities involved in decision making in 2001 did not benefit the system. The unwillingness of anyone within the system to challenge viewpoints or think critically about threats meant that the system could not respond to actual threats. The personality of DCI Tenet allowed him to remain DCI, but his trial period meant that he could have little influence on the system and was required to politicize briefing reports to manage the administration and keep his position. In early 2001, the system was adjusting to a new government and consequentially the intelligence community tread carefully to avoid upsetting a precarious balance.

Bureaucracy between decision makers and the intelligence community in 2001 did not create the intelligence system's problems: the head of the intelligence community had a direct line to the president through the President's Daily Briefings (PDBs) and information was able to travel quickly from the head of one organization to the head of the other. While Tenet and Rice met weekly, Tenet and Bush met daily to discuss the PDBs.¹⁶² It was the bureaucracy at other levels of both organizations that had a dramatic impact on the transfer of knowledge between the two. Perhaps most prominent is the bureaucracy within the intelligence community: the DCI, who headed the CIA and the

¹⁶¹ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 199-200

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 204

Ibid, 254

intelligence community in general, was structurally an important position, but in practice did not accomplish all that was necessary. The 9/11 Commission Report identifies the difficulties the intelligence community had in sharing information between agencies under the purview of the DCI: not all of the agencies had access to the appropriate information at the appropriate times.¹⁶³ The result was an inability by any agency to realize the potential importance of particular information. The Phoenix Memorandum is one such instance of bureaucratic difficulties that may have provided decision makers with the requisite information to protect national security. That the electronic communication warning of “radical Middle Easterners attending flight school” was blocked before it even reach the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Headquarters, and was thus not able to enter into the intelligence system, indicates an overabundance of bureaucratic red tape that prevented any agency from acquiring a complete understanding of the threats against the United States.¹⁶⁴ As agencies were not able to communicate well amongst each other, the final product of intelligence available for consumption was not as valuable as it could have been.

Furthermore, bureaucracy within the decision making organization prevented issues from being dealt with effectively. The checks and balances that exist within the American system serve to ensure that no one person or body has too much power or control. However, these same checks and balances also serve to incidentally prevent decisions from being made on particular issues: Congress, which until 2001 held the power to declare war and traditionally controls the intelligence budgets, had limited intelligence information throughout the lead up to 9/11 and the Afghanistan invasion. The

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 271

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 83

limited information, as well as the requirement of Congress to authorize spending on intelligence programs, and thus to direct intelligence programs, meant that the United States had little capacity to improve or redirect its intelligence production, resulting in a decreased consumption capacity.¹⁶⁵ Congress's inability to address the issues of terrorism in 2001 indicates the inefficiencies of the American governmental system and the potentially negative effects on decision making.

Although the bureaucratic nature of the United States government was not fundamentally problematic in early 2001, many of the nascent issues that existed became considerably more problematic throughout the year as senior decision makers began to recognize the reality and scope of threats against the United States. At the most senior levels bureaucracy did not prevent reports from reaching the President, but at operational levels reports were made less effective due to bureaucracy. Ultimately, the slow movement of a large and bureaucratic organization such as the United States' federal government meant that non-immediate threats would have needed to be identified and acted upon months earlier in order to have been prepared for an attack such as 9/11.

The tense relationship between the decision makers and the intelligence community, particularly in the first months of the Bush administration, undermined the capacity of the intelligence system. The individuals involved in decision making, as well as the DCI, had strong personalities and clear biases on threat priorities that severely compromised the relationship between the two groups. The unwillingness of decision makers to even consider the terrorist threat a serious issue offended the intelligence community to such an extent that Richard Clarke eventually requested a change of

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 103

position to another portfolio as he believed he could not make any further progress on the counter-terrorism file in the current decision making environment.¹⁶⁶ The ability of the two groups, with fundamentally divergent philosophies on the importance of intelligence matters, thus made the relationship ineffective in early 2001.

The relationship was further compromised by the lack of trust within the intelligence system. In part due to the political nature of appointments, but in large part due to the strong personalities within the decision making organization, the basis for trust did not exist. Decision makers did not believe that the intelligence community was addressing the right security threats and as such behaved in a manner contrary to the suggestion of the intelligence community. This lack of trust in early 2001 significantly affected the relationship between the two organizations and undermined the credibility of the intelligence community and the capability of the intelligence system.

Overall, the transition from the Clinton to the Bush administration, the strong personalities, and the unwillingness of new decision makers to trust the established intelligence community negatively affected the consumption of intelligence in early 2001. These factors resulted in an unclear policy direction, an unwillingness to consider certain recommendations, and ultimately a systemic ignorance of South Asia and Afghanistan. Without a clear direction established by the new administration during this period, an emphasis could not be placed on Afghan issues by the intelligence community in the successive months.

