

Insurgencies and charlie wilsons war movie review

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In the 2007 film *Charlie Wilson's War*, US Representative Charlie Wilson (Tom Hanks) finds himself working to increase funding and support for the mujahedeen freedom fighters battling the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, often through underhanded and clandestine means. The film presents Wilson as a champion rallying behind a cause, idealistically hoping to help the mujahedeen defeat the Soviet Union and give them the help they desperately needed. Charlie uses substantial political bargaining and maneuvering to get the funding for CIA agent Gust Avrakotos' group, something that places his actions in a bit more ambiguous area with regards to political ethics. In essence, the film celebrates the intent behind supporting the fight against the Soviet Army, but by the end is cognizant of the disastrous circumstances that result from its involvement.

In terms of the actual struggle in Afghanistan during the Reagan era, the war being staged by the mujahedeen is most certainly a Type III insurgency - Global-Local. In this kind of insurgency, the local insurgency (namely, the mujahedeen fighting the Soviets) is given outside support (this time, from the United States), much like a Type II. However, this insurgency itself is part of a larger struggle, largely because of America's involvement - in this case, America's funding of the mujahedeen is part of their Cold War against the USSR.

During the course of the film *Charlie Wilson's War*, the mujahedeen seem to be in Phase 2 of the life cycle of an insurgency - here, the rebellion has recently started and the combatants go to work disrupting the administration of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. To that end, they need help with funding and equipment from powers like the United States to continue their

rebellion, which Charlie Wilson chooses to provide them. Wilson gets close to Avrakotos and his CIA group in Afghanistan in order to find ways to combat the more well-equipped Soviet Army. For example, the Mi-24 helicopter gunship provided to be a terrible enemy of the mujahedeen that they had no defense against. With the help of Wilson's political wrangling, he was able to help the group get possession of Stinger missile launchers - this allowed the mujahedeen to take down heavy artillery and equipment, leveling the playing field somewhat. This aid helped the insurgents by providing them with greater firepower and the money to keep operating in their guerilla operations.

The current state of affairs in Afghanistan can most certainly be paralleled to the mujahedeen's work in the 1980s, and could even be said to be caused by it. One of the things the film criticizes about Wilson's work in the war in Afghanistan is that the United States effectively helped the mujahedeen destroy their own country with their weapons; in the war to free their people, lots of collateral and infrastructure damage took place, to the point where nothing was left when the Soviets were turned away. Because of that, it left a tremendous power vacuum that allowed more radical elements (like Osama bin Laden) to start gaining a political foothold. The United States had completely withdrawn from the country after the Soviets left, giving the Afghans little to no assistance in rebuilding. This allowed these other figures to get into power, and resentment over the US's lack of political and foreign aid led to Muslim extremist elements rising from these events. Furthermore, they still had the weapons and training given to them through these clandestine CIA operations, effectively turning American weapons against

the country they came from.

In modern-day Afghanistan, we find a situation much like Iraq in the 2000s, and it also has parallels with the mujahedeen/Soviet fighting in the 1980s. This time, Muslim extremists are attacking American soldiers instead of Soviets, fighting on their own with the weapons already given to them by the United States. This same rebellion came about as a result of the power vacuum that was put in place after the US withdrew from Afghanistan, allowing resentment to build and fundamentalist figures like bin Laden to steer these groups in a different direction. This occurred in Phase 4 of their insurgency, wherein the government and political leaders come from the leaders of the insurgency, and foreign aid is withdrawn.

In conclusion, Charlie Wilson's War showcases an environment that was created with the best of intentions, but has now backfired into a politically dicey Middle Eastern conflict. Wilson used deceit and subterfuge to secure funding and weapons for the mujahedeen, but finds himself without support for the idea of supporting Afghanistan after the Soviet occupation. This leads to the resentment toward the US for using them for our own ends, culminating in the political situation we find ourselves in with the Middle East today - a new insurgency is happening in Afghanistan, and we are not in the role of the Soviets. The role of the US in Afghanistan is morally ambiguous at best, particularly given our unwillingness to support them after our ends had been met, a dilemma that Charlie Wilson's War explores in detail.

Works Cited

Nichols, Mike (dir.) *Charlie Wilson's War*. Perf. Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts, Philip Seymour Hoffman. Universal Pictures, 2007. Film.