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Modern Russian Reflections on the Soviet-Afghan War

by

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Introduction

The Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-1989 was a key event that preceded the collapse of the Soviet Union, the destruction of Afghanistan, the end of the Cold War, and the beginning of the West's Global War on Terrorism that has shaped the 21st Century. After the two World Wars, the Soviet Union emerged as one of the 20th century's two seemingly unstoppable superpowers, able to go toe-to-toe with the United States. Despite this power, the USSR lost its campaign in Afghanistan, a country of loosely connected tribes and clans that were constantly occupied with internal warfare. The Soviet Union, at one time the greatest threat and rival to America, suffered a crushing and embarrassing defeat as it withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. The United States would see itself as the victor of the Cold War following the Soviet failure in Afghanistan and the collapse of the Soviet Union. America would go on to enjoy economic prosperity and global influence in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the United States celebrated too quickly; after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, and Pentagon in Washington DC on September 11th, 2001, it too would get involved in Afghanistan. It would repeat many of the USSR's mistakes while fighting in Afghanistan against former mujahideen, such as Gulbaddin Hakmatyar, whose Holy Jihad shifted focus after the Soviet withdrawal towards the Americans and their allies. The instability following the Soviet withdrawal and the fall of Afghanistan's Communist government ultimately allowed for Taliban control of Afghanistan. Both of the last global superpowers fell in prestige after becoming involved in - and having to withdraw from - warfare in Afghanistan without a decisive victory. Despite the misinformed attitudes of many outside commentators that Afghanistan as a country was socially backwards and technologically

weak, individual Afghans from the countryside proved effective in combating the weapons and technology of modern warfare.

The goal of this paper is to analyze modern reports in the Russian-language press about the Soviet-Afghan War in order to better understand the experiences of those that fought and lived through the conflict. Current reflections on the Soviet experience in Afghanistan hold lessons for citizens and policymakers around the world. The intent is to understand the lessons of the Soviet Union's intervention in its neighbor's internal politics, and the devastating consequences that come with using military might to enact political judgment. Starting with texts written by Russian speakers in the Russian language decades after the war offers modern readers a chance to understand how these concepts shape the mindset of modern Russia and why the Soviet leadership made its decisions. It is helpful to translate, analyze and make use of sources from various points of view on the political spectrum, in order to gain a full picture of the war and how the mistakes of the Soviets can be avoided in the future. It is vital to ask the questions: "What rhetoric does the recent Russian press use in reflections on the Soviet-Afghan War? What does this rhetoric tell us about modern Russian sentiments concerning military interventions in other countries?"

Afghanistan

“How can a small power like Afghanistan which is like a goat between two lions or a grain of wheat between two strong millstones of the grinding mill, stand in the way of the two stones without being ground to dust?”

- Abdur Rahman Khan, the Iron Amir, 1900¹

To begin, Afghanistan has always been a complex territory with a weak central government characterized by unique geopolitical circumstances. In his August 2001 book, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of the Taliban*, author Larry P. Goodson explains that Afghanistan is defined by multiple key factors which are vital to understanding its status in modern times. He points particularly to these six factors: ethnic-linguistic cleavages, social structures, religious ideologies, long conflict, geopolitical position, and limited economic development.² Each of these key factors creates divisions that contribute to hindering the country from unifying and overcoming its history of warfare, poverty and illiteracy. Further, Goodson states: “Afghanistan has never been a homogeneous nation but rather a collection of disparate groups” which are “forced together by the vagaries of geopolitics.”³ The numerous tribes were historically in constant war with each other. The different ethnic groups and tribes were also separated by language, Tajiks speaking Persian, Pashtuns speaking Pashto, and Kabuli Afghans speaking primarily Dari.

¹ Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. Hoover Press, 1984. pg. 2

² Goodson, Larry P. *Afghanistan's Endless War*. University of Washington Press, 2001. pg. x

³ Goodson, Larry P. *Afghanistan's Endless War*. University of Washington Press, 2001. pg. 14

Goodson claims that Afghanistan cannot be categorized as a state, “a political entity that has a recognized territory, a population that sees itself as belonging to the state, and institutions of government that are sovereign within that territory.” Whether a monarchy, Communist, Islamic-militant or democratic government, Afghans in the countryside that make up the majority of the population in the countryside have historically dealt with their own local tribal leaders and traditional laws. During the times that different ethnic groups or tribes are not fighting each other, it is because they have united in waging war - either against the central power in Kabul, or a foreign invading army. At the same time, Afghanistan does not meet Goodson’s definition of a nation, “the shared identity, often centered on a common language, religion, history, or other cultural trait, that a group sometimes feels.”⁴ Afghanistan contains close to 25 prominent groups that can be categorized based on language and self-identity, the main five being: Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, and Chahar Aimaq - with Pashtun being the most prominent.⁵ The many tribes of Afghanistan generally spill over borders, with Pashtuns freely moving back and forth between Eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province, with the Tajiks and Uzbeks remaining close to their people across the borders to the north. The end result is Afghanistan's recent form, not a nation, or state - instead an area containing independent groups historically left alone by the weak central government. Goodson explains Afghanistan is “almost the archetype” of a country that suffers from what he defines as “weak state syndrome.” There is little authority held by the central government, with power instead administered by rural leadership. The little authority Kabul possesses has not historically been seen as legitimate. Afghanistan has been not only plagued with social-political-economic issues, but has also battled with internal conflicts worsened by external actors. Afghanistan’s

⁴ Goodson, Larry P. *Afghanistan's Endless War*. University of Washington Press, 2001. pg. 6

⁵ Goodson, Larry P. *Afghanistan's Endless War*. University of Washington Press, 2001. pg. 14

neighbors, the former-Soviet Central Asian powers (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan), have interests in controlling it, while Afghanistan also has to deal with regional powers that include: Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Each of these countries have significant interests in Afghanistan, having supported at least one of the actors fighting for control of Afghanistan in the modern civil wars.⁶ Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia have attempted to give power to their own interpretations of Islam within Afghanistan.

The stability of Afghan society is further threatened by tribal conflict, which can be placed into five different categories. The first category includes conflicts that arise among individuals within tribes, often cousins against cousins. This aspect of tribal conflict can be seen in Prince Mohammed Daoud Khan's betrayal of his cousin, King Mohammed Zahir Shah in 1973. Daoud Khan's rivalry with his cousin was personal, as well as political.⁷ The second category includes conflicts that can arise between groups within tribes, and the third covers conflicts between different tribes of the same ethnicity. This is followed by the fourth category, where conflicts arise between tribes of different ethnicities, and a fifth category, where 'one or more tribes' battle against the central powers in Kabul.⁸ While the tribes have no issue with sustaining conflict against each other, they have regularly shown the ability to join together in sustained warfare against larger forces attempting to encroach on the isolated communities farther from major cities. This holds true even when the resistance falls back into the habit of waging war on rival tribes.

⁶ Goodson, Larry P. *Afghanistan's Endless War*. University of Washington Press, 2001. pg. 4-6, 12.

⁷ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 89

⁸ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 57

Pakistan

Afghanistan's modern conflicts, which include both internal-factor motivated civil wars, and externally-driven foreign invasions and occupations, can be tied to the 1893 formation of the Durand Line, named after British Diplomat Sir Henry Mortimer Durand.⁹ This border was created to separate what is now modern Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Durand Line was formed in consideration of British regional interests, splitting the Pashtunistan region, the home of the Pashtun tribe. The Durand Line is now largely unrecognized by Afghanistan. The persistent issue created by the Pashtunistan matter was a source of tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 20th century. This tension would lead to Afghanistan relying on Russia for economic partnership.¹⁰ Understanding Pakistan's interests in the region is also critical to having a clear picture of the recent wars in Afghanistan's territory. Pakistan has supported the most extreme and unpopular warlords and mujahideen commanders in recent history, never wanting moderate leadership in Afghanistan that might create greater stability, prosperity and improved international relations. Pakistan has also opposed true pan-Islamic cooperation, instead consistently seeking leverage in the region in order to maintain parity with India. Pakistan's assistance to the mujahideen during the Soviet-Afghan War had less to do with resistance to Communism or waging a holy jihad, and more to do with regional control. Despite claiming otherwise, Pakistan instead sought to gain control within Afghanistan in order to deny influence in the region to its bitter rival India. During the Soviet-Afghan War, Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence, its chief covert intelligence agency, encouraged radical mujahideen commander

⁹ Baumann, Bob. "The Soviet Union in Afghanistan." The Dole Institute of Politics. YouTube. Nov 15, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JglkhXaTBUw>

¹⁰ Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. Hoover Press, 1984. pg. 36

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar over other more popular and moderate Afghan leaders. Stability was ignored in exchange for greater regional control.

When the American Central Intelligence Agency began Operation Cyclone in support of the Afghan mujahideen's battle against the Soviets, it started a working relationship with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. The ISI acted as a go-between for weapons transport and command coordination, as well as providing critical intelligence. The United States, still mindful of its failures in Vietnam, chose to rely on Pakistan for intelligence about Afghanistan. Robert D. Kaplan explains the thought process on this decision in simple terms: better to listen to the Pakistanis, they were the real experts in the region.¹¹

20th Century

“My last words to you, my son and successor, are: Never trust the Russians.”

- Abdur Rahman Khan, Amir of Afghanistan (1880-1901)¹²

The attempts of previous Afghan kings to modernize Afghanistan continuously failed, and before his death in 1901, Abdur Rahman Khan, the “Iron Emir,” warned his sons about modernizing too quickly.¹³ The Iron Emir was succeeded by his sons, followed by his grandson, Amanullah Khan, who reigned as the Emir of Afghanistan (1919-1926) and then King of

¹¹ Kaplan, Robert. *Soldiers of God*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2001. pg. xviii

¹² Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 91

¹³ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 63

Afghanistan (1926-1929). Amanullah Khan was followed by Mohammed Zahir Shah, the last King of Afghanistan, reigning for a 40-year period from 1933 to 1973. During Zahir Shah's reign, Afghanistan was relatively prosperous, seeing slow, incremental modernization.

Afghanistan remained neutral during both World Wars, and after World War II, despite efforts from both victorious superpowers, neither the USSR or the USA could gain enough leverage to achieve their goals.

Afghanistan was largely independent of outside influence after British rule ended in 1919. Zahir Shah avoided Afghanistan getting involved in both world wars. Although the royal family maintained power for 50 years, starting when Zahir Shah was 18 in 1933, allowing for slow and stable development, the royal family would also lead Afghanistan to ruin, due to traditional cousin-against-cousin conflict, as the rivalry between Zahir Shah and his cousin Muhammad Daoud grew hostile.¹⁴ Shah's advisors and administration were made up of his family members. Mohammed Daoud Khan served as Prime Minister from 1953 to 1963, before withdrawing from government for ten years, shortly before Zahir Shah removed the latter's family from positions of power. Daoud Khan spent the next ten years biding time to overthrow his cousin Mohammed Zahir Shah in a bloodless coup that ended two centuries of Afghan monarchical rule in July 1973.¹⁵

After gaining the ability to self-administer foreign relations and trade, Afghanistan had generally allowed itself to benefit from foreign aid, while keeping itself relatively independent of external manipulation. The Soviet Union would become a key ally and it would pair its economic development aid in infrastructure with military advisers and training for the Afghan Army,

¹⁴Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 89

¹⁵ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 97

strengthening its influence in the country.¹⁶ Daoud's Afghanistan sent military officers to train in Soviet military academies, and Afghanistan found in this arrangement two key advantages. First, because Afghan and Soviet officers were training together, it was less likely for either side to want to start a war against their ally and partner; and second, the Afghan officers would know the tactics of the Soviet Army, so they would be more prepared for how the Soviets would fight, should a war break out with their longtime allies.

During Zahir Shah's reign, the Soviet Union decided to form a Communist Party in Afghanistan. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was founded on Marxism-Leninism ideology in 1965. This was accomplished by combining two competing study groups: the moderate Parcham (Flag) faction, made up of mostly urban intellectuals, and the Khalq (People) faction, mostly rural and mostly Pashtun. The Khalq faction was led by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hazifullah Amin, and the Parcham faction by Babrak Karmal. The divisions were regional as well as ethnic. Khalqi's leadership was mostly made up of Ghilzai Pashtuns, with the faction members mostly coming from Eastern Afghanistan and from lower socio-economic backgrounds, while Parchami's top group was mostly Kabuli Tajiks, from middle and upper classes. Both factions also spoke different languages: Khalquis generally Pashto, and Parchamis generally Dari.¹⁷ The PDPA was made up of the most extreme followers of socialism, representing a very small fringe movement in Afghanistan. This meeting appointed Taraki the general secretary, and Karmal as his deputy. There were only thirty Afghan Communists present.¹⁸ The Soviets would mistakenly see the formation of the PDPA as a

¹⁶ Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. Hoover Press, 1984. pg. 37

¹⁷Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. Public Affairs, 2011. pg. 127

¹⁸Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. Public Affairs, 2011. pg. 99

promising sign that previously successful methods could be applied to Afghanistan in order to inspire socialist values.

Iran's Islamic Revolution, 1978

The Soviet leadership's mindset in December 1979 was also informed by events in Iran, Afghanistan's neighbor to the west. Iran had undergone a radical change of government three months before Afghanistan's April 1978 Saur Revolution. It created anxiety for the Soviets. The 1978-79 Islamic Revolution in Iran resulted in the declaration of an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. This caused the Soviet leadership to become nervous about political Islam creating waves in Afghanistan and the Soviet Central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. These countries have a shared cultural history with Afghanistan, as well as a common Islamic faith. In November 1979, a group known as the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam Khomeini Line held Americans hostage in the United States Embassy in Tehran, releasing them 444 days later in January 1981. American President Jimmy Carter failed to take swift action during the hostage crisis, and the Soviet Union felt the need to take drastic measures to avoid similar victimization. While the Saur Revolution in Afghanistan in April 1978 and the Iranian Revolution occurring in January 1978 to February 1979 were close chronologically, the revolutions were different in both cause and outcome. Still, the Soviet Union wondered if its neighbor to the south was vulnerable to the same Islamic fundamentalist influence as Tehran.