During the early months of 2001, the United States intelligence system was sufficiently capable: no direct security threats existed and the new administration needed

¹⁶⁶ Coll, 548

some time to adapt and adjust to the reality of their environment. Although significant improvements could have been made and the administration could have begun some projects sooner, the system had no reason to alter its operations.

4.2.2 Summer 2001 (pre-9/11)

Intelligence Production

Summer 2001, the “summer of threat,” increased the importance of Afghanistan and al Qaeda relative to other security threats investigated and reported on by the intelligence community.¹⁶⁷ The PDBs during the summer months validated much of what the transition team had discussed in January, and forced decision makers to begin a discussion of what the policy toward Afghanistan ought to be, given its willingness to provide sanctuary to bin Laden and al Qaeda.

The intelligence community’s threat reporting during summer 2001 indicates a clear availability of intelligence related to potential attacks against the United States: intercepts and human agents both confirmed the likelihood of an al Qaeda attack and more than thirty-three “different intercepts indicating a possible imminent al Qaeda attack” were reported between May and July.¹⁶⁸ Many of these intercepts suggested possible aviation related attacks and, in hindsight, provide clear evidence to suggest direct threats to the United States and its citizens.¹⁶⁹ The 9/11 Commission Report provides evidence of “more than 40 intelligence articles in the PDBs from January 20 to September 10, 2001, that related to Bin Ladin (*sic*)” indicating that the intelligence

¹⁶⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 254

¹⁶⁸ Coll, 566

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*

community was fully aware of the threats to the United States and was communicating these to key decision makers.¹⁷⁰ Although the PDBs are highly sensitive and only available to certain officials, the frequency of reporting on bin Laden suggests that the intelligence community was acutely aware of the threat.¹⁷¹ Overall, the production of intelligence on terrorism issues originating in Afghanistan was effective and significant amounts of material were produced during this period. Although there were limited substantiated reports, enough existed that the 30 April CIA briefing described al Qaeda as “the most dangerous group we face” due to its “leadership, experience, resources, safe haven in Afghanistan, [and] focus on attacking” the United States.¹⁷²

By mid-summer, the threat analysis had shifted: a 10 July CIA briefing paper and meeting between DCI Tenet and NSA Rice suggests that the intelligence community was producing important information regarding the threats to the United States: in the meeting, Tenet and counterterrorism chief J. Cofer Black indicated that “al Qaeda was going to attack American interests, possibly in the United States itself” and that “this was a major foreign policy problem that needed to be addressed immediately.”¹⁷³

Furthermore, the now-declassified 6 August PDB indicates that the CIA clearly understood that bin Laden intended to strike in the United States. While unable to corroborate the reports of bin Laden wanting to hijack a plane (ostensibly as a means of negotiating the release of senior al Qaeda members), the briefing does note that “patterns of suspicious activity [are occurring] in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in

¹⁷⁰ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 254

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 203

¹⁷³ “Two Months Before 9/11, an Urgent Warning to Rice” *Washington Post* 1 October 2006, sec. A

New York.”¹⁷⁴ The report further goes on to say that over 70 field investigations were underway at this time investigating the threats.¹⁷⁵ As such, it is clear that the intelligence being produced regarding threats to the United States was strong. Specific intelligence related to Afghanistan and the means by which the United States government might combat the threat posed by al Qaeda was lacking considerably however, thereby limiting the potential value of the intelligence that did exist.

Although many plans had been developed and put in place to kill or capture bin Laden and other al Qaeda ringleaders, none were ever effectively supported, in part due to a lack of reliable intelligence to confirm the location of bin Laden and the scope of civilian casualties. Both the Clinton and Bush administrations were particularly concerned about the potential consequences of a failed attack against bin Laden, especially given the lack of direct evidence connecting him to attacks against the United States. The ill-fated el-Shifa attack of the Clinton administration became a political lesson that led to an unwillingness to conduct operations against al Qaeda: if the United States launched an operation “to kill or capture bin Laden, and the mission failed, it would have elevated the opinion of al Qaeda and its leader while making the United States look impotent,” a concern that was particularly pronounced in the early months of the Bush administration.¹⁷⁶

Prior to 9/11, the intelligence community was producing great quantities of reliable information but does not appear to have been producing intelligence information

¹⁷⁴ National Security Agency, *Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US* “President’s Daily Briefing” (Washington, D.C.: 6 August 2001) Declassified 10 April 2004
<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB116/pdb8-6-2001.pdf>

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁶ Michael Zenko, *Between Threats and War: U.S. Discrete Military Operations in the Post-Cold War World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Series, 2010), 72

related to addressing identified threats. This was problematic. Without sufficient and reliable intelligence information on ways in which to address the problem, the information on al Qaeda threats was not useful to United States decision makers. Had the intelligence community been able to provide information on bin Laden's location, on the specific hijackers, or information on how to support either Massoud or Pakistan's ISI to do so in their stead, the intelligence may have been valuable in achieving a victory, even if that victory was not part of any documented strategy or policy.

