

27. AFGHANISTAN

Background

Following the coup by General Mohammed Daud in 1973, Afghanistan underwent rapid changes. These involved the imposition of a secular civil-military régime, the implementation of an ambitious development strategy, and the broadening of relations with both East and West. In 1978 the Daud régime was overthrown by the Khalq faction of the pro-Moscow Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The newly formed Revolutionary Military Council attempted to implement a land redistribution programme and other reforms. These policies and the régime's tilt towards the Soviet Union gave rise to an anti-government insurgency, and the country's political, economic and military situation deteriorated rapidly.

In September 1979 the regime was toppled by the backers of Hafizolla Amin, who in turn was replaced in December by Babrak Karmal of the PDPA's Parcham wing. The Soviet Union, which had been assisting the Amin Government's counter-insurgency efforts through the provision of equipment and troops, became dissatisfied with Amin and engineered Karmal's takeover and supported it through direct intervention. By 1980 there were over 100,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

In the first year of the occupation, large-scale military operations were conducted to overcome the resistance. However, the Mujahideen guerillas retreated into their mountain strongholds and adopted hit-and-run tactics which led the Soviet Union to focus on defence of the cities and major transportation arteries while leaving rural operations to the remnants of the Afghan army (50,000 to 60,000 troops had deserted since the Soviet invasion). Major Soviet offensives in the Panjshir Valley (through which