The United States was seen as “The Great Satan” in the eyes of Iran and hatred began to grow in the decades that followed.¹⁹ The influence of powerful conservative mullahs created greater restrictions on personal freedoms as political Islam overtook the nation. Iran was generally stable during this time, until religious riots and student groups began causing social unrest. Tehran, as the home of many religious leaders and clerics, acted as the main staging ground for the societal schisms.²⁰ The return of Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hosseini to public life in October 1981 marked the new Islamic Republic of Iran. These interlinked events and the following crises created greater instability in the region, including the Iran-Iraq War from 1980-1988. The aftermath would also see Iran cutoff from much of the world due to its antagonistic relationship with the United States.

The Soviets would find themselves fearing similar unrest in Amin’s Afghanistan. The Soviet model of handling rebellion (e.g., Czechoslovakia in 1968) would not fit the Afghan situation. In December 1979, the Soviets deployed a limited contingent to counteract any similar revolt in Afghanistan, but this action only strengthened the opposition. Radical political Islam, instead, grew as a result. The issue was not only political, but religious: Afghanistan saw the atheist Soviet presence as an attack on all of Afghanistan’s values as an Islamic society. For Afghanistan, it was a holy war of Jihad against the atheist Soviet imperialists. It would serve to further worsen internal tribal divisions as external forces, mainly Pakistan, predominantly Sunni, and Iran, predominantly Shia, would seek to promote tribes and schools of Islam which aligned with their interests.²¹

¹⁹ Baumann, Bob. “The Soviet Union in Afghanistan.” The Dole Institute of Politics. YouTube. Nov 15, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JglkhXaTBUw>

²⁰ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 191

²¹ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 187

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan gave the Soviets an illusion of socialism having strong support, when it was in reality made up of the radical fringes of Afghan politics. The socialist movement in Afghanistan was not strong enough to outweigh the fact that the USSR was ideologically opposed to religion. Islam was not necessarily political or conservative in Afghanistan, but it was core to Afghan life. The foreign invader was not only violating Afghan sovereignty, a country which did not have a historical record of national identity, it was now directly threatening the way that Islam was integrated into Afghanistan's daily life.

Saur Revolution

“They don't know what they're doing. They are provoking a conflict, which could go on for centuries.”

- Scholar Yuriy Gankowskiy²²

The Saur Revolution in April 1978 began with a coup d'état initiated by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the Soviet-sponsored Communist Party in Afghanistan. The PDPA launched the Saur Revolution on April 27th, 1978 under orders of Hafizullah Amin. The victory resulted in the overthrow and death of Mohammed Daoud Khan, as well as his family. Afghan Army Captain Mir Kahn recognized President Daoud among the

²² Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 130

bodies transported from the Presidential Palace. Captain Khan turned the heads of the bodies towards Mecca, in the Muslim tradition. He later went to Peshawar and became a mujahideen commander.²³ Once Mohammed Daoud Khan's supporters had been hunted down as well, the Republic of Afghanistan and Daoud Khan's single-party autocracy were replaced by a Democratic Republic founded on socialist values.

In the Saur Revolution of April 1978 Khalq-faction leader Taraki became the head of government after Daoud Khan was removed from power. However, Taraki had proven to be unpopular with the Soviet Politburo, his own administration, and the Afghan people in the time period from April 1978 until the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Amin, the other Khalq-faction leader, continued to be involved with managing government affairs.²⁴ Taraki was removed from office in September 1979. Hafizullah Amin would take over the position of President, and would enter the office as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan on the 14th of September 1979.

The Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan Alexander Puzanov initially assessed the situation as open to swift control, but he made two critical mistakes in his message to Moscow. First, Kabul never had complete control of the entire country, meaning control of the capital did not mean control of the countryside. Second, the Khalq-Parcham feud remained among the Afghan Communists and they were not able to move beyond past disagreements, and their disunity prevented them from properly combatting the later uprising of mujahideen opposition. Because Puzanov failed to properly appreciate the divisions within the PDPA, his initial assessment proved to have deadly consequences.²⁵ After the Afghan Communists took power in

²³ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 114

²⁴ Mlechin, Leonid. "Рикошет на сорок лет." *Kommersant*, 4 February 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3585195>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

²⁵ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 119

Kabul, tensions between the Khalquists and Parchamites further divided the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and created more instability. The Soviets responded by putting their own advisers everywhere, in "intelligence agencies, communist party headquarters, party front organizations, and positions in the government bureaucracy, both in Kabul and in the provinces." However, even the heavy presence of outside advisors from Socialist countries (i.e., East Germans advised the Afghan National Police) and the USSR could not overcome the divisions within the PDPA.

The American response to the Iranian Hostage Crisis, or lack thereof, greatly determined the steps its rival the USSR felt emboldened to take with its invasion of Afghanistan. It is important to understand the schools of thought in American politics at this time. In his book *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, Anthony Arnold defines two camps of thought that defined the analysis of the Soviet Union in the early 1980s. Arnold's Group A was more "traditionally acceptable," if only for not being alarmist. This camp was generally more open to diplomacy, and soft-power measures. Group A believed that events in the decade before the Soviet deployment into Afghanistan occurred largely independent of outside influence, with the USSR having little control over the activities of international Communist parties. In contrast, Arnold's Group B pointed to patterns of long-term Soviet aggression in the pursuit of parity with the United States, including influence campaigns in Africa, the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution (1956), the Cuban missile crisis (1962), and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968).²⁶ These events painted a picture of the Soviet Union as an aggressor that had to be contained from reaching global hegemony.

²⁶ Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. Hoover Press, 1984. pg. xvi

The Soviet Union would suffer due to divisions within the PDPA leadership. Taraki took power in 1978, and was favored by Leonid Brezhnev as the leader of Afghanistan. This was in part due to the fact that Taraki spoke Russian, while Amin, having attended Columbia University in the United States, spoke English.²⁷ In July 1979, Amin began his consolidation of power removing Defense Minister Mohammad Aslam Watanjar, Interior Minister Sher Jan Mazdooyarm and Communications Minister Sayed Mohammad Gulabzoi. Amin then personally appointed himself the Minister of Defense.²⁸ Taraki's unpopularity in Afghanistan came from his radical leaps in modernization. Afghanistan's traditional, deeply Islamic, and mostly rural population was not easily swayed toward Taraki's promotion of women's rights, socialism and literacy. Taraki's Khalquists in the PDPA in Spring 1979 unleashed violence on enemies of the Socialist regime within Afghanistan, which caused armed reactions and sabotage from the mujahideen.²⁹ Taraki's failure was a direct result of his poor statecraft; he attempted to achieve too much too quickly. The Socialist revolution was left with the support of few revolutionaries.

Foreseeing the threat to his power from Amin, Taraki ordered two attempts on Amin's life in 1979: first at the Kabul airport on September 11th, and the second three days later on the 14th, in the stairway of the Presidential Palace.³⁰ The Soviets expected decisive retaliation from Amin against Taraki; General Secretary Brezhnev himself, Ambassador Puzanov, the KGB Resident in Kabul, and several Soviet military advisers stationed in Afghanistan pleaded directly with Amin to spare Taraki's life.³¹ Nevertheless, on October 8th, 1979 two members of Taraki's personal guard forced themselves into his room, and despite Taraki's offer to surrender his party

²⁷ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 146

²⁸ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 147

²⁹ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 142

³⁰ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 150, 153

³¹ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 158

membership card, he was killed, suffocated by his own pillow.³² The Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, would later tie Amin's assassination of Taraki to the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan.³³

With Taraki out of the way, Hafizullah Amin began purging the government of his potential replacements, including military and political leaders, and those from the Daoud and Zahir Shah governments, as well as his own provincial administrations and Ministry of Defense. The former Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Nur Ahmad Etemadi was executed in September 1979.³⁴

Because a cult of personality had started to develop around Taraki, who was referred to in the Afghan press as the "Great Leader," there was an immediate shift in tone in the Afghan media when it began to report Taraki's death.³⁵ Official statements at the time read, "Noor Muhammad Taraki, former President of the Revolutionary Council, died yesterday morning of serious illness, which he had been suffering for some time."³⁶ Members of the new Amin regime began meeting with aggressive mujahideen commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, causing the Soviets greater concern.³⁷ The Pakistani ISI was already working with mujahideen groups to organize a resistance to Amin's government by providing weapons and training.³⁸

Two aspects formed the Soviet response to Taraki's death: luring Amin into a sense of safety, that his killing of Taraki was forgiven, and preparing to deploy military combat units into Northern Afghanistan and the Kabul airport.³⁹ By 1979, the Soviet Union's failing relationship

³² Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 159

³³ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 159

³⁴ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 161

³⁵ Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. Hoover Press, 1984. pg. 74

³⁶ Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. Hoover Press, 1984. pg. 84

³⁷ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 159

³⁸ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 160

³⁹ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 163

with Iran left Afghanistan the Kremlin's only ally in the region.⁴⁰ Moscow had encouraged both Amin and Taraki to improve relations with Iran and Pakistan, but it was only after Amin had eliminated Taraki that Amin decided to stop ignoring the Soviets and take steps to follow their advice.⁴¹

Little by little through the Autumn of 1979 the Soviet Union increased its military preparedness in response to the Amin's government's actions. A GRU (the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet Army's foreign military intelligence) "Muslim Battalion," formed of Soviet Central Asian personnel, was attached to Amin's personal security detail. KGB Zenith units soon followed. By November 1979, the Soviet Army had mobilized the 108th Mobilized Rifle Division in Uzbekistan, and the 5th Motorized Rifle Division in Turkmenistan. The 103rd Paratroop regiment was expanded later that month.⁴² These troop movements darkly hinted at the invasion to follow.

No Miracles: The Failure of Soviet Decision-Making in the Afghan War by Michael R. Fenzel attributes the Soviet Union's defeat in Afghanistan to poor statecraft.⁴³ Fenzel's claims match some of the commentary in some current Russian articles that reflect on the conflict decades later. The failure in governing is evident in the Soviet management of military affairs. Most of the mujahideen victories were small and symbolic, and while the Soviets were superior in terms of military power, they failed to exploit this advantage and only conducted the most aggressive offensives shortly before withdrawal from Afghanistan. As the Soviet leadership became older and weaker in 1978-1985, military professionals were routinely ignored, and decisions always followed the desire of the General Secretary. In a short span of five years the

⁴⁰ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. Pg. 162

⁴¹ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 159

⁴² Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 164

⁴³ Michael, Fenzel. *No Miracles*. Stanford University Press, 2017. pg. 29

Soviet Union was led by four Secretaries General. The large Soviet bureaucracy was also ill-equipped to properly advise their leader. Toward the end of his life, General Secretary Brezhnev began to rely solely on his “troika” of senior Politburo members to make up the war’s main decision-making body: Chairman of the KGB Yuri Andropov, Minister of Defense Dmitry Ustinov, and Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister. When the Politburo Special Afghan Commission was formed, it was clear that Andropov was the shaper of policy, as all the other members deferred to his judgment, and Brezhnev was growing increasingly unable to govern due to his age and health.⁴⁴

As early as March 1979, Soviet leadership debated whether to assist the Afghan government in handling the rebellion after Taraki’s requests for assistance. Some of the Soviet leadership was hesitant to become involved, while others were eager to assist the situation in order to exert control over their closely monitored neighbor. *Novaya Gazeta*’s 2019 article “Who Started the War in Afghanistan?” detailed the Soviet decision to introduce troops into Afghanistan through analyzing a secret document titled “Concerning the Situation in A.”⁴⁵ The article explains this document was written in bureaucratic code, indistinguishable from a resolution produced by a local housing authority office. The “A” document was not signed by the full Central Committee, but by only 11 people, 10 of whom were full members of the Central Committee. This group included the most senior members of Brezhnev’s inner circle. Due to the increasingly complex situation in Afghanistan, a four-member Politburo Afghan Special Commission was created. It was made up of senior, conservative, aging members of the Party who did not possess the necessary skills to navigate the Afghan situation. The Special

⁴⁴ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 136-139

⁴⁵ Lipskii, Andrei. "Кто начал войну в Афганистане." *Novaya Gazeta*, 25 December 2019, <https://novyagazeta.ru/articles/2019/12/25/83281-kto-nachal-voynu-v-afganistane>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

Commission consisted of: Yuri Andropov (Central Committee Member), Dmitry Ustinov (Minister of Defense), Andrey Gromyko (Minister of Foreign Affairs), and Boris Ponomarev (Head of the International Department of the Communist Party). It is important to note that all of the senior Party members were past their prime. General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev at 72 was in poor health. Yuri Andropov, 65, a Central Committee member that had led the KGB for 15 years, being the first secret police leader since Lavrentii Beria to be on the Central Committee. Andropov was the most influential member of the Afghan Commission and the clear successor to Brezhnev. Dmitry Ustinov, 71, Minister of Defense, was Andropov's closest ally. Ustinov was not a career soldier, and deferred to the advice of Andropov against the counsel of his own generals. Andrey Gromyko, 70, was the Soviet Foreign Minister serving in that capacity for 26 years. Gromyko followed Andropov's lead and was genuinely scared of Ustinov. Boris Ponomarev, 74, was never a full Politburo member, yet had a critical role as head of the Communist Party's International Department for 29 years. Over time the issues created by the age and health of the senior Soviet Union leaders would become clear and present.⁴⁶ The quick successive changes in leadership would create instability for the Soviet Union.

Operation Storm-333, December 1979

“So what, the more they come the better for us.”