Intelligence Consumption

By the end of April, the Bush administration had altered its approach to al Qaeda: Bush indicated that he was "tired of swatting flies," preferring to "play offense" in dealing with the threats emanating from Afghanistan.¹⁷⁷ However, the complexities in understanding the situation on the ground at this time meant that the only course of action available at that time was to develop or review plans to aid Massoud and implement strikes against al Qaeda. The administration was not yet capable of understanding the bigger strategy questions related to the linkages between al Qaeda and their allies in Pakistan.¹⁷⁸

The personalities that dominated the decision making group within the United States in 2001 meant delays in consuming the intelligence that was available, a categorization of available intelligence information as unreliable, and a failure to request additional intelligence information that may have saved time later. As neither Afghanistan nor al Qaeda were considered imminent threats by key decision makers, due

¹⁷⁷ Barton Gellman, "A Strategy's Cautious Evolution," *The Washington Post*, 20 January 2002

¹⁷⁸ Coll, 565

primarily to their Cold War-era and Eurocentric biases, swift decision making was not prioritized during the pre-9/11 period and resulted in no tangible outcomes. On 4 September, the Bush Cabinet met to discuss a National Security Presidential Directive that outlined a new policy toward al Qaeda and Afghanistan: it was agreed that the United States needed to support Massoud, but no one could agree on whether or not to deploy a Predator drone for anything more than a reconnaissance mission.¹⁷⁹ Yet again, personal biases and an inability to make a contentious decision stunted United States decision making. The intelligence consumption during this period was poor. It was an improvement on earlier intelligence consumption however, as both the intelligence community and decision makers had finally concluded that an imminent threat existed and that a strategy needed to be developed.

Despite a March agreement in principle about the need to address the issue by “initiat[ing] a comprehensive review of U.S. policy on Pakistan and explor[ing] policy options on Afghanistan,” the *how* still needed to be determined.¹⁸⁰ During the summer months, the processes of developing a Vice-Presidential task force to “look at preparations for managing a possible attack by weapons of mass destruction and at more general problems of national preparedness,” and a comprehensive review of policy options, began in earnest response to the surge in intelligence reporting on terrorism.¹⁸¹ Although the threats were considered unreliable, there was a general sense that something

¹⁷⁹ The debate over the use of a Predator drone stemmed from an acknowledgement that the expensive aircraft would eventually be recognized by the Taliban and shot down, thereby limiting its potential utility in the future. While one side argued that reconnaissance was necessary for conducting any kind of operation, the other side argued that the drone should not be flown until it could safely be armed and have a direct affect. The stalemate between intelligence gathering and operating on intelligence certainly resulted in poor performances in both areas.

Coll, 580

¹⁸⁰ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 203

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 204

needed to be done. The lack of imminent threat and the inefficiencies of the policy process, were mitigating factors in achieving efficiency.¹⁸²

The decision making bureaucracy significantly stifled action on the Afghanistan file in the lead up to 9/11. It would take years to investigate, develop, and implement any form of policy on South Asia, let alone al Qaeda and the terrorist threat: despite impatience on the part of several intelligence officials as well as the President, there was no incentive in summer 2001 to speed the process.¹⁸³ Donald Rumsfeld's 10 September 2001 Department of Defense speech clearly outlines the issues that existed within the United States bureaucracy, calling it an "adversary that poses a threat, a serious threat, to the security of the United States of America . . . it's the Pentagon bureaucracy. Not the people but the processes. Not the civilians but the systems."¹⁸⁴ Rumsfeld's recollection of the bureaucracy being bloated through the duplication of duties and inert because of gridlock on the eve of 9/11 suggests that the bureaucracy, despite the concerted efforts of Rumsfeld and Rice in the preceding nine months, was not ready for the upcoming challenges and was an important factor that prevented the intelligence system from being as effective as it needed to be during this critical period.¹⁸⁵

While the bureaucracy halted progress, the relationship between the intelligence community and decision makers slowly became more functional. The 4 September cabinet meeting included a prolonged discussion of possible solutions to the problem, including flying a Predator drone over Tarnak Farm and working directly with

¹⁸² *Ibid*

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 202

¹⁸⁴ Donald Rumsfeld, "Bureaucracy to Battlefield," (speech to DOD Acquisition and Logistics Excellence Week Kickoff 10 September 2001)

¹⁸⁵ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 333

Massoud.¹⁸⁶ In both proposed solutions, the CIA and NSC were willing to cooperate. The relationship between the two entities had taken nearly nine months to develop but was finally ready to begin tackling important security issues related to twenty-first century terrorism.

