**Rebuttal**

It’s clear that Wilson was not the only player affecting the decisions on his war. The members of the Reagan administration were more focused on overcoming the “Vietnam Syndrome,” despite the Soviet Union’s desire to negotiate peace with the West when Gorbachev came to power. Yet Reagan requested CIA Director William Casey to release propaganda and disinformation to the American people regarding the Soviet-Afghan War. Casey went on to lead the public to believe that the Soviet Union was a much greater threat than they actually were, and that those fighting the Red Army were liberators, not terrorists. The propaganda would continue well beyond Reagan’s presidency and would include hiding the atrocities that the Afghan freedom fighters committed, as well as details of the war from the American people (Parry). This cover for the mujahideen and the blind support for them by the CIA and Reagan allowed them to grow to the point of instability.

Moreover, the commitment for a clean-cut victory against the Soviets led the CIA to choose war over peace. In fact, Gorbachev had promised to remove Soviet troops from Afghanistan and had asked for a united government that incorporated elements of both the KGB-backed Najibullah regime in Kabul and the CIA-backed Islamic fundamentalists. However, because of Defense Secretary Robert Gates’ believing that the mujahideen could easily defeat the Najibullah regime after the Soviets’ pulling out, he turned down the plans for peace and insisted on a forceful takeover. In his memoir, Defense Secretary Robert Gates wrote “I told [the CIA] that most analysts did not believe Najibullah’s government could last without active Soviet military support.” As a result, when the George H. W. Bush administration entered office in 1989, instead of negotiating their geostrategic aims towards peace, continued the U.S. covert support for the mujahideen. However, Najibullah’s regime defied the CIA’s expectation of rapid collapse, beating back the mujahideen offensive for over three years. As Najibullah hung on, the war, the violence, and the disorder continued. (Parry) As historian Stephen Tanner says, the following years only strengthened the Soviet claim that the mujahideen, once in power, would result in disaster.

Furthermore, the endgame that followed the war, resulting in an Afghan insurgency, was not entirely the fault of Wilson’s. He had proposed numerous bills to try to rebuild Afghanistan for the better, most notably HO-118, which proposed the reconstruction of schools and villages. However, Congress, exhausted by the war, refused, leading to private armies clashing to gain power. (Conan)

**Terrorism**

The rapid growth of the Taliban and radical Islamic groups could be attributed to the actions of George W. Bush in the events following 9/11 rather than Wilson. When the Bush administration publicly announced that Pakistan was building an atomic bomb, it was clear to the Afghan mujahideen and the Taliban what the U.S.’s intentions were. During the war, the U.S. and Pakistan worked on an agreement that stated that Pakistan would help fight the Soviets for the U.S. if the U.S. supplied aid to the country and would not speak up about Pakistan’s construction of a nuclear warhead (Crile). However, since the U.S. had broken the agreement and with the Russians gone, the U.S. imposed immediate sanctions on Pakistan and made Pakistan an enemy for funding known terrorist groups. To the Afghan and Pakistani people, the U.S. began looking like another country who would come to dominate the Middle East. These actions only reinforced groups like the Taliban and Al Qaeda’s claims that the U.S. was seeking world domination, and helped them gather immense support.

[ video clip from movie ]

Wilson had admitted, “It would have been very easy and done for a minuscule amount of money. We should have done the basic things for a backward country that's trying to come out of (a war) and have a reasonable hope of economic success.” (Crile, 2007)

**9/11**

On September 11th, 2001, al-Qaeda militants hijacked four airliners. Two of the planes hit the towers of the World Trade Center, and one hit the Pentagon. There were nine thousand casualties in total. It’s difficult to not relate this incident to Wilson’s actions in Afghanistan. With his and the CIA’s gratuitous funding, the U.S. had directly armed and trained Afghan insurgents for acts of terror such as these.

In response to the attacks, Wilson admitted, “It didn't register with me for a week or two that this thing was all based in my mountains.” (Crile, 2007).

**Reflection**

**“**These things happened. They were glorious and they changed the world. And the people who deserved the credit are the ones who made the sacrifice. And then we fucked up the endgame.”— Wilson (Crile, 2007)

Wilson’s legacy remains that of a thirty-year Afghan civil war, the Taliban, and a misguided U.S. strategy of intervention. Although he is largely responsible for helping the mujahideen defeat the Soviet Army and advancing the collapse of the USSR, his poor execution afterwards left the region politically unstable and factionalized, causing decades of civil war and fundamentalism thatthat still affect us today.