- Hafizullah Amin, December 26th, 1979.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 136-139

⁴⁷ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 170

The Soviet Afghan War began with the introduction of Soviet troops into Afghanistan on the 24th of December 1979. The Soviet Union claimed it had sent a “limited contingent” of troops to aid the Afghan government. Taraki’s request for Soviet troops in Afghanistan from early 1979 was fulfilled, but not in the way he had envisioned. The invasion was seen by the Soviets and the Communist Afghan government as a simple means of exercising control over the rebellious countryside. Operation Storm-333 was activated on the night of December 27th, 1979. The Afghan Presidential Palace was assaulted by the Soviet special forces (Spetsnaz), and Afghan President Hafizullah Amin was assassinated. Soviet forces entered Kabul, and the Afghan armed forces surrendered. It is likely that Amin, much like Daoud, died fighting.⁴⁸ The USSR then installed Parcham activist Babrak Karmal as the new President of Afghanistan.

The security clause of the Soviet-Afghan Friendship and Cooperation Treaty of 1978 signed by Brezhnev and Taraki called for both nations to “consult with each other and take by agreement appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries.”⁴⁹ The language of the 1978 Friendship Treaty was able to justify the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Brezhnev Doctrine dictated the Soviet Union’s foreign policy of military intervention in countries where socialism was threatened. The internal conflict at the top of the Afghan government was characterized by differences between Taraki and Amin. When Amin removed Taraki from power, the PDPA continued to weaken at a rapid pace during the Autumn of 1979. Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) saw the assassination of Taraki as both a political and personal insult. He had used considerable methods to save

⁴⁸ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 175

⁴⁹ Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 123

Taraki, including the many appeals to Amin. The disappointing outcome would contribute to the lack of trust the Soviets had for Amin. There were enough factors at play in the Soviets' lack of trust in Amin, including the possibility that he was an agent of the CIA from the time that he was a student in the United States. However, these factors and the lack of faith in Amin made his situation precarious enough to lead to his assassination.

Taraki had requested Soviet assistance nine months earlier in March 1979. The Soviets debated and decided that it was not yet time to assist Taraki. By December 1979, President Amin had not proved himself a useful ally, and the Soviets considered that the few potential benefits of an intervention outweighed the large cost of sending military aid. Unfortunately for Amin, the assistance came in the form of Soviet troops that were sent to assassinate him and replace his administration. Arnold's book offered three reasons for the Soviet presence in Afghanistan: a changing correlation of forces, the strategic importance of Afghanistan, and an ideological investment.⁵⁰ The Soviet end-goal was to ensure stability and control in Afghanistan by its armed forces in the country. Being the leader of the global Communist struggle, the Soviet Union saw itself as obligated to become involved in the internal affairs of its neighbor and ally. The reasoning was simple and aligned with the idea of international cooperation that the Soviet Union regularly embraced. From the Soviet perspective, the intervention in Afghanistan was not viewed as an imperialist action, nor as an intervention in a religious war. It was in the interest of the Soviet Union that the government in Afghanistan remained under the rule of the PDPA and Communist policies.

Babrak Karmal's time as the head of government began after the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Karmal was a founding member of the PDPA, and later leader of the Parcham

⁵⁰ Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. Hoover Press, 1984. pg. xxii

faction. His administration would be defined by brutality and strongman tactics and it ultimately created more instability inside Afghanistan, which would fuel the later conflicts of the 1990s.⁵¹ The invasion and following decade of Soviet occupation and war were always treated as short-term and side issues by the Soviets, with their primary focus remaining on possible conflict with NATO and the United States. The conflict was not shown or discussed in the Soviet press through most of the 1980s, so the Soviet population was not particularly moved to support (or protest) the war, and the Politburo leadership remained cautious of increasing troop numbers on the ground. This short term mindset informs why the Soviet leadership took so long in deciding to enter Afghanistan.

Soviet 40th Army

“Moscow fell into a trap and was drawn into a game with increasingly higher stakes, a game it could neither control, nor win.”

- Deputy of the Communist Party International Department, Keran Brutents⁵²

The limited contingent sent to Afghanistan was the Soviet Union’s 40th Army. In 1979, the Soviet Union still held onto memories of its victory in the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany, and onto the belief the Red Army contributed and sacrificed the most to win the war. However, this war in Afghanistan would not be remembered with the same glory. According to

⁵¹ Mlechin, Leonid. "Рикошет на сорок лет." *Kommersant*, 4 February 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3585195>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

⁵² Tomsen, Peter. *The Wars of Afghanistan*. PublicAffairs, 2011. pg. 156

Dr. Bob Baumann, the USSR had achieved its goal of forming a great conventional army, having been focused on potential conflict with NATO.⁵³ This would, however, be ill-suited for the type of combat seen in counterinsurgencies. The Red Army was a formidable force in terms of large-scale ground combat, having been modeled for the division-sized and battalion-sized warfare of World Wars One and Two. Yet, the evolution of modern warfare and battling insurgencies required a need to shift towards smaller platoon and squad levels.⁵⁴ Soviet unit sizes were also ill-suited for trekking through the mountains of Afghanistan. Despite their technical superiority, with advanced weapons systems, including air support in the form of helicopters, as well as radio communications, the Soviets saw themselves suffering in Afghanistan similarly to the Americans in Vietnam. The Soviets were able to exploit their significant advantage in technological superiority by deploying attack helicopters with devastating success.⁵⁵

The Soviet Army's primary method of combating the mujahideen insurgency was to not differentiate between civilian and military targets. The goal of a counterinsurgency effort to win the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan was impossible to do while at the same time attempts were made to wipe out the civilian population that supported the mujahideen resistance. The term "migratory genocide" applies to these methods, as explained by Baumann: You can eliminate guerilla resistance if you drive the population completely out of the area. Yet these two competing and incongruous goals would leave the Soviets in a scenario where neither goal would be successfully accomplished.⁵⁶

⁵³ Baumann, Bob. "The Soviet Union in Afghanistan." The Dole Institute of Politics. YouTube. Nov 15, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgIkhXaTBUw>

⁵⁴ Van Creveld, Martin. In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern War: Technology and War II: Postmodern War?* (essay) Oxford University Press, 1997. pg. 311, 312.

⁵⁵ Sheridan, Chris. *Modern Warfare: Russia in Afghanistan*. International Television News, 2003.

⁵⁶ Baumann, Bob. "The Soviet Union in Afghanistan." The Dole Institute of Politics. YouTube. Nov 15, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgIkhXaTBUw>

The Afghan mujahideen were able to exploit the large Soviet unit sizes with hit-and-run attacks on vehicle columns.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the mujahideen worked in small groups that did not coordinate organized attacks, and they did not wear identifying uniforms, leaving them free to blend in with the civilian population. They easily utilized their home terrain and support from the people in the countryside.⁵⁸ The military strategy was undermining the nation-building efforts while also being unable to defeat the enemies. The harm done to the civilian population would simply add to the number of people willing to join the mujahideen in order to fight the government removing them from their homes. The unfortunate nature of counterinsurgency is the fact that math simply works against the invading force. The more battles won creates more enemies. These enemies are indistinguishable from civilians and they gain motivation with each loss. Killing one fighter motivates the victim's father, son, brother, cousin or nephew to seek revenge.

Investment in aid programs and propaganda would not be able to change the image of the Soviet-backed Afghan government. The Soviet Army was a large hammer, and to the USSR Afghanistan was a nail. Soviet leadership feared the spread of political Islam into Afghanistan and into the Soviet Republics of Azerbaidzhan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizia, and Kazakhstan in a way that would diminish the Kremlin's power and secular socialist values. This perceived threat swayed the decision makers towards a military response.⁵⁹ Tajik veterans of the Soviet Army would recall the efforts to help the Afghan people through building schools, hospitals, roads and bridges. Yet these efforts were simultaneously undermined by the

⁵⁷ Mlechin, Leonid. "Рикошет на сорок лет." *Kommersant*, 4 February 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3585195>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

⁵⁸ Baumann, Bob. "The Soviet Union in Afghanistan." The Dole Institute of Politics. YouTube. Nov 15, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgIkhXaTBUw>

⁵⁹ Sheridan, Chris. *Modern Warfare: Russia in Afghanistan*. International Television News, 2003.

military's offensive actions.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, Afghanistan's political ideologies could not be shifted through blunt armed warfare. The Soviets did not properly assess the situation in Afghanistan, leaving themselves unprepared to either influence political affairs or to be tactically effective.

Mujahideen

“We prefer involvement in internal war rather than occupation by foreigners and foreign troops.”

- Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, 1992⁶¹

The mujahideen groups were united by Islamic faith against the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. In April 1978, the PDPA began aggressive domestic policies that prompted the formation of insurgencies. The term mujahideen is an Arabic word which means “those who engage in jihad.” However, there was no official organization known as the mujahideen, it is instead a collective term for all of the Islamic holy warriors engaged in warfare against communist powers in Afghanistan.⁶²

Despite the technical and weapons superiority of the Soviet Union, the mujahideen proved to be competent and ferocious fighters, despite many being armed with Lee Enfield rifles.

⁶⁰ Sarkorova, Anora. "28 лет выводу войск из Афганистана: таджикские "афганцы" о забытой войне." BBC Russia Service, 15 December 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-38981903>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

⁶¹ Loyn, David. *In Afghanistan*, 2009. Palgrave Macmillan. pg. 159

⁶² Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "mujahideen". Encyclopedia Britannica, 26 Aug. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mujahideen-Afghani-rebels>. Accessed 15 September 2022.

The mujahideen lacked a centrally organized command structure, with most groups remaining in their local valleys. While this hindered their ability to fight strategically, it served as an advantage as it made Soviet counter-attacks difficult. Among Western observers the most popular mujahideen commander was Ahmad Shah Massoud, a Tajik from Northern Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley. Massoud was a key actor in effective combat against the Soviets and for peace in Afghanistan, being the most effective Afghan war commander, who created the strongest regular fighting force and used more complex offensive methods. In 1983 Massoud negotiated a cease-fire with the Soviets.⁶³ Abdul Rashid Dostum, another prominent mujahideen leader, known for shifting alliances, would become the Vice President of Afghanistan after the American invasion three decades later. Abdul Haq was a prominent member of the Peshawar Seven interim government. Haq acted as a representative for the mujahideen and met with US President Ronald Reagan in 1985, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1986, and went on to represent the Afghan effort in front of the United Nations in 1988.⁶⁴ Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a more aggressive mujahideen commander, was supported by Pakistan through the ISI. Pakistan chose Hekmatyar, despite the fact that he created a division in the Pakistan-supported "Peshawar Seven" interim government made up of seven mujahideen commanders. Hekmatyar would consistently side with the fundamentalists, alienating traditionalist leaders. He was the most unpopular mujahideen leader, so unpopular that Abdul Haq was regularly asked by a variety of Afghan people to simply kill him.⁶⁵

⁶³ Kaplan, Robert. *Soldiers of God*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2001. Pg. 40

⁶⁴ Kaplan, Robert. *Soldiers of God*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2001. Pg. 67

⁶⁵ Kaplan, Robert. *Soldiers of God*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2001. pg. 168

CIA's Operation Cyclone

In 1984, the mujahideen found an ally in the American House of Representatives, Charlie Wilson, U.S. Representative from Texas.⁶⁶ Representative Wilson used his position on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense to increase CIA funds and to provide the mujahideen with advanced weapons systems, which was done by CIA officials Michael G. Vickers, and Gust Avrakotos.⁶⁷ The CIA's Operation Cyclone, began as an effort to supply the mujahideen with weapons, was authorized by President Jimmy Carter in December 1979 and reauthorized by President Ronald Reagan in 1981.⁶⁸ This would later evolve into providing financial, logistical, tactical advice and heavy weaponry through a partnership with the Pakistani ISI. American Stinger Missiles gave the mujahideen an answer to the problem of Soviet helicopters. The Reagan administration (1981-1989) worked closely with Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq, who claimed to seek pan-Islamic cooperation. Pakistan was in reality seeking more power over the region. The Americans came to see the mujahideen groups as allies, holy warriors fighting against the Soviet Union's atheist Communism.

While it is clear that Operation Cyclone greatly helped the mujahideen victory, it is not correct to simply state that foreign support was the deciding factor. The mujahideen victory was due to numerous factors, including: the nature of the conflict being an invading army against an insurgency which allowed the mujahideen to utilize their home terrain and the Afghan people's support; the tactical situation which the Soviet Army was not built for, having prepared for large-scale operations against Western forces in conventional warfare; and the political situation where

⁶⁶ Coll, Steve. *Ghost Wars*. The Penguin Press, 2004. pg. 58

⁶⁷ Crile, George. *Charlie Wilson's War*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003. pg. 302

⁶⁸ Coll, Steve. *Ghost Wars*. The Penguin Press, 2004. pg. 58

holding power in the capital of Kabul did not translate into control over the whole country because Afghanistan was not a unified nation.

Viewing the Afghan resistance as a group of noble underdog freedom fighters against an overwhelming Soviet enemy offers a convenient narrative. Yet, this can cause readers to mistakenly view the Soviet-Afghan War as a small footnote, proxy battle to the larger Cold War between the forces of Capitalism and Communism. Such a dismissive categorization fails to understand the importance of the conflict within its own sphere. The Saur Revolution of 1978 and the Soviet-Afghan War 1979-1989 would directly lead to the Afghan Civil War of 1992-1996, whose outcome was the replacement of Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah's government with the Taliban's Islamic Emirate. In 2001, the United States would enter Afghanistan in response to the World Trade Center attacks. Two decades later, Afghanistan would continue to see destruction as a result of this conflict, with the Taliban again returning to power. These wars are all a direct result of the instability created by the end of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the resulting strengthening of radical political Islam. The war was also a concluding note for the Soviet Union, since the Soviets' withdrawal showed the weaknesses in the Soviet Union's military power and the changes in its political power. The USSR lost its position and prestige as a world superpower. In part due to its failures on the ground in Afghanistan, caused by an overestimation of its own power, and the underestimation of the mujahideen's fighting spirit. Also critical to the USSR's downfall were systematic failures in governance in Moscow that allowed a small, insulated group at the top of Soviet leadership to make such a decision to enter the conflict in the first place. The aging leaders were unable to properly guide the war effort. These factors significantly contributed to the outcome of the conflict, more than the involvement of outside allies such as Pakistan or the United States.

Withdrawal, February 1989

In Afghanistan “a small army would be annihilated and a large one starved.”

- Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington.⁶⁹

The Soviet Army won battles, yet lost the war. The Afghans didn't have to win, they simply had to not lose. The mujahideen were simply able to endure the advanced weaponry and sophisticated technology as the Soviet units continued to bleed and were left with no other option than to withdraw. Tanks and large machine guns are difficult to manage in mountain passes. The Soviet army continually found itself the target of ambushes by the Mujahideen fighters, who refined this tactic throughout the war. By the end of the war, Soviet soldiers moved in smaller formations partially due to changes in strategy, and partially due to necessity as a result of the number of Soviet casualties.⁷⁰

The Soviet failure in Afghanistan was due to a number of factors. Among them was the lack of internal coordination within the Soviet government bureaucracy between civil and military structures. This created significant political-military weakness, and the lack of external transparency which informs the current Russian-language press reflections on the Afghan War. The Soviet Union was historically secretive, keeping information from the public, and

⁶⁹ Loyn, David. *In Afghanistan*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. pg. 11

⁷⁰ Baumann, Bob. “The Soviet Union in Afghanistan.” The Dole Institute of Politics. YouTube. Nov 15, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgIkhXaTBUw>

compartmentalizing information within government bureaucracies, and the Party itself. Because of this there was little direct Russian reporting from the time period. This lack of information is illustrated by the fact that the exact number of Soviet casualties in Afghanistan remains unknown to this day. Coffins transporting Soviet soldiers killed in action were sealed with zinc and could not be opened by the grieving families. In their farewell addresses to the returning “Afghantsi” (Soviet soldiers who were getting ready to return from Afghanistan), political officers ordered the returning soldiers not to speak of the war and to destroy any photographs taken in Afghanistan.⁷¹

The Soviet Union began preparations for complete withdrawal from Afghanistan in May 1988. At this time, the Soviet Army was under the command of General of the Army Valentin Varennikov, with Colonel-General Boris Gromov acting as the commander of the 40th Army. Boris Gromov would be awarded the honor of Hero of the Soviet Union, the same recognition that Yuri Gagarin, the first human to journey into outer space, received. On February 15th, 1989, Colonel-General Boris Gromov, Commander of the Soviet Union’s 40th Army was the last Soviet soldier to officially cross the Friendship Bridge over the Oxus River from Afghanistan to the Soviet Union. The war was over for the Soviet Union, ending in defeat, after the loss of nearly 14,000.⁷² The Soviet withdrawal would not bring peace to Afghanistan.

⁷¹ Alexeivich, Svetlana. *Zinky Boys*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1990. pg. 51, pg. 87

⁷² Sheridan, Chris. *Modern Warfare: Russia in Afghanistan*. International Television News, 2003.

Translations Commentary

The translation of the selected articles was the first and most essential part in forming the roots of this project. The translated articles formed the core basis for me to come to an understanding of the relevant modern views on the Soviet-Afghan War. Working on the translations provided a challenging and enriching endeavor. This starting point required thoughtful reading of the Russian originals, efforts to understand what certain words mean, not only in the literal dictionary sense, but in the context of war and Soviet culture. It was also important to understand the overall implied tone of the writing. This means that there was a need to both comprehend the factual information and the emotional subtext underneath the wording of these events in order to find a deeper meaning. One part was understanding the dates and movements, and the other was appreciating the emotions tied to the war.

It is important to note that translating the texts forced me in a critical way to make sense of the culture and history of the target language. I had to be accurate in conveying the author's intended rather than literal meaning, and in finding methods to keep the original message intact in its authenticity. Knowing the grammar and vocabulary is simply not enough to properly convey the deeper senses of these pieces, and they required me to expand my writing skills in both the translation and analysis.

Russian Language Reflections

Article 1: A Forty Year Ricochet

Leonid Mlechin's Kommersant article "A Forty Year Ricochet" was the first article that I translated into English from Russian, and this article formed the basic idea that became the larger

work. In writing the line “...endless graveyard of destroyed and burned Soviet military vehicles at the slope’s bottom” Mlechin created an image that carried powerful emotion. It brings to mind a lumbering giant that was large and powerful, but stumbling and uncoordinated. The great might of the Soviet Army was left behind in the ruins at the bottom of this slope. The choice of the term graveyard also reminds the reader of the saying that Afghanistan is known as the graveyard of empires. This trope is associated with the larger history of foreign incursions into Afghanistan. Later in the article Mlechin notes, “before the Saur Revolution, there was no Islamic fervor.” If this is the case, it makes the entire justification of the Soviet invasion invalid. The whole point was to prevent Iran’s Islamic Revolution from spreading to Afghanistan, yet the ten year war only increased Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan and strengthened the case for modern political Islam. Mlechin closes the article looking at Afghanistan in 2018. “*Afghanistan turned into a territory which today is torn into pieces by illiterate young men, armed with Kalashnikovs. They say they are fulfilling the commands of the Quran. But they have not read the Holy Book because they are illiterate.*”⁷³

Article 2: Who Started the War in Afghanistan?

It is a natural matter in the course of world events that powerful nations wage wars to increase their military might and political influence. What creates concern regarding the Soviet-Afghan War is the carelessness with which it was launched. The second piece analyzed - Andrei Lipskii’s article from *Novaya Gazeta*, “Who Started the War in Afghanistan?” offered startling insights. The revelations slowly uncovered through translations and retranslations were: the fact that the Soviet Union’s “Kremlin elders” so flippantly decided to initiate such a devastating war.

⁷³ Mlechin, Leonid. "Рикошет на сорок лет." *Kommersant*, 4 February 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3585195>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

In addition to his commentary, Lipskii provides information on the original document that laid out the plan for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He notes that the “Situation in A” document was written in such a way that the authors themselves could not confront the truth of the matter. Lipskii compares the “legalese” used in the document with the records kept by a Veteran’s fraternity or local housing authority record. The opaque wording, however, does not absolve those listed as signing off on the order. The “Situation in A” document that launched the Soviet War in Afghanistan, that is one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union and the poor state of both Russia and Afghanistan in modern times, was carelessly written in an attempt at deliberate self-deception.⁷⁴ The political leaders used this language in order to avoid confronting the truth of the matter. Despite the fact that it is written in a way that ignores the significance of the decision, the consequences were significant to the Soviet Union and transformative to the world.

Article 3: 28 Years after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan: Tajik “Afghans” on the Forgotten War

Anora Sarkorova’s BBC article “28 Years after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan: Tajik “Afghans” on the Forgotten War” details the reflections of Tajik veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War and the lack of agency they had during their service. Muhiddinov and Saerobekov, two Tajik veterans of the Afghanistan War, had no choice or decision about whether or not to participate in the war effort. They were soldiers at the time and simply followed orders in the field. This was taken out of their hands. Tajikistan and Afghanistan share linguistic and cultural histories, making soldiers from Soviet Tajikistan particularly suited for work in

⁷⁴ Lipskii, Andrei. "Кто начал войну в Афганистане." *Novaya Gazeta*, 25 December 2019, <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2019/12/25/83281-kto-nachal-voynu-v-afganistane>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

Afghanistan as translators or interpreters. Tajik Persian is similar to Dari Persian, being mutually intelligible. This is why Muhiddinov and his colleagues were trained with the Arabic script. Yet these linguistic and cultural similarities which would make them effective in Afghanistan also made it emotionally difficult for them to be deployed there. Tajik veterans now feel that the war which was such a large part of their lives and that transformed so much of their future is now largely forgotten. American veterans of the United States' war in Afghanistan sometimes voice similar feelings twenty years after their conflict began. It wasn't something they necessarily wanted, and now it's something that isn't remembered. This ties in with the importance of learning about history and the mistakes made of predecessors. A national shame is not something that ought to be buried away, but instead something to keep in mind to shape a better future. Many in the USSR wanted to create a better future for Afghanistan, as Saerabekov says: "No wonder they say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions." This article and the following article both highlight the damage created by the war.⁷⁵

Article 4: Afghanistan 30 years after the Soviet Union withdrawal: what Afghans think about life then and now

Olga Ivshina wrote the 2019 article "Afghanistan 30 years after the Soviet Union withdrawal" which looks back on the events of the late 80s from three decades later. Both Sarkova's and Ivshina's BBC articles demonstrated how deeply the war tore apart not only Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, which are still seeing the effects of instability and poor leadership, but also the people that fought and lived through them. Ivshina examines this through

⁷⁵ Sarkorova, Anora. "28 лет выводу войск из Афганистана: таджикские "афганцы" о забытой войне." BBC Russia Service, 15 December 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-38981903>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

the lens of several individuals. Tajvar Kakar, a human rights activist recalls being arrested and tortured in 1980 due to a suspicion of cooperating with the mujahideen. The war ended, yet violence continued as the mujahideen overtook the country. Khabibula, a now retired teacher, explains that in 2018 things were generally better than during Taliban rule, however unemployment and a low standard of living conditions remain issues. The Soviets and the Americans solved and created problems for Afghanistan, and cautious optimism would be replaced by a simple desire for peace. The overall sentiment from the four featured interviews was a fatigue from all that came from the wars that followed the Soviet invasion. Some things change, and some things stay the same, but ultimately all that people want is to live in peace and stability. A significant aspect of frustration comes from the failure in achieving the goal of self-determination and national sovereignty, due to Soviet and American intervention. Even if both wars were launched in good faith, the end result is the same: Afghanistan is not able to determine a path towards stability for itself. The former teacher and activist explained the hardships that have continued since the 1970s. Afghanistan might have a complicated history, but it would be better to see how it decides to create its own future.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ivshina, Olga. Prosvirova, Olga. "Афганистан спустя 30 лет после вывода советских войск: что думают афганцы о жизни тогда и сейчас." BBC Russia Service, 14 February 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-47205296>. Accessed 25 February 2022.

Conclusion

Many lessons can be learned from the recent reflections in the Russian-language press on the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-1989. To a great extent the Soviet campaign informs the American experience in the Afghanistan War from 2001-2021, and the current state of Russian leadership as Vladimir Putin launches a war with Ukraine. The Soviet campaign created a power vacuum which resulted in an unstable Afghan government and civil armed conflict between armed militant groups for decades to come. The clear lesson is that military interventions in other countries extract a terrible price on both the foreign invader and people defending their homeland. After the World Trade Center attacks in September of 2001, Afghanistan would see conflict with another foreign power that intervened with the intention to create a new political situation for the betterment of the Afghan people. The Americans would deal with the consequences of their actions during the Soviet campaign and the consequences of their inaction after the Soviet withdrawal. The mujahideen who collectively were once allies in the fight against the Soviet Union spreading atheism and Communism were now seen as radical Islamists set on destroying the freedom and democracy of the United States and the West. The more moderate commanders that weren't supported by the CIA and Pakistan were not able to reverse the course of Afghan politics. The modern wars in Afghanistan seem to simply tell a story of repeated cycles of violence and destruction. The Soviet withdrawal was followed by civil wars in Afghanistan, leaving the militant Islamic Taliban in control of the country. The Soviet Union's campaign took Afghanistan farther towards the inverse of their initial goal: now radical political Islam is the main force that has shaped modern Afghanistan. Taliban rule was defined by a hardline approach, as explained by Stephen Tanner, the author of *Afghanistan: A Military*

History from Alexander the Great to the War Against the Taliban. Women were rendered anonymous, refused work or education. Justice was implemented by chopping off people's hands, ears, or heads, depending on the crime. Public stoning was the solution to adultery. Television, music, photographs, whistling, and kite flying were all banned.⁷⁷ Following September 11th, 2001, the United States Armed Forces spent two decades with the greatest warfighting capability of any army in history. The American goal to free Afghanistan from Taliban control and build a free nation failed. The most powerful military in history used the most devastating arsenal possible with a basically unlimited budget, and Afghanistan is not any better off for it. After the American withdrawal in 2021, the Taliban is once again in control of Afghanistan. The Soviets and the Americans could not win their fights. Afghanistan does not have a higher quality of life, nor is it a free and democratic society, the Soviet Union collapsed, and the United States also suffered a terrible failure. No matter the tenacity of the invading force, the outcome has been the same: violence and chaos. Waging wars and foreign incursions has not created a lasting positive end to these tragic events.