While the relationship slowly developed, so too did the trust of decision makers. The willingness of members of the NSC and the President to listen attentively to intelligence community briefings on Afghanistan and al Qaeda beginning in August 2001 suggests that the decision makers were beginning to trust the intelligence community, and its analysis of threats. Unfortunately, the development of this trust was too little too late.

The intelligence produced during the summer did eventually lead to the creation of an action plan that would ensure the elimination of bin Laden and, if necessary, the overthrow of the Taliban. This indicates a willingness by decision makers to engage in conversations about the threat emanating from Afghanistan, but it did not occur until late summer.¹⁸⁷ As Coll notes, “after five months of discussion and delay they had arrived at relatively cautious, gradual plans that departed from Clinton policies in their eventual goals, but not in many of their immediate steps.”¹⁸⁸ The project was estimated to take three years.¹⁸⁹ By 10 September, after news had broken regarding Massoud’s assassination, the Deputies Committee rounded out the 4 September National Security Presidential Directive, agreeing on a three phase plan. The first phase was to increase diplomatic pressure on the Taliban to expel or give up bin Laden while simultaneously providing covert aid to the Northern Alliance and other anti-Taliban groups. Second, if

¹⁸⁶ Coll, 581

¹⁸⁷ Tomsen, 557

¹⁸⁸ Coll, 583-584

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 584

diplomacy failed, they would undertake a covert war in which anti-Taliban forces would attack al Qaeda directly. Third, should both fail, a direct attack by the United States to overthrow the Taliban would occur.¹⁹⁰ The decision makers had finally begun to consume intelligence effectively by 10 September: the intelligence that had always existed was now perceived as reliable and valuable due to the improved relationship and trust between the intelligence community and decision makers. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine whether the intelligence system may have been capable of providing security for the United States in its September 2001 form. The catalytic events of the following morning would fundamentally alter the decision making paradigm and initiate crisis decision making.

4.2.3 Fall 2001 (post-9/11)

Intelligence Production

Following the 9/11 attacks, it was abundantly clear that the American intelligence on Afghanistan was inadequate. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld reflected in 2010 that the 2001 intelligence community, having had to respond to budget cuts and the lack of threat emanating from Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal, was unprepared to provide even basic information in preparing for war: “our intelligence personnel did not know the extent to which tribal leaders would tolerate, let alone welcome American forces into the country. We didn’t even have an up-to-date picture of the terrain. In some cases our analysts were working with decades-old British maps.”¹⁹¹ Rumsfeld’s observations suggest that there was a distinct unavailability of intelligence information about

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 583-584

¹⁹¹ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 369-370

Afghanistan during a period of key decision making regarding whether to conduct a full military operation or engage in surgical and diplomatic operations. The lack of available intelligence information was further compounded by the unreliability of information: few of the intelligence “operatives and analysts spoke the Afghan languages” and the intelligence community itself was open about how “spotty” the “early intelligence information” provided to the decision makers was, and thus its low value in planning operations.¹⁹²

As invading Afghanistan or engaging in anything other than diplomatic relations with the Taliban was not considered by decision makers prior to the attacks, the intelligence community had no mandate to gather intelligence related to a possible military operation in the country. Decision makers had not directed the intelligence community to produce intelligence on this area and as a result the available intelligence was sparse and unreliable. Although surgical airstrikes against al Qaeda strongholds had been previously contemplated, intelligence had never been sufficient to warrant authorization. Furthermore, as there had not been any indication that the United States would become involved in Afghanistan, diplomatic intelligence on Pakistan, who supported the Taliban, was not acquired. The lack of South Asian strategy had become painfully apparent.

The daily threat reports were unique in that they were able to provide reliable intelligence: the reports “cautioned that additional terrorist attacks were likely.”¹⁹³ As the majority of intelligence produced during this period remains classified, it is necessary to extrapolate what intelligence information may have been available between 9/11 and the

¹⁹² Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 370

¹⁹³ *Ibid*

7 October invasion. Although much of the information used to coordinate the invasion appears to have been from intelligence collected before 9/11, the analysis and communication of intelligence material to decision makers was more important than the collection of additional material given the timelines and desire to begin operations. Generally, there was sufficient intelligence available in the month prior to the invasion to launch a successful takeover of Kabul and eliminate the Taliban. This intelligence was reliable and valuable enough to complete that task, although the intelligence available to kill or capture bin Laden was significantly lacking.

As discussed below, the United States was aware of its intelligence gaps but was willing to accept the consequences in favour of immediate action that was based on decent intelligence. The events of 9/11 shocked the intelligence system. Decision makers were forced to initiate a response and vindicate the emotions of the American public. While 9/11 did cause a major shift in the direction of intelligence production, the reallocation of resources and a shift in focus takes time. By the time of the invasion on 7 October, the intelligence community had not yet had an opportunity to properly prepare decision makers or the armed forces. As such, the availability and reliability of intelligence was adequate for the purpose of decision making, but less so for implementing an invasion.

Intelligence Consumption

The consumption of intelligence in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 was complicated by conflicting reports, the feeling of loss, and a need for retribution. All of these sentiments are reflected in the 14 September Congressional Record for the House of Representatives as they debated a resolution that has come to be known simply as the

Authorization for the Use of Military Force.¹⁹⁴ Although decision making of this magnitude generally resides with the President and his cabinet, the declaration of war has been the prerogative of Congress since the enactment of the United States Constitution in 1787. As such, when the decision in September 2001 became a question of whether or not to engage in a war with the self-declared enemies of the United States, the decision making body that must analysed following 9/11 is Congress.

While personalities and biases continued to be an important element in determining the course of action, the will of the American people was an increasingly important factor in the aftermath of 9/11: the people were enraged and sought revenge for the attacks on their homeland. Bush's comments immediately after the attacks, that American "freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts . . . [but] we stand together to win the war against terrorism" are indicative of the emotions broadly experienced throughout the country and were more influential in driving a response than any individual personality in the NSC.¹⁹⁵ The events of 9/11 fundamentally altered the way in which United States decision makers consumed intelligence information. The month-long period of mobilization between the attacks and the successful invasion of Afghanistan proves that the United States intelligence system functioned well in wartime and had the capacity to do so, particularly when motivated by civilian intent.

¹⁹⁴ Congressional Record: House of Representatives, 107th Congress, *Terrorist Bombing* (Washington, D.C.: 14 September 2001), <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2001/9/14/house-section/article/H5635-2>

¹⁹⁵ White House Archives, *Selected Speeches of George W. Bush*, 57-58

The CIA and the NSC were able to function between 14 September and 7 October with minimal bureaucratic interference. All involved were working toward the same objectives and the President was able to override any possible delays within the bureaucracy as the invasion of Afghanistan had become the priority for the entirety of the United States. Given this, the consumption of available intelligence was efficient and reactive, something it had not been in the preceding nine months.

The relationship between Congress and the intelligence community during this time is unclear: while the intelligence community was clearly working above capacity in analyzing additional threats, briefing the President, and making preparations for an imminent war in a country that had not yet been fully analysed, the intelligence community was not providing sufficient information to the decision making body that would be responsible for declaring war. The comments of Mr. Foley in the House of Representatives on 14 September outline the lack of information received by Congress: “I have heard over the last 24 hours concerns from Members that they are not being briefed enough and they are not being told enough and they are not being in the loop enough,” indicating a deficiency in information reaching that body.¹⁹⁶ However, Mr. Foley’s comments also suggest that Congress did not feel at this time the need to have sufficient information on what was occurring, and would be comfortable devolving their power to declare war to the President, who was in fact much better informed, provocatively stating “they cannot find their loved ones, and we are demanding more briefings.”¹⁹⁷ Comments such as these are indicative of the public motivation for engaging in war in Afghanistan.

¹⁹⁶ Congressional Record: House of Representatives, 107th Congress, *Sticking Together in these Difficult Times* (Washington, D.C.: 14 September 2001), H5633-H5634 <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2001/9/14/house-section/article/H5633-3>

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*

In making the decision, intelligence was not fully necessary. In undertaking the decision, intelligence was required, but not available.

Congress' decision to pass the Authorization for the Use of Military Force on 14 September put in motion a series of decision making changes that positively altered the efficacy of the intelligence system: by charging the President with the decision to declare war, Congress shifted the responsibility of this important decision to a branch of the government that had the best relationship with the intelligence community and was best informed about developments. From 14 September onward, the relationship between Congress and the intelligence community was less important than the relationship between the intelligence community and the decision makers within the NSC.

The relationship between the intelligence community and the President's decision making community in the lead-up to invasion was particularly complex: given the focus on minimizing civilian casualties and an acute awareness of the limits to the intelligence information the CIA could provide, it was necessary not only to work with local intelligence agencies and regional allies,¹⁹⁸ but also to merge "the CIA's broad authorities and experienced intelligence operatives with the Defense Department's greater military resources" in order to more effectively streamline the process and ensure greater strategic effectiveness.¹⁹⁹ While this increased cooperation indicates the strength of the relationship between the two communities during the period immediately before the invasion, it does so at the highest levels: those in the lower ranks of the CIA in particular were not convinced of the arguments made to intertwine the agencies' efforts and many

¹⁹⁸ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 374

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 375

viewed the merger as a subordination of the intelligence community.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, this type of operational arrangement necessitated an increasingly effective communication strategy between the agencies, which was accomplished through weekly meetings between CIA Director George Tenet and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.²⁰¹

By 9/11 the trust between the decision makers and the intelligence community had fully matured. Decision makers trusted the intelligence they were receiving and were therefore willing to act more efficiently on that information. This was particularly evident in intelligence regarding developments in South Asia and especially Afghanistan. The belief in the intelligence community and associated intelligence reports allowed decision makers to engage differently with the intelligence material. While 9/11 itself verified the previous reports of the intelligence community, it also symbolized a shift in how the two communities interacted with each other. Although 9/11 was predominantly a catalyst for invasion, it was also a catalyst for solidifying the trust between the intelligence community and decision makers.

4.3 Conclusion

Throughout 2001 the United States intelligence system was complex: intelligence information was collected and analyzed at several levels on a variety of different threats and in many cases this information was communicated directly to key decision makers. However, the reliability of that intelligence information seems to have been questionable in a number of circumstances that led to a dismissal of important information. This in large part stemmed from a lack of trust in the intelligence community by newly elected

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 375-376

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 375

decision makers. In addition to the complexity of the intelligence community, in which agencies did not necessarily share intelligence information and could not verify each other's reports, the lack of trust meant significant limits to the value that the intelligence may have had in decision making.

Additionally, the complexities within the United States government system were overwhelming: the transition between the Clinton and Bush governments in early 2001 was devastating for any continuity of projects and appears to have delayed decision making on the questions of al Qaeda and Afghanistan by several months. Combined with a host of strong personalities and unclear understandings of the threats and challenges of the new millennium, decision making was compromised throughout the first nine months of 2001. The tragic and unexpected events of 9/11 shocked the entire intelligence system into a new way of operations that resulted in massive changes to the system. More importantly, the shock of 9/11 prompted "democracy's best oversight mechanism," the public, into calling for immediate action and responding to the attacks and ongoing threats.²⁰²

²⁰² National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 103

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Afghanistan, despite multiple invasions at different points in history, tends to be quickly forgotten by strategists and politicians: the same mistakes occur each time a state chooses to invade. Rarely however, do invasions occur in quick succession as they did with the December 1979 invasion by the Soviets and the October 2001 invasion by the Americans. As the previous chapters have shown, intelligence on Afghanistan by both the Soviets and the Americans was scant prior to their invasions. In this chapter, I directly compare the invasions and intelligence operations of the Soviets and Americans, concluding that the systems failed when decision makers placed too much or too little trust in their respective intelligence communities, and consequentially did not consider new evidence or appropriately adapt the intelligence system in a timely manner.

The Soviet and American experiences in invading Afghanistan, only twenty years apart, began from fundamentally different places. While the Soviet Union was already engaged in Afghanistan and used the invasion to assert greater control over the government, the United States had mostly disengaged from Afghanistan and the entirety of South Asia. The United States invasion occurred to develop a presence in the country, whereas the Soviet Union invasion had occurred to strengthen its presence. These intrinsically different motivations for invading the country seem at first to indicate that the two wars would begin very differently and require vastly different intelligence information. In actuality, the invasions were very similar: both were able to march into Kabul and overtake the capital in a matter of days. The tremendous disparity in force strength meant that neither the Soviets or Americans required the multiplication effect of intelligence in the initial invasion. The problem quickly became political: controlling the

country and accomplishing long term strategic goals in Afghanistan required significant intelligence, none of which the pre-war intelligence system produced.

5.1 Intelligence Production

Neither the Soviets nor the Americans put a strong emphasis on intelligence production or consumption in the months leading up to the invasions. Neither state intended to invade Afghanistan. The result was a failure to direct the intelligence system to produce intelligence on the country and prepare decision makers for the catalytic events – Taraki’s assassination and 9/11, respectively – or for the possibility of invasion. Although intelligence information will often help form direction setting as part of the feedback loop, it is clear in these two case studies that this transition point between production and consumption is where the intelligence system failed.

The weakness in transitioning between production and consumption, and more importantly between direction setting and production, produces unclear objectives for the intelligence community that negatively affects the availability, reliability, and utility of intelligence information. Although the information collected and produced by both intelligence communities was good, it could not achieve the necessary effect within the system. The lack of direction to focus on issues within Afghanistan meant that fewer resources were dedicated to that intelligence operation. Fewer resources meant less information available to the system, leading decision makers to misconstrue the situation in Afghanistan until invasion was necessary.

The Soviets had a number of human agents employed within the country during 1979, and strong diplomatic relations with many of the important actors in Afghanistan

that helped them general understand what was occurring. Although some information was available to them, the Soviets did not appear to invest in acquiring additional information, particularly secret information, that may have helped alert them to the intentions of Amin. As such, intelligence was available to the Soviets during 1979 and much more could have been available if direction setting had prioritized the situation in Afghanistan. The reliability of intelligence information was also fairly high.

The Americans had a stronger presence in Afghanistan in the lead up to the Soviet invasion than they did in the lead up to their own invasion. The Americans, having largely discarded Afghanistan as an important global actor following the Soviet withdrawal, had minimal information on the country in 2000 and 2001. The intelligence information that the Americans had collected was predominantly in the form of satellite imagery. No American human agents were located in Afghanistan, primarily because the decision makers had not developed a South Asia strategy. The result was a general lack of available intelligence on Afghanistan as a whole, although there is significant evidence to suggest that the intelligence system was nonetheless collecting information about the al Qaeda terrorist threat, primarily as a result of the 1996 and 1998 *fatwas* and the attacks on the U.S. Embassy and *U.S.S. Cole* in previous years. This intelligence information, not on Afghanistan itself but on the threat that came from Afghanistan, was generally reliable but was not received as such by decision makers.

Neither the Soviets nor the Americans had any clear indication that the Afghan threat was going to grow substantially in the months preceding their invasions. For both intelligence systems, Afghanistan was a blip on the radar but not sufficient enough to direct additional resources toward. In hindsight, the value of the intelligence information

that was collected clearly points toward a need to increase intelligence operations in the country well in advance of the invasion, but given contemporary needs and concerns, the intelligence itself was not enough to alter the policies of either state.

In sum, the intelligence operations of 1979 and 2001 were insignificant in Afghanistan. While a shift in policy may have precipitated additional intelligence resources to the country and may thus have altered the course of the pre-invasion decision making, it is not possible to conclude that intelligence production failed either the Soviets or the Americans.

5.2 Intelligence Consumption

Intelligence consumption prior to the Soviet and American invasions was particularly problematic. Although decision makers were not prioritizing intelligence on Afghanistan, they were also not effectively consuming the intelligence information that was available. Neither intelligence system's consumption process was in itself ineffective, but the individuals within the systems caused them to ultimately fail.

The dominance of key personalities and the character traits of important individuals within each system caused significant disruption to the normal functioning of both intelligence systems. The Soviet Union, dominated by the personality of Andropov, was subject to the biases and individual will of the intelligence chief. Conversely, the Americans were dominated by a group of strongly opinionated politicians that the political system empowered to direct foreign policy objectives. In both instances the biases of Andropov and the NSC had too great an influence on the direction setting of the intelligence system. The characters of key individuals in both case studies dominated the

characters of others who ought to have balanced out the biases and ensured a certain level of neutrality. In the Soviet case, the bias against Amin and toward increased capacity in Afghanistan led the intelligence community to report intelligence information to the CPSU that confirmed their desired course of action. This, combined with the strong personality of Andropov and the much weaker one of Brezhnev, meant that the intelligence community enjoyed excessive control over the decision making process.

Conversely, American decision makers were unwilling to consider seriously the threat analyses of the intelligence community until much too late: despite clear warnings from the intelligence community, and even holdover mid-level bureaucrats, the senior decision makers' convictions in their own interpretations of global affairs controlled the decision making process without sufficient information to support their biases. The contrast between the two cases suggests that intelligence systems are not immune to biases nor set up to overcome the challenges of strong personalities that seek to shape the system's responses.

Bureaucracy was also not a major issue within either the Soviet or the American case: although bureaucracy clearly existed and prevented certain information from being considered by decision makers, it is a relatively minor flaw. While modifications to the bureaucracy in either case may have provided additional information, it could not have compensated for the characters of individuals involved in providing or accepting the information. Perhaps more importantly within an analysis of bureaucracy in the systems, is an analysis of the governmental systems of both the Soviet Union and the United States: the authoritarian Soviet system, which Andropov was able to manipulate, prevented anyone within the system from questioning the decisions of the CPSU

Politburo. It also negated any contradictory evidence from entering into the system to influence the final decision: that Andropov, a man of strong convictions on the issue of Afghanistan, was both the final producer of intelligence and the de facto decision maker proved to be problematic within the intelligence system. Contrarily, in the American case the democratic nature of presidential elections meant that a new administration was transitioning in the midst of an escalation of activities in Afghanistan and those who could have questioned decision makers had been relegated by virtue of their political affiliations. The result was inefficiencies in transmitting important information regarding threats and significant delays in adjusting preconceptions to reality.

Additionally, the systems were plagued by stovepiping of intelligence information and an unwillingness of intelligence agencies to share either their raw or produced intelligence with each other. The GRU and the KGB refused to share resources, primarily as the leaders of each organization disliked each other and disagreed on the meaning of intelligence information. The FBI and CIA also did not share information and failed to include other federal agencies, such as the FAA, in their discussions. While the position of DCI ought to have accommodated for this in the American case, it is clear that the DCI, as head of the CIA first, was in a position to prioritize his own agency's intelligence, particularly in his reports to the President. As such, the systems were effective in ensuring that the decision makers were able to receive intelligence information, but were much less effective in ensuring that all of the intelligence information was made available and that inter-agency conflict did not override strategic and security objectives.

The relationships between the decision makers and the intelligence community in both case studies are remarkably strong. In both systems a fairly effective relationship existed between the head of the intelligence community, Andropov for the Soviets and Tenet for the Americans, and the key decision makers, Brezhnev and Bush respectively. Both also included frequent meetings between the intelligence and decision making communities that allowed for information to transfer quickly and efficiently. However, the relationships lacked a balance of trust.

In the Soviet Union, Brezhnev, particularly given his own health issues, was overly trusting of the KGB and especially of Andropov. The result was significant authority inappropriately placed in Andropov. The Soviet intelligence system became dominated by the intelligence community and decisions lacked key input from decision makers who need to hold a greater position of power within the system. In the United States, the opposite was true: the decision makers, particularly Bush, did not have sufficient trust in the intelligence community and Tenet's reports, preferring to rely on their own biases. Although the Bush administration retained Tenet as DCI, indicating a potential belief in capabilities, it is clear that there was no behavioural intent of trust. The American intelligence system therefore became overly dominated by decision makers, lacking input from the intelligence community, which needs to have some influence. The influence of the intelligence community, derived from the trust placed in it by decision makers must be balanced, somewhere just below the influence of decision makers. In the Soviet case, the balance was too far in the direction of control. In the American case, the balance was too far in the direction of no control.

Overall, the consumption of intelligence in the lead up to the invasions was not effective: decision makers were not able to make good decisions based on intelligence information despite the availability of intelligence to them. This mainly stems from the personalities of those involved in the intelligence system and the imbalance of trust. The level of trust a decision maker has in the intelligence community is critical in determining the capacity of the intelligence system. In both case studies trust was improperly titrated resulting in decision makers maintaining too much or too little power in setting the direction of the system and in subsequently formulating policy decisions in the final consumption phase.

Although the intelligence communities in both the Soviet Union and the United States had recognized the threats to their respective state's strategic objectives, the immediacy of the threat was not clearly recognized by the decision makers, which resulted in inefficient responses. In part, this was due to the unwillingness of either decision making organization to direct their intelligence communities toward gathering additional intelligence information on the threats from Afghanistan during the year leading up to each respective invasion. The Soviets did not want to believe that they would have to intervene with military force and the Americans did not want to believe that they would be coerced into military intervention in a country in which they only wanted to undertake diplomatic operations. In either case, the functionality of the intelligence system was disrupted by imbalanced trust.

5.3 Effectiveness of Intelligence Systems in Preparing for Afghan Wars

In evaluating the overall effectiveness of the intelligence systems in making the decision to invade Afghanistan, it is important to recognize that neither system prepared the governments, their militaries, or their societies for the decade of war that would follow both invasions. Neither the Soviets nor the Americans considered their previous experiences in Afghanistan, or recent experiences, in their decision making. Nor did either system fully consider the outcomes or consequences of the invasion. Intelligence operations, which ought to prepare a government for the reality of war, did not consider these elements in full detail before a decision to invade was made. The result was political and military leaders misunderstanding the conflict they were embarking on and thus an inadequacy of strategy.

The 1979 and 2001 Afghan invasions both led to disastrous campaigns that involved both militaries for a decade or longer and failed to bring peace to the country. In both cases the campaign was flawed in its strategic outlook: although both the Soviets and Americans were clear in their rationale for invasion, they were not clear in either their specific objectives or their exit strategy. While both concluded that they wanted to remove the current government, and in the American case also eliminate al Qaeda, this does not seem to have been the final goal. Removal of the government took less than a month for both militaries, and yet both remained in Afghanistan for much longer. Given this, it is clear that the intelligence operations undertaken prior to the invasion did not prepare the decision makers to match their military strategy to their political strategic objectives in Afghanistan. The result was a lack of clarity in the purpose of the Afghan missions, leading to long and drawn out conflicts. If either the Soviets or the Americans

had a better understanding of the situation in Afghanistan, and therefore a better understanding of what they wanted to accomplish in the country and how to accomplish it, it is likely that the conflicts would have been much shorter and much less costly.

5.4 Conclusion

The similarities between the Soviet and American experiences in Afghanistan are overwhelming: although the specific problems existed in different parts of the intelligence system, both systems were subject to the same inability to overcome the powerful personalities that dominated the system and influenced decision making. The intelligence systems, though not perfect by any means, were functional and allowed decision makers the possibility to have sufficient intelligence information to make informed decisions on Afghanistan. The domination of the system by certain individuals made this impossible in the context of Afghanistan. These individuals, combined with weaker characters amongst the supporting cast, imbalanced the levels of trust by decision makers in the intelligence community and created an ineffective power hierarchy that disrupted the system. This disruption not only prevented effective decision making in terms of the invasion itself, but also prevented decision makers from thinking strategically about their mission in Afghanistan and ensuring that the invasion had clear objectives and a critical end point.

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