

The Soviet-Afghan War, which took place during the era of General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan from 1979 to 1989, was a conflict with significant regional and global implications. It was a result of the Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan, prompted by the Soviet government's desire to prop up a friendly communist regime and prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the region.

1. **Context and Causes:** The origins of the conflict can be traced back to the 1978 Saur Revolution in Afghanistan, when a coup led by communist elements within the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew the government. This resulted in a power struggle within the country, with various factions vying for control. The communist government faced opposition from both Islamist mujahideen groups and traditional tribal leaders.
2. **Pakistan's Role:** Pakistan played a crucial role in the Soviet-Afghan War. As a neighboring country with historical and cultural ties to Afghanistan, Pakistan became a significant base for the Afghan resistance, known as the mujahideen. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) provided training, funding, and weapons to the Afghan mujahideen, facilitating their resistance against the Soviet forces.
3. **Afghan Resistance and International Involvement:** The Afghan resistance against the Soviet forces was diverse, comprising various factions with differing ideological and tribal affiliations. The resistance fighters, often referred to as mujahideen, received support not only from Pakistan but also from other countries. The United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Western and Muslim countries provided financial and military aid to the mujahideen, aiming to counter Soviet expansionism and uphold their own strategic interests.
4. **Impact on Pakistan:** The Soviet-Afghan War had profound consequences for Pakistan. The influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan was one of the major challenges faced by the Zia-ul-Haq government. With estimates ranging from three to five million, the refugee population strained Pakistan's resources, economy, and social fabric. Refugee camps were established along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, resulting in significant social and economic disruptions in the affected areas.
5. **Regional and Global Implications:** The conflict had far-reaching implications beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan. It became a proxy war between the Soviet Union and the United States, representing the larger Cold War struggle for influence. The war also served as a breeding ground for international jihadists, attracting fighters from various countries who would later become key figures in global terrorism.
6. **Withdrawal and Aftermath:** The Soviet Union faced mounting challenges and resistance throughout the war. In 1988, the Geneva Accords were signed, outlining the process for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. By 1989, the last Soviet troops had left, marking the end of the Soviet-Afghan War. However, the power vacuum left by the Soviet withdrawal contributed to continued instability and conflict in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, the Soviet-Afghan War during the Zia era was a complex and multifaceted conflict with regional and global implications. Pakistan played a crucial role in supporting the Afghan resistance against the Soviet forces, but it also faced challenges due to the large influx of Afghan refugees. The war had a lasting impact on Afghanistan, with the power vacuum leading to ongoing conflict and instability in the country. Additionally, the war shaped the global geopolitical landscape and contributed to the rise of international jihadist networks.