⁷⁷ Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan*. Hachette Books, 2009. pg. 284

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Appendix: Russian Originals and my translations

Article 1: Рикошет на сорок лет

<p>Журнал "Огонёк"</p> <p>02.04.2018, 0:00 Рикошет на сорок лет Советский след в афганской революции. Исторический экскурс Леонида Млечина</p> <p>40 лет назад в Афганистане произошла Апрельская революция, которую Москва поддержала сначала советниками, потом тайными операциями, а в итоге и войсками. СССР втянулся в войну, ставшую одной из причин его развала, а разбросанные тогда "камни" не только Афганистан, но и весь мир не может собрать по сей день. Почему все это случилось?</p>	<p>"Spark" Magazine</p> <p>2-4-2018 A Forty Year Ricochet The Soviet footprint in the Afghan Revolution. A historical excursion by Leonid Mlechin</p> <p>Forty years ago, the April Revolution took place in Afghanistan, which Moscow at first supported through advisers, and later with covert operations, and eventually with troops. The USSR got involved in the war, which became one of the reasons for its collapse, and not only Afghanistan, but the whole world can not collect the scattered "stones" to this day. Why did all this happen?</p>
<p>Никогда не забуду, как ехал из Кабула домой через Саланг, трехкилометровый тоннель в горном хребте Гиндукуш. Через Саланг проходил главный путь снабжения расквартированной в Афганистане советской 40-й армии. Если смотреть на верхушки гор, уже покрывшихся снегом, можно решить, будто попал в курортное местечко. Но стоило глянуть вниз, и дыхание перехватывало. Не из-за страха высоты. Там, под откосом,— нескончаемое кладбище подбитых и сожженных советских машин.</p> <p>Каждый километр был полит кровью наших ребят. На узкой горной дороге, где ни свернуть, ни увеличить скорость, советская бронетехника, грузовики и бензовозы становились легкой добычей. Сначала, стреляя с соседних гор, афганцы</p>	<p>I will never forget how I was riding home from Kabul through the three kilometer-long Salang Tunnel in the Hindu Kush mountain range. The main supply route for the Soviet 40th Army stationed in Afghanistan passed through the Salang Tunnel. If you looked towards the already snow-capped mountaintops, you might think you were in a resort town. But if you bothered to glance down, it took your breath away, not out of fear from heights but from the endless graveyard of destroyed and burned Soviet military vehicles at the slope's bottom.</p> <p>Every kilometer was covered in our men's blood. On a narrow mountain road, where one could neither turn off or speed up, Soviet armored vehicles, trucks and fuel trucks became easy prey. First, shooting from the</p>

<p>подбивали первую машину, и колонна останавливалась, потом последнюю, чтобы никому не дать уйти...</p>	<p>neighboring mountains, the Afghans hit the first car, and the column stopped, then the last one, so no one could escape...</p>
<p>Зачем убили Дауда? Почему перед СССР возникла дилемма: вводить войска или не вводить? Обычное объяснение: нужно было помешать превращению Афганистана во враждебное нам государство. Но разве таким соседом был Афганистан до революции 1978 года и ввода войск? В XX веке в Кабуле сменилось немало правителей, но Москва в любом случае могла рассчитывать на их лояльность — Кремль держал руку на пульсе политической жизни Афганистана, который находился в советской сфере влияния. Так было и 40 лет назад: генерал Мохаммад Дауд Хан, который много лет возглавлял правительство, а в 1973 году стал главой государства, поводов для тревоги не давал. Он помнил о геополитике: американские займы принимались в меньших масштабах, чем советские; инженеров отправляли учиться в США, офицеров — в Советский Союз. За полтора десятка лет более 7 тысяч афганских офицеров получили дипломы советских военных училищ, прослушав объемные курсы марксизма-ленинизма. В 1978 году в Афганистане работало более 2 тысяч советских технических и экономических советников. Режим Дауда отвечал интересам Советского Союза. Полная лояльность, безопасная граница, широкие торгово-экономические связи. И никакой угрозы исламского фундаментализма: до Апрельской революции в Афганистане не было исламской истовости. Но 27 апреля 1978 года молодые офицеры взяли штурмом президентский дворец и расстреляли Дауда вместе с его окружением. Один из участников заговора заранее уведомил обо всем советских</p>	<p>Why was Daoud killed? Why did the USSR face this dilemma: to deploy troops or not? The common explanation being: it was necessary to hinder the transformation of Afghanistan into a state hostile to us. But was Afghanistan really such a neighbor before the revolution of 1978 and the introduction of troops? In the 20th century Kabul had many rulers, but Moscow in any case was able to count on their loyalty. The Kremlin kept a finger on the pulse of Afghan political life, which was located in the Soviet sphere of influence. So it was forty years ago: General Muhammad Daoud Khan, which lead the government for many years and in 1973 became the head of state, not giving any cause for alarm. He was mindful of geopolitics: American loans were taken out in lesser amounts than Soviet loans; engineers were sent to study in the USA, military officers to the Soviet Union. In 15 years more than 7,000 Afghan officers received diplomas from Soviet military academies, and received extensive courses in Marxism-Leninism. In 1978 more than 2,000 Soviet technicians and economic consultants worked in Afghanistan. The Daud regime met the interests of the Soviet Union: complete loyalty, a secure border, expansive economic and trade relations. And there were no threats of Islamic fundamentalism: before the Saur revolution, there was no Islamic fervor in Afghanistan. But on April 27, 1978 young officers stormed and took over the presidential palace and shot Daud along with those surrounding him. One of the conspirators informed the Soviet agents of everything in advance. If they had dissuaded the Afghan officers, Afghanistan's fate may have gone down a different path.</p>

разведчиков. Если бы они афганских офицеров тогда отговорили, судьба Афганистана пошла бы иным путем. Остались бы живы и сотни тысяч афганцев, и 15 тысяч советских солдат. Увы...

Новые афганские лидеры взялись строить социализм по советскому образцу. Но наши советники, прибывшие в Кабул, увидели такую сложную и запутанную картину афганской жизни, о которой в Москве имели весьма приблизительное представление.

Мне рассказывали об этом Валерий Харазов, кандидат в члены ЦК КПСС, руководитель первой группы партийных советников в Афганистане, и генерал Василий Заплатин, советник начальника главного политического управления афганской армии. Заплатин приехал в Кабул в конце мая 1978 года, Харазов — в первых числах июня, буквально через месяц после революции.

Правящая партия была расколота на две фракции — "Хальк" ("Народ") и "Парчам" ("Знамя"). Они поделили власть. Нур Моххамед Тараки ("Хальк") стал председателем Революционного совета и премьер-министром. Бабрак Кармаль ("Парчам") — заместителем председателя Ревсовета и премьер-министра. Хафизулла Амин ("Хальк") — заместителем премьер-министра и министром иностранных дел. Между победителями началась грызня. Лидер "Парчама" Бабрак Кармаль жаловался советским товарищам, что его отстранили от руководства (Тараки отправил Кармаля послом в Чехословакию). В ночь перед отъездом Кармаль собрал у себя лидеров своей фракции и пообещал: "Я еще вернусь. И под красным флагом".

Между тем ситуация в Афганистане стремительно ухудшалась.

Социалистические преобразования на

Hundreds of thousands of Afghans and 15,000 Soviet soldiers may still be alive. Alas...

The new Afghan leaders undertook building socialism under the Soviet model. But our advisors arriving in Kabul saw the complex and tangled picture of Afghan life which people in Moscow only had a foggy notion of.

I was told about this by Valery Karazov and General Vasili Zaplatin. Valery Karazov, a candidate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was the Director of the First Group of Communist Party Advisors in Afghanistan. General Vasili Zaplatin, an advisor to the Chief of the Political Section of the Afghan Army, moved to Kabul at the end of May 1978, whereas Karazov arrived there in the first days of June, literally a month after the revolution.

The ruling party was split into two factions: the "Khalq" (People's) and the "Parcham" (Banner's). They shared power. Nur Muhammad Taraki (Khalq) became Chairman of the Revolutionary Soviet and Prime Minister. Babrak Karmal (Parcham) was the Deputy of the Chairman and of the Prime Minister. Hafizullah Amin (Khalq) was a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. Clawing started between the victors. Leader of the "Parcham" faction, Babrak Karmal complained to Soviet comrades that he was removed from power (Taraki dispatched Karmal as ambassador to Czechoslovakia). At night before departing Karmal collected the leaders of his faction and promised: "Still, I shall return. And under a red flag."

Meanwhile, the situation in Afghanistan swiftly deteriorated. Socialist transformations in the Soviet manner, undertaken by the "revolutionaries" were destroying the country.

<p>советский манер, затеянные "революционерами", разрушали страну. Афганцы отчаянно сопротивлялись, брались за оружие. В марте 1979 года вспыхнул антиправительственный мятеж в городе Герате (к мятежникам присоединились части гарнизона, убили одного из наших военных советников). В ответ — по советскому же образцу — массовые репрессии. Арестовывали обычно вечером, допрашивали ночью, а утром расстреливали.</p>	<p>Afghans desperately resisted, taking up arms. In March of 1979 an anti-government mutiny flared up in the city of Herat. (One of our military advisors was killed by garrison units that joined the mutiny). Following the very Soviet model, in response there was massive repression. People were regularly arrested in the evening, interrogated at night, and shot in the morning.</p>
<p>Тараки и Амин В практической работе Тараки был беспомощным. Тараки царствовал, Амин правил. — Амин тянул весь воз работы на себе, он занимался партийными делами, армией, кадрами,— вспоминал Валерий Харазов. — А вы замечали, что Амин плохо относится к Советскому Союзу и симпатизирует Соединенным Штатам? — спрашивал я Харазова.— Ведь потом это утверждение станет главным объяснением, почему убили Амина и заменили его Кармалем... — Амин постоянно говорил о своих дружеских чувствах к Советскому Союзу,— ответил Харазов.— Откуда слухи о том, что Амин — агент ЦРУ? Он недолго учился в США и руководил землячеством афганцев. — К Советскому Союзу Амин относился к уважением и любовью,— говорил генерал Заплатин.— У него были два святых праздника в году, когда он позволял себе спиртное, и это были не афганские, а советские праздники — 7 ноября и 9 мая. Когда Амина убили, вдова с дочками и младшим сыном поехала в Советский Союз, хотя ей предложили любую страну на выбор. Но она сказала: мой муж был другом Советского Союза... Между афганскими лидерами был не политический конфликт, а личный —</p>	<p>Taraki and Amin In practical work Taraki was helpless. Taraki played the ruler, while Amin governed.</p> <p>- “Amin carried the whole workload on his back, he occupied himself with party affairs, the army, and personnel,” remembered Valery Karazov.</p> <p>- “And did you notice that Amin “had a poor attitude towards the Soviet Union and sympathized with the United States?” I asked Karazov. “After all, this statement became the main explanation of why Amin was killed and replaced by Karmal.”</p> <p>- “Amin constantly spoke of his amicable feelings towards the Soviet Union,” answered Karazov. Where did the rumors that Amin was an agent of the CIA originate? He did not study in the USA long, and was a leader in the community of Afghan countrymen.</p> <p>- “Amin treated the Soviet Union with love and respect,” said General Zaplatin. “He had two sacred holidays each year when he allowed himself alcohol, and they weren’t Afghan holidays, but Soviet ones: November 7th and May 9th.”</p> <p>When Amin was killed, his widow fled to the Soviet Union with their daughters and young son, although she had the choice of any</p>

<p>война амбиций. Но в него втянулись и советские представители в Кабуле. Партийные и военные советники поддерживали фракцию "Хальк", то есть Амина. Представители КГБ работали с "Парчамом", об этом мне рассказывал полковник Александр Морозов, в те годы заместитель резидента внешней разведки в Кабуле.</p> <p>— На одном совещании,— вспоминал Заплатин,— дело дошло до того, что мы друг друга готовы были взять за грудки. Представители КГБ делали ставку на Бабрака Кармаля. Почему им нравился Бабрак? Легко управляемый человек. Амин мог и не согласиться с советскими представителями, проводить свою линию.</p>	<p>country. But she said: my husband was a friend of the Soviet Union...</p> <p>Among Afghan leaders there was not a political, but personal, conflict; it was a war of ambitions. But the Soviet representatives in Kabul also got dragged into it. The Party and military advisors supported the “Halq” faction and therefore Amin. The Director of the KGB worked with the Parcham faction, I was told about this by Colonel Aleksandr Morozov, who was in those years Deputy Chief of Station for Foreign Intelligence in Kabul.</p> <p>“In one meeting,” Zaplatin remembered, “the matter came to this, that we were ready to grab each other by the lapels.” The KGB representatives gambled on Babrak Karmal. Why did they like Barbak? Barbak was easy to control. Amin was capable of disagreeing with Soviet representatives, and following his own [policy] line.</p>
<p>Новые афганские властители теряли власть, потому что пытались силой навязать стране социализм советского образца.</p> <p>Но в Москве решили, что причина всех проблем — Амин. В сентябре 1979 года Тараки летал на Кубу. На обратном пути остановился в Москве. Брежнев сказал: от Амина надо избавиться. Тараки согласился, но как? Председатель КГБ Андропов обещал: когда вы прилетите в Кабул, Амина уже не будет. Но когда Тараки вышел из самолета, то увидел... Амина.</p> <p>Хафизуллу Амина пытались убить несколько раз. Два раза хотели застрелить, два раза отравить. Генерал Александр Ляховский, много лет прослуживший в Кабуле, рассказывал мне, что советские снайперы из отряда "Зенит" подстерегали Амина на дороге, по которой он ездил на работу. Но кортеж пронесся с огромной скоростью. С отравлением тоже ничего не</p>	<p>The new Afghan leaders lost power because they tried to impose socialism by force on the country through use of Soviet means.</p> <p>But in Moscow it was resolved that the reason for all the problems was Amin. In September 1979 Taraki flew to Cuba. On the return trip he stopped in Moscow. Brezhnev said: “We need to get rid of Amin.” Taraki agreed, but how? KGB Director Andropov promised: “By the time you fly into Kabul, Amin will be dead.” But when Taraki exited the airplane, he saw... Amin.</p> <p>They almost assassinated Hafizullah Amin several times. They tried twice: to shoot him, and to poison him. General Alexander Lyakhovskiy who served many years in Kabul told me that Soviet snipers from “Zenith ” lied in wait for Amin on the road which he drove to work. But the motorcade drove by at a high speed. The poisoning didn't work out any better: poisoned cups of Coca Cola were</p>

<p>получилось. стакан кока-колы с отравой вместо него выпил племянник — Ассадула Амин, шеф контрразведки. В последний раз в Амина стреляли во дворце Тараки. Но он остался жив. Тараки приказал армии уничтожить Амина. Но войска кабульского гарнизона заняли сторону Амина, который приказал задушить Тараки и расстрелял несколько тысяч человек.</p> <p>Брежнев считал это личным оскорблением: он гарантировал безопасность Тараки, а его убили.</p> <p>— Что скажут в других странах? — переживал Леонид Ильич. — Разве можно верить Брежневу, если его заверения в поддержке и защите остаются пустыми словами?</p> <p>Леонид Ильич санкционировал спецоперацию в Кабуле — заменить Амина на Бабрака Кармаля. В КГБ придумали версию, будто Амин — агент ЦРУ. И началась переброска спецподразделений в Афганистан.</p>	<p>drunk by his nephew, Assadul Amin, his counterintelligence chief. In the final attempt Amin was shot into Taraki's Palace. But he was still alive. Taraki ordered the army to destroy Amin. But soldiers of the Kabul Garrison were on Amin's side, and Amin ordered them to strangle Taraki and he shot several thousand people.</p> <p>Brezhnev deemed it a personal insult: he guaranteed Taraki's security, yet Taraki was killed.</p> <p>“What do they say in other countries?” - Leonid Ilich worried. “Can you believe Brezhnev, if his assurances of support and protection are empty words?”</p> <p>Leonid Ilich sanctioned a special operation in Kabul: to replace Amin with Babrak Karmal. The KGB came up with the narrative that Amin was an agent of the CIA. And thus started the deployment of special forces into Afghanistan.</p>
<p>Хроника роковых решений</p> <p>Когда министр обороны Устинов приказал начальнику Генерального штаба Огаркову готовить ввод войск, маршал ответил, что это безрассудство. На заседании политбюро начальник Генштаба предупредил: афганцы не терпят вооруженных иностранцев и наши войска неминуемо втянутся в боевые действия. К тому же такая акция чревата большими внешнеполитическими осложнениями, особенно в исламском мире.</p> <p>Председатель КГБ Юрий Андропов оборвал маршала:</p> <p>— У нас есть кому заниматься политикой. Вам надо думать о военной стороне дела, то есть как лучше выполнить поставленную вам задачу.</p>	<p>A chronicle of fateful decisions</p> <p>When Defense Minister Ustinov ordered Ogorkov, the Chief of the General Staff, to prepare for deploying troops, the marshall replied it was reckless. In a Politburo meeting, the Chief of the General Staff gave a warning: the Afghans would not tolerate armed foreigners and our fighters will inevitably be drawn into combat actions. Besides, such actions are fraught with large foreign policy complications, especially in the Islamic world.</p> <p>Yuri Andropov, Chairman of the KGB, interrupted the marshall:</p> <p>“We have someone for studying politics. You have to think about military issues,</p>

Заплатин вспоминал: 10 декабря 1979 года позвонили из Москвы: ваша дочь просит о немедленной встрече с вами, возвращайтесь. Встревоженный генерал тут же вылетел, но оказалось, что его дочь ни к кому не обращалась: Заплатина просто убрали из Кабула накануне поворотных событий. Начальник Генштаба Огарков спросил его: не настало ли время ввести войска в Афганистан, чтобы спасти страну? Заплатин отвечал: мы втянемся в чужую гражданскую войну. После заседания политбюро Устинов вызвал к себе Огаркова, Заплатина и начальника главного политуправления генерала Епишева.

Огарков сказал министру:

— Товарищ Заплатин остается при своем мнении.

— Почему? — удивился Устинов.— Вот почитайте, что представительство КГБ сообщает о положении в Афганистане. Ты изучаешь тамошнюю обстановку вроде как попутно. А они головой отвечают за каждое слово.

В шифровке говорилось, что афганская армия развалилась, а Амин находится на грани краха. Заплатин прочитал шифровку и твердо сказал:

— Товарищ министр, это не соответствует действительности.

Устинов ответил:

— Но уже поздно...

Именно в тот день, 12 декабря, было принято решение ввести советские войска в Афганистан. Устинов полагал, что достаточно советским войскам появиться, как бандиты разбегутся. Первый заместитель министра обороны Сергей Соколов, которому поручили руководить вводом войск, обещал жене, что через месяц вернется и они поедут в санаторий. Санаторий не случился: Соколов провел в Афганистане не месяц, а год...

Операцией в Кабуле руководили

that is, how best to act on to carry out a task that has been assigned to you.”

Zaplatin recalls: December 10, 1979, they called from Moscow: his daughter asked for an immediate meeting, for him to come back. The alarmed general immediately got on a plane, but it turned out that his daughter did not send anyone for him: Zaplatin was simply removed from Kabul on the eve of the schisms. At first the General Staff Ogarkov told him: do not come if it is time to deploy troops into Afghanistan, in order to save the country? Zaplatin replied: “We retreated from the foreign civil war. Ustinov summoned Ogarkov, Zaplatin and General Epishev, the Head of the main office of Political Affairs, to his office after the Politburo meeting.

Ogarov told the minister:

Comrade Zaplatin remains unconvinced.

Why? wondered Ustinov. Here read what the KGB representatives report on the position in Afghanistan. You learn to study the situation on the ground there casually. And they answer everything with their heads.

The coded reports note that the Afghan Army was unraveling and Amin was on the verge of collapse. Zaplatin wrote a coded message and firmly said:

“Comrade minister, this does not match reality.”

Ustanov replied:

But it is already too late...

Precisely on the day of December 12th the decision was made to deploy Soviet soldiers to Afghanistan. Ustinov believed that were sufficient Soviet soldiers to appear, the bandits would flee. At first, Deputy Defense Minister Sergei Sokolov who was assigned to manage the invasion, promised his wife that

заместитель начальника разведки генерал Вадим Кирпиченко и старший представитель КГБ в Афганистане Борис Иванов. 19 декабря им в помощь отправили нового начальника нелегальной разведки Юрия Дроздова. Они доложили в Москву, что уничтожить Амина и заменить его Кармалем невозможно без поддержки армии. 25 декабря в Кабул была переброшена 103-я гвардейская воздушно-десантная дивизия.

Предполагалось, что Амин сам заявит о том, что по его приглашению советские войска входят в Афганистан, а уже потом его уберут. Бабрак Кармаль, находившийся под охраной офицеров 9-го управления советского КГБ, ждал своего часа. Но оперативники поторопились: с помощью шеф-повара, работавшего во дворце, Амину дали отравленную пищу и выступить по телевидению он уже не смог. Только попросил советского посла прислать врачей. Посол и не подозревал, что КГБ проводит спецоперацию в Кабуле! Терапевт Виктор Кузнеченков и хирург Анатолий Алексеев спасли президента Амина. Но только для того, чтобы его через несколько часов расстреляли спецназовцы. Они же в горячке боя убили и одного из наших врачей — Виктора Кузнеченкова. Дворец Амина штурмом взяли спецназ КГБ вместе с десанниками. Погибло большое количество афганцев, которые не могли поверить, что их убивают лучшие друзья.

До последней секунды не верил в это и Амин. Его убили вместе с малолетними сыновьями — одному было всего пять лет. Дочь Амина была ранена в обе ноги. Рассказывают, что Амину отрезали голову и в полиэтиленовом пакете доставили в Москву — отчитаться о проделанной работе. Обезглавленное тело завернули в ковер и закопали рядом с дворцом. Полковник Александр Кузнецов работал в Афганистане военным переводчиком:

he would return after a month and they would go to a vacation resort. The vacation never happened: Sokolov spent not a month in Afghanistan, but a year.

Operations in Kabul were managed by Deputy Chief of Intelligence, General Vadim Kirichenko and Senior KGB Representative in Afghanistan, Boris Ivanov. On December 19th they were sent by new Chief of Covert Intelligence Yuri Drozdov to help out. They reported to Moscow that doing away with Amin and replacing him with Karmal is impossible without the support of the army. On December 25th the 103rd Guard Airforce Paratrooper Division landed in Kabul

It has been assumed that Amin himself declared an invitation for Soviet soldiers to enter Afghanistan, after he was already removed. Babrak Karmal was located under the protection of officers from the Soviet KGB 9th Directorate bided his time. But operatives were hasty: with the help of the head cook working in the palace, they gave Amin poisoned food and said by phone that he was already banned from television. Amin was only able to request the Soviet ambassador send a doctor. The Ambassador did not even suspect that the KGB was conducting special operations in Kabul!

Doctor Anatolii Alekseev saved President Amin. But only for the Spetsnaz to shoot him in a couple of hours. They (i.e., Spetsnaz) in the heat of the fight killed one of our doctors as well - Viktor Kuzhechenkov. The KGB's spetsnaz together with paratroopers took the Amin Palace by storm. A large number of Afghans perished and they couldn't believe that they were killed by their best friends.

Until the last second, Amin did not believe this. He was killed together with his infant sons - one of them was just five years old. Amin's daughter was wounded in both legs. It

<p>— Я находился в ту ночь на узле связи. Когда представитель КГБ генерал Иванов получил сообщение о том, что Амина больше нет, он меня расцеловал: все, мы победили!</p> <p>31 декабря Кирпиченко и Дроздов доложили Андропову об успешно проведенной операции. Председатель КГБ обещал всех наградить и велел все забыть. Забыть не получилось: началась долгая и кровопролитная война.</p>	<p>is said that Amin was cut on the head and in a polyethylene packet it was delivered to Moscow - as proof the job was finished. The headless body was returned, cloaked, and staged near the palace.</p> <p>Colonel Aleksandr Kuznetsov worked in Afghanistan as a military interpreter:</p> <p>That night I was located with the communications unit. When Director of the KGB General Ivanov received the message that Amin was no more, he kissed me: “That’s it! We’ve won!”</p> <p>On December 31st Kirpichenko and Drozdov reported to Andropov on the operation’s success. The KGB Director promised everyone commendations and ordered everyone to forget. Forgetting didn’t occur: a long and bloody war began.</p>
<p>Приказано молчать</p> <p>Поначалу в СССР не дозволялось ни писать, ни говорить о погибших и раненых в Афганистане. Сотрудники военкоматов приходили к несчастным родителям вместе с врачом — откачивать людей, которым говорили, что их сын убит, что привезли цинковый гроб и завтра похороны. Людям, чьи дети погибали в далекой стране, запрещалось говорить о своем горе, поминать их. Но с каждым месяцем таких людей становилось все больше, а замалчивать войну — все сложнее.</p> <p>Появление советских солдат в мусульманской стране пробудило радикальный политический ислам. Стало желанным поводом начать джихад, священную войну против неверных.</p> <p>Высшие религиозные инстанции суннитского мира объявили, что защита Афганистана от внешнего врага — священный долг каждого мусульманина. По несчастливому для брежневского</p>	<p>Media blackout is ordered</p> <p>At first in the USSR it was not permitted to write or speak about the dead and wounded in Afghanistan. Employees of military recruiting offices came with sadness together with the doctor to push parents out, those who were told, that their son was killed, that a zinc coffin had been brought and that the funeral is the next day. People, whose children were killed in a far off country, were forbidden to speak of their grief, to mourn them. But with every month such people became more and more numerous, and the war became more and more difficult to conceal.</p> <p>The appearance of Soviet soldiers in a Muslim country gave rise to radical political Islam. It became a desirable cause to start Jihad, a sacred war against atheists.</p> <p>The uppermost religious authorities of the Sunni world announced that the protection of Afghanistan from the external enemy - was a</p>

<p>руководства стечению обстоятельств через месяц после ввода советских войск в Белом доме обосновался Рональд Рейган, который рад был помочь советскому руководству поглубже увязнуть в афганской войне. И не он один: президент Пакистана генерал Мохаммад Зия уль-Хак обучал афганцев воевать, Китай давал оружие моджахедам, чтобы ослабить Советский Союз. Саудовская Аравия финансировала войну. Все видные семьи королевства работали в комитетах по сбору средств для джихада. Семья бен Ладенов делегировала Осаму. После возвращения из Афганистана Осам бен Ладен создал террористическую группу "Аль-Каида".</p>	<p>sacred duty to every muslim. In an unfortunate turn of circumstances for Brezhnev's leadership team, Ronald Reagan, who was happy to help the Soviets get bogged down even deeper in the Afghan War, settled into the White House a month after the Soviet invasion. And he was not alone: the President of Pakistan, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq trained Afghans to wage war, China gave arms to the Mujahideen in order to weaken the Soviet Union, Saudi Arabia financed the war. All the notable families of the kingdom worked in various committees to raise donations for Jihad. The Bin Laden family offered Osama. After returning from Afghanistan Osama Bin Laden founded the terrorist group "Al-Qaeda".</p>
<p>Цена ошибки ...Безоблачное небо над Кабулом было исчеркано запятыми: взлетая и садясь, самолеты "Аэрофлота" и афганской "Арианы" отстреливали тепловые снаряды, чтобы обмануть "стингеры". Из Кабула я улетел на вертолете. Его тоже обстреляли.</p> <p>С президентом Наджибуллой, недавним начальником афганской госбезопасности, я разговаривал в здании ЦК партии "Отечество". Я спросил президента: не считает ли он, что Апрельская революция была ошибкой?</p> <p>— Идеи и цели революции,— ответил Наджибулла,— были правильны. Но попытки построить коммунистическое общество быстрее, чем в Советском Союзе,— ошибка...</p> <p>Без советской помощи он продержался недолго. Когда талибы вошли в Кабул, они жестоко расправились с бывшим президентом. Наджибуллу мучили, отрезали ему половые органы. Вывесили на площади уже мертвое тело. После Апрельской революции из всех лидеров</p>	<p>The price of a mistake The cloudless sky above Kabul was checkered with smoke from explosives: taking off and landing "Aeroflot" airplanes and Afghan "Arianes" fired off thermal shells, in order to trick the Stingers. From Kabul I flew away in a helicopter. The helicopter was also fired at.</p> <p>I spoke with President Nadjibulla, until recently, Chief of Afghan National Security in the building of the Central Committee of the "Fatherland" Party. I questioned the president: if he didn't consider the Saur Revolution a mistake?</p> <p>"The ideas and goals in the revolution were correct," replied Najibullah. "But attempts to construct a communist society faster than in the Soviet Union were a mistake..."</p> <p>Without Soviet assistance he didn't hold on for long. When the Taliban arrived in Kabul they severely punished the former president. Nadjibullah was tortured, and his sexual organs were removed. His dead body was displayed in the city center. After the Saur Revolution out of all leaders of Afghanistan, only Babrak Karmal died of natural causes.</p>

<p>Афганистана своей смертью умер только один Бабрак Кармаль.</p> <p>Апрельская революция, ввод советских войск, междоусобная война — все это разрушило государство. Афганистан превратился в территорию, которую и сегодня раздирают на части группы неграмотных молодых людей, вооруженных "калашниковыми". Они говорят, что исполняют веления Корана. Но они не читали эту святую книгу, потому что они неграмотны...</p> <p><i>Леонид Млечин</i></p>	<p>The Saur Revolution, the introduction of Soviet soldiers, a civil war - all of this destroyed the state. Afghanistan turned into a territory which today is torn into pieces by illiterate young men, armed with Kalashnikovs. They say they are fulfilling the commands of the Quran. But they have not read the Holy Book because they are illiterate.</p> <p><i>Leonid Mlechin</i></p>
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Article 2: Кто начал войну в Афганистане

<p>Кто начал войну в Афганистане</p> <p>Особая папка: документы</p> <p>07:09, 25 декабря 2019 Андрей Липский, зам. главного редактора</p> <p>12 декабря 1979 года кремлевские старцы приняли секретный документ. Он был официально оформлен как «Постановление ЦК КПСС» за № 176/125. Название было «зашифровано» — К положению в «А». Текст тоже выглядел как шифровка: какие-то «соображения», «мероприятия», о чем это — понять невозможно. Если б не фамилии участников заседания, ответственных за выполнение неизвестно чего, не ссылки на ЦК и политбюро, такой документ вполне мог быть принят домкомом ЖЭКа или районным советом ветеранов. Однако банальный советский канцелярит о «намеченных мероприятиях» открывал зловещую главу современной истории — введение в Афганистан советских войск, увязнувших там почти на</p>	<p>Who started the war in Afghanistan</p> <p>Special file: documents</p> <p>December 25th, 2019 Andrei Lipskii, editor-in-chief</p> <p>December 12th, 1979, the Kremlin elders received a secret document. It was officially written as “Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee Resolution” no. 176/125. The title was “coded” - on the matter of the situation in “A”. The text also seemed written in code: such as “considerations”, “undertakings”, it was impossible to understand what this was about. If not for the names of the meeting’s participants who were responsible for accomplishing God-knows-what, if not for references to the Central Committee and Politburo, then this document could have been passed by the Resident Committee’s of the Local Housing Authority or a neighborhood for veteran’s council. However, the trivial Soviet bureaucratise about the planned activities opened a sinister chapter in modern history - the introduction of Soviet troops in Afghanistan who got bogged</p>
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<p>десятилетие, жестокою войну, унесшую жизни и здоровье сотен тысяч людей, международную катастрофу, ускорившую развал Советского Союза.</p>	<p>down for almost ten years; a cruel war that carried off the lives and the health of hundreds of thousands of people; an international catastrophe that hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union.</p>
<p>ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ ЦК КПСС</p> <p>Председательствовал тов. Л. И. Брежнев.</p> <p>Присутствовали: Суслов М. А., Гришин В. В., Кириленко А. П., Пельше А. Я., Устинов Д. Ф., Черненко К. У., Андропов Ю. В., Громыко А. А., Тихонов Н. А., Пономарев Б. Н.</p> <p>К положению в «А»</p> <p>1. Одобрить соображения и мероприятия, изложенные тт. Андроповым Ю. В., Устиновым Д. Ф., Громыко А. А.</p> <p>Разрешить в ходе осуществления этих мероприятий им вносить коррективы не принципиального характера.</p> <p>Вопросы, требующие решения ЦК, своевременно вносить и в Политбюро.</p>	<p>RESOLUTION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION</p> <p>Chairman L. I. Brezhnev.</p> <p>Attendants: Suslov M. A., Grishin V. V., Kirilenko A. P., Pelshe A. Y., Ustinov D. F., Chernenko K. Y., Andropov F. V., Gromyko A. A., Tihonov N. A., Ponomarev B. N.</p> <p>On the matter of “A”</p> <p>1 - Approved considerations and undertakings, explained by Andropov Y. V., Ustinov D. F., Gromyko A.A.</p> <p>Resolved during the course of the implementations of these undertakings they may make adjustments of an incidental character.</p> <p>Questions demanding decisions of the Central Committee, are to be brought to the Politburo in a timely manner.</p>

<p>Осуществление всех этих мероприятий возложить на тт. Андропова Ю. В., Устинова Д. Ф., Громыко А. А.</p> <p>2. Поручить тт. Андропову Ю. В., Устинову Д. Ф., Громыко А. А. информировать Политбюро ЦК о ходе выполнения намеченных мероприятий.</p> <p>Секретарь ЦК Брежнев Л. И.</p> <p>№ 997-оп (1л.)</p> <p>П 176/125 от 12/XII</p>	<p>Implementation of all these undertakings were assigned to comrades: Andropov Y. V., Ustinov D. F., Gromyko A. A.</p> <p>2 - Instruct comrades Andropov Y. V., Ustinov D. F., Gromik A. A. to inform the Politburo Central Committee on the progress of the completion of planned tasks.</p> <p>Secretary of the Central Committee Brezhnev, L.</p> <p>№ 997-оп (1.)</p> <p>P 176/125 от 12/XII</p>
<p>Кстати, никаким постановлением ЦК этот документ не был. Ведь этот орган в период принятия решения о войне в Афганистане был достаточно многочисленным — 287 членов и 139 кандидатов в члены ЦК.</p> <p>На самом деле судьбу страны решила группа членов политбюро (в советское время это слово писалось исключительно с заглавной буквы П), причем даже не в полном составе.</p> <p>В судьбоносной сходке не приняли участие члены ПБ — премьер Косыгин, казахстанский партийный лидер Кунаев,</p>	<p>By the way, this document wasn't any kind of a Central Committee resolution. After all, the Central Committee in the period when the decision about the War in Afghanistan was made was pretty large: 287 members and 139 candidate members of the Central Committee.</p> <p>In reality, the fate of the nation was decided by a group of Politburo members (in Soviet times this word was written exclusively with capital letter "P"), moreover, not even all of the Politburo members.</p> <p>These Politburo members did not take part in the fateful meeting - Premier Kosygin, the</p>

украинский первый секретарь Щербицкий и руководитель ленинградской партийной организации Романов.

Из кандидатов в члены политбюро, традиционно присутствовавших на заседаниях этого органа, в этой встрече участвовал лишь Борис Пономарев. Попал в эту компанию по должности — он был секретарем ЦК и зав. международным отделом, отвечавшим за связи с коммунистическими и рабочими партиями Запада и левыми партиями и движениями стран третьего мира. Понятно, что Народно-демократическая партия Афганистана, осуществлявшая после так называемой «саурской (апрельской) революции» 1978 года прыжок «из феодализма в социализм», проходила по его ведомству. Остальные кандидаты в члены ПБ, в том числе М. С. Горбачев и Э. А. Шеварднадзе, приглашены не были.

Докладывала свои «соображения» по поводу «мероприятий» троица членов ПБ — председатель КГБ Андропов, министр обороны Устинов и министр иностранных дел Громыко. Позже стало известно, что этими мероприятиями на тот момент были формирование и развертывание военной группировки на границе с Афганистаном для последующего вторжения, подготовка агентуры, спецподразделений и спецмероприятий для «работы» в стране и поддержка грядущей акции или хотя бы нейтрализация ее негативных последствий на международной арене.

После принятия этого «Постановления ЦК КПСС» ни сам ЦК, ни Верховный Совет СССР, ни Совет министров введение войск в Афганистан не обсуждали и никаких решений на этот счет не принимали —

Kazakhstan party leader Kunaev, the First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party Shcherbitskyi, and the Leader of the Leningrad Party organization, Romanov.

Of the candidate members in the Politburo who traditionally were present for the meetings of the Central Committee, just Boris Ponomarev participated in this meeting. He landed in this company due to his responsibilities - he was the Central Committee Secretary and Head of the International Division, who was responsible for ties to communist and labor parties in the West and leftist parties and movements in third world countries. It is clear that the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan that had implemented, after the so-called "Saur (April) Revolution" of 1978, its leap "from feudalism into socialism" fit into his portfolio. The rest of the Politburo candidate members, including Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were not invited.

Just a trio of Politburo members (KGB Director Andropov, Defense Minister Ustinov and Minister of Foreign Affairs Gromyko) reported their "thoughts" concerning the "events". Later it became known that the undertakings at that moment included: the formation and deployment of military detachments on the border with Afghanistan for the subsequent invasion, preparation of intelligence agents, special task forces and special operations for "work" in the country and support for the upcoming action or at least neutralizing its negative consequences on the world stage.

After adopting this "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" neither the Central Committee itself, nor the Supreme Soviet of the United Soviet Socialist Republics, nor the Council of Ministers discussed the introduction of troops into Afghanistan, nor did they make any

<p>просто приняли к сведению и к безусловному исполнению. Таким образом, всего 11 человек — 10 членов политбюро и один кандидат в таковые — решили судьбу огромной державы и вовлекли ее в кровопролитную войну.</p>	<p>decisions on that question/point. They took it under advisement and set out to fulfill it unconditionally. So it was: all of 11 people - 10 Politburo members and one candidate member decided the fate of a huge power and involved it in a bloody war.</p>
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Article 3: 28 лет выводу войск из Афганистана: таджикские "афганцы" о забытой войне

<p>28 лет выводу войск из Афганистана: таджикские "афганцы" о забытой войне Анора Саркорова Русская служба Би-би-си, Душанбе 15 февраля 2017</p> <p>Спустя 28 лет военная кампания СССР в Афганистане (1979-1989) практически забыта - но не ее участниками - бывшими "афганцами", самым молодым из которых сейчас за пятьдесят.</p> <p>За 10 лет войны через Афганистан прошло около 620 тысяч советских военнотружущих и гражданского персонала.</p> <p>Для многих жителей советского Таджикистана афганская война началась задолго до официальной даты ввода ограниченного контингента советских войск в Афганистан.</p> <p>По официальным данным, выполнять интернациональный долг в Афганистан были призваны более 15 тысяч таджикотружущих. 366 из них погибли. Почти в каждом полку, разведотделе служили таджики, которые выполняли роль переводчиков.</p> <p>Таджикские "афганцы" считают, что участники той войны незаслуженно</p>	<p>28 Years after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan: Tajik "Afghans" on the Forgotten War Anora Sarkorova BBC Russian Service, Dushanbe 15 February 2017</p> <p>After 28 years, the Soviet military campaign in Afghanistan (1979-1989) is practically forgotten - but not by its participants - former "Afghans", the youngest of which are now over fifty.</p> <p>During the ten years of war, close to 620,000 Soviet soldiers and civilian personnel passed through Afghanistan.</p> <p>For many citizens of Soviet Tajikistan, the Afghan War started long before the official date of the Soviet contingent's deployment into Afghanistan.</p> <p>According to official data, more than 15,000 Tajiks were conscripted for foreign service. 366 of them died. Tajiks served in almost every regiment and intelligence department as translators.</p> <p>Tajik "Afghans" believe that participants of the war are undeservedly forgotten, despite honoring their duty to a country that no longer</p>
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<p>забыты, хотя честно выполняли свой долг перед страной, которой уже нет.</p>	<p>exists.</p>
<p>Одина Мухиддинов, 51 год Я получил повестку в 1983 году. Группа, в составе которой я оказался в Туркмении, состояла в основном из таджиков. Кроме военной подготовки нас обучали арабскому шрифту. Вопросы, конечно, были - зачем мы учим арабский алфавит, но никто из нас не решался спрашивать об этом офицеров. Служба родине была для всех священным долгом, так нас воспитывали.</p> <p>Я узнал об отправке в Афганистан от руководства военной части, новобранцев попросили связаться с родными и рассказать им о месте службы. Шел третий год войны, уже были погибшие, поэтому нам позволили попрощаться с родителями. Ко мне приехал отец. Понимал ли я, что это может быть нашей последней встречей? Конечно, нет. До службы в Афганистане я не интересовался этой кампанией. Все, что я знал, ограничивалось новостными репортажами, которые очень сильно отличались от реальности, которую я увидел позже. Советским солдатам из мусульманских республик было непросто. Афганцы осуждали нас. Но таджикам было еще сложнее, потому что нас с афганцами объединял не только язык, но и общая в прошлом история и культура. Это несколько напрягало руководство, которое не до конца доверяло своим солдатам. Однажды в районе афгано-пакистанской границы я задержал афганского военного, воевавшего против правительственных войск. Я его разоружил, привел в часть. Офицеры были очень недовольны мной. Они пытались выяснить, почему я его не убил, а привел в часть, разоружив.</p>	<p>Odina Muhiddinov, 51 years old I received orders in 1983. The group I was a part of was in Turkmenistan, it was mainly made up of Tajiks. Aside from military training, we were trained with the Arabic script.</p> <p>There were questions, of course - what are we learning the Arabic script for, but none of us dared to ask the officers about this. Service to the motherland was sacred to everyone, that's how we were raised.</p> <p>I found out about being sent into Afghanistan from the unit's leadership, the recruits were asked to contact their families and tell them about their place of service.</p> <p>It was the third year of the war, there were already casualties, so we were allowed to say goodbye to our parents. My father came to me. Maybe he understood that it was possibly our last meeting? Of course, it wasn't.</p> <p>Before service in Afghanistan, I was not interested in this unit. Everything that I knew, was limited to news reports, which were very different from the reality which I saw later.</p> <p>It was not so easy for soldiers from the Islamic republics. The Afghans condemned us. But it was even more difficult for the Tajiks, because they were unified with the Afghans, not only in language, but in a shared history and culture. It was a bit stressful for the leadership, who, to the end, did not fully trust their soldiers.</p> <p>One time in the Afghan-Pakistan border region, I detained an Afghan soldier, who fought against government forces. I disarmed him and brought him to the unit. The officers were very unhappy with me. They were trying</p>

<p>Появилось недоверие ко мне. Мне было сложно убедить военное начальство в том, что мне, 18-летнему парню, сложно, глядя человеку в лицо, видя его глаза, расстрелять его.</p> <p>До войны, на которую я попал, часто смотрел фильмы про войну с фашисткой Германией. Я и предположить не мог тогда, что увижу боевые действия наяву. Никто не хотел воевать. Наверное, каждый про себя задавал себе вопрос, а зачем я здесь, но вслух никто никогда этого не произносил. Мы выполняли приказ. Никто не спрашивал нашего желания. Считаю ли я ошибкой ввод войск в Афганистан? Я полагаю, что СССР очень много сделал для афганского народа. Велось активно строительство школ, больниц, дорог, мостов. Афганцы относились к нам неплохо, хотя постоянно спрашивали о том, что мы делаем в чужой стране. За участие в афганской войне мне присудили орден, который я до сих пор не получил. В списках минобороны России я значусь, но орден до меня не дошел.</p>	<p>to figure out why I did not kill him, and why I brought him to the unit disarmed. There was a distrust of me. It was difficult for the military leadership to convince me, 18 years old, to look a person in the face, look into his eyes, and shoot him.</p> <p>Before I was in the war, I often watched films about the war with fascist Germany. I could not have guessed it then, that I would be seeing war in reality.</p> <p>No one wanted to go to war. Probably everyone questioned themselves, ‘What am I here for?’ But no one ever uttered it outloud. We followed orders. No one asked what we wished.</p> <p>Do I consider it a mistake, the deployment to Afghanistan? I suppose that the USSR often did much for the Afghan people. There was active construction of schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges. Afghans thought well of us, although they constantly asked about why we were in a foreign country.</p> <p>For service in the Afghan War I was awarded the Order, which I have yet to receive.</p>
<p>Аскарали Баротов, 55 лет Ранним утром 1981 года наш полк, расквартированный в узбекском Термезе, разбудили и приказали идти. Никто не знал, куда мы направляемся. О том, что мы в Афганистане, ребята поняли по надписям на улицах. Но никто и не представлял, что значило наше место службы. Что такое война, я понял практически в первые дни после прибытия в Афганистан. Гуманитарный конвой, который я сопровождал, попал под обстрел, длившийся почти 12 часов. Это было как в кино, но только по-настоящему. Было очень страшно. Нас обстреливали, мы отстреливались. Мы проходили узкий горный участок, а позиции моджахедов</p>	<p>Askarali Barotov, 55 years old Early in the morning in 1981, our unit was stationed in Uzbek Termes, they woke me up and ordered me to go. No one knew where we were headed to. About being in Afghanistan, the guys understood this from the street signs. But no one had any idea what our duty station meant. I realized that it was war after the first days, after arriving in Afghanistan. The humanitarian convoy I was escorting took fire for nearly 12 hours. It was like in the movies, only in real life. It was quite horrid. We were shelled, we returned fire. We were passing through a narrow section of a mountain, and the mujahideen were located in a higher</p>

располагались повыше. Мы плохо знали местность, не были подготовлены к ведению боевых действий в горных условиях. Наши противники были у себя дома и отлично владели техникой боя. Трудно передать словами картину, которую я увидел, когда все закончилось. Повсюду лежали тела погибших солдат, стонали раненые. Наш командир не выдержал и заплакал, ведь большинство убитых в бою были недавние призывники. Солдаты не обсуждали эту войну между собой, но воевать никто не хотел. Умирать никто не хотел. Это был приказ. Мы принимали это как судьбу. Мы были обречены.

Иногда по службе мы выходили в город. Особенно интересно было прогуливаться по афганским рынкам. Часто покупали фрукты, особенно те, что видели впервые. Многого не было в СССР. Таджики и узбеки покупали лепешки. В военной части выпекали хлеб, а мы скучали по лепешкам.

Самым тяжелым моментом стал случай с моими однополчанами. Во время одного из проездов мы попали под обстрел. Двое из наших сослуживцев, чью машину взорвали, не смогли догнать БТР. На следующее утро мы поехали их искать. Нашли через пару часов их изуродованные и изувеченные тела. Их жестоко пытали, а потом убили. Мы все плакали, глядя на тех, с кем еще вчера шутили и мечтали о будущем. Никто не стеснялся своих слез. После возвращения домой я еще в течение долгого времени боялся выходить ночью на улицу. Ничего не мог с собой поделаться. Тогда мы были уверены, что выполняем свой долг.

position. We knew the local area poorly, and were not prepared to conduct combat operations in mountainous conditions. Our enemy was on home turf and had excellent command of combat tactics.

It is difficult to paint a picture of what I saw when it was all over with words. Bodies of dead soldiers lay all over, the wounded groaned. Our commander was not able to stand, and cried, after all, most of those killed in battle were the most recent recruits.

Soldiers didn't talk about this war among themselves. No one wanted to go to war, no one wanted to die. These were orders. We accepted this as fate. We were doomed.

Sometimes we were sent into the city on missions. It was especially interesting to walk through the Afghan markets. We often bought fruit, especially the ones we saw for the first time. There were many things we did not have in the USSR. Tajiks and Uzbeks bought tortillas. At the unit they baked bread, and we missed out on the tortillas.

The most difficult moment was a matter with my fellow soldiers. We came under fire in a split second. Two of our comrades whose vehicle was blown apart couldn't catch up with the (BTR) armored personnel carrier. The next morning we went searching for them. We found them after a couple hours, their bodies were disfigured and mutilated. They were brutally tortured, then killed. We all cried, looking at them, those we were joking with, and dreaming about the future yesterday. No one was shy about their tears.

For a long while after returning home I was still scared of going to the street at night. Nothing could help me.

Then we were sure about honoring our duty.

**Вали Саерабеков, заместитель
председателя совета ветеранов
Таджикистана**

Многих из "афганцев" уже нет в живых. Умерли молодыми от последствий контузий, ранений, стрессов, депрессий. Афганская война навсегда изменила судьбы всех тех, кто в ней участвовал.

Мне было 22 года. Я заканчивал учебу в госуниверситете Ленинграда, на факультете восточных языков. Со мной учились еще четверо моих земляков из Таджикистана.

Перед самым выпуском к нам приехали представители генштаба СССР. Они предложили пройти службу в Афганистане.

Теоретически мы могли отказаться от этого предложения, но все мы хорошо понимали, что в дальнейшем отказ может негативно отразиться на нашей карьере. Это был 1985 год. К тому времени советских солдат извещали о месте прохождения службы.

Война шла уже шесть лет. Росло число погибших, нарастало социальное недовольство и возмущение людей. Каждый привезенный из Афганистана груз-200 вызывал огромный общественный резонанс.

Вокруг люди жили в мире, уже был определенный достаток, а тут привозят тела молодых ребят. Солдат отправляли на войну в чужую страну, и делалось это принудительно.

На родине, особенно в советских азиатских республиках, груз-200 встречали и хоронили целыми селениями. Росло народное недовольство. В Кремле об этом знали, и в последние годы число призывников из Центральной Азии на службу в Афганистан заметно уменьшилось.

Открыто критиковать советское руководство боялись, но известны случаи,

**Valii Saerabekov, Deputy Chairman of the
Tajikistan Veterans' Council**

Many of the "Afghans" are already no longer among the living. They died young from the effects of concussions, wounds, stress, and depression. The Afghan War forever changed the fate of all those who participated in it.

I was 22 years old. I finished my studies at Leningrad State University, in the Department of Eastern Languages. Four more of my fellow countrymen from Tajikistan studied with me.

Before we were released, representatives from the General Staff of the USSR came to us. They offered service in Afghanistan.

Theoretically, we could have rejected this offer. But we were all well aware that refusal could negatively affect our careers.

This was in 1985. By that time the Soviet soldiers knew their duty station.

The war lasted six years. As the death toll grew, so did social discontent and indignation. Every cargo plane of Gruz 200 from Afghanistan caused a huge public reaction.

People lived near peace, there was already a certain prosperity, and here they brought the bodies of the young guys. Soldiers were sent to war in a foreign country, and it was done so forcibly.

At home, especially in the Soviet Asian republics, Gruz 200 was met and entire villages were buried. Popular dissent grew. In the Kremlin they knew of this, and in recent years the number of conscripts from Central Asia for service in Afghanistan noticeably decreased.

когда убивали представителей минобороны, доставлявших груз-200. Я попал в самую горячую точку - в Панджшер. К тому времени там фактически не осталось мирного населения. Оно было полностью эвакуировано.

Самые масштабные операции советских войск против моджахедов прошли на севере Афганистана.

Высокогорные кишлаки были заминированы. Одно неосторожное движение, подрыв - лишаешься ног, рук, умираешь. Уходя из части на задания, никто не знал наверняка, что вернется. Все войны бессмысленные, не исключение и афганская война СССР.

Вроде хотели добра, а в итоге получили сотни, тысячи убитых, искалеченных молодых мужчин. Не зря говорят, что благими намерениями устлана дорога в ад. В самом начале военной кампании более половины афганцев одобряли ввод советских войск, но уже в конце войны отношение к СССР сильно изменилось. Война продолжалась, гибли люди, росло недовольство.

Росло недовольство и в афганской правительственной армии. Афганцев силой забирали в армию. Воевать никто не хотел. Началось массовое дезертирство из афганской армии. Люди покидали расположение своих военных частей. Убегали по тем самым заминированным тропам и подрывались. Это были дехкане (крестьяне - Би-би-си), насильно призванные в армию.

Война в Афганистане была большой политической ошибкой СССР. Печально, что интересы политиков и государства нередко стоят выше человеческой жизни.

They were afraid to openly criticize the Soviet leadership, but there are cases where representatives from the Ministry for Defense, who delivered the Cargo-200, were killed.

I got to the hottest spot in Panjshir. By that time there were virtually no civilians left. It was entirely evacuated.

Most of the large-scale operations by Soviet soldiers against the mujahideen went on in northern Afghanistan.

High mountain villages were mined. A careless movement, the detonation - you lose your legs, your arms, you die. No one knew for sure they would return when they left the unit for missions.

All wars are meaningless, the Soviet-Afghan War is no exception.

They seemed to want to do good, but in the end, they got hundreds, thousands of young men wounded and killed. It isn't for nothing they say the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

At the start of the military campaign, more than half of the Afghans welcomed the introduction of Soviet troops, yet by the end of the war, attitudes towards the USSR had changed greatly.

The war went on, people died, bitterness grew.

Discontent grew within the Afghan Army. The Afghans were forced into the army. No one wanted to fight a war. Mass desertion from the Afghan Army began. People walked off their military posts. They ran off on mined paths, and were blown apart. This was the Dekhans (peasants, BBC), conscripted by force into the army.

The War in Afghanistan was the largest

	political failure of the USSR. It is sad that the interests of politicians and the government often stand above human life.
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Article 4: Афганистан спустя 30 лет после вывода советских войск: что думают афганцы о жизни тогда и сейчас

<p>Афганистан спустя 30 лет после вывода советских войск: что думают афганцы о жизни тогда и сейчас Ольга Ившина, Ольга Просвинова Би-би-си 14 февраля 2019 Статья была опубликована в феврале 2019 года, когда исполнилось 30 лет с момента вывода войск. 25 декабря 2019 года исполнилось 40 лет с начала советского вторжения в Афганистан.</p> <p>За последние 40 лет война стала неотъемлемой частью жизни для афганцев. Люди откровенно признаются, что все, о чем они мечтают, - пожить немного в мире, не видеть оружия и перестать бояться за своих детей. Каково это - жить, несмотря на обстрелы, подрывы смертников, разрушенную инфраструктуру и растущую волну наркотрафика?</p> <p>Русская служба Би-би-си попросила жителей Афганистана рассказать, как им жилось во время советской военной операции и сейчас, когда в стране находятся военные США и стран НАТО.</p>	<p>Afghanistan 30 years after the Soviet Union withdrawal: what Afghans think about life then and now Olga Ivshina, Olga Prosvirova BBC February 14th, 2019</p> <p><i>The article was published in February 2019, on the 30th anniversary of the moment of withdrawal. December 25th, 2019 marked 40 years from the start of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.</i></p> <p>For the last forty years war became a defining feature of life for the people of Afghanistan. People frankly admit that everything that they dreamed of — to live a little bit in the world, to not see rifles, and to stop being afraid for their children. What is it? - to live, despite the gunfire, suicide bombers, destruction of infrastructure, and a growing wave of narcotics trafficking?</p> <p>BBC Russia Bureau asked Afghans to tell how they lived then, in the time of Soviet military operations, and now when soldiers from the USA and NATO countries are located in Afghanistan.</p>
<p>Хабибула, бывший преподаватель, пенсионер: "Люди сейчас настороженно относятся к России"</p>	<p>Habibullah, a former teacher, now retired: "People now speak uneasily of Russia." When Soviet soldiers entered Afghanistan, I was almost 20 years old. When they came I</p>

Когда советские войска прибыли в Афганистан, мне было почти 20 лет. Когда они пришли, я подумал, что это начало какого-то ужаса в истории нашей страны. И действительно, на самом деле так и получилось: началась война, которая продолжается до сих пор.

Когда в стране были советские войска, здесь строились здания - вот второй микрорайон и третий. Афганская армия была очень хорошо вооружена и обучена. К советским военным афганский народ относился с симпатией, добротой.

Когда выходили советские войска из Афганистана, весь народ и армия - все надеялись, что это конец войны, надеялись на мир, думали, что война кончается. К большому сожалению, получилось наоборот. Как только моджахеды пришли в города, особенно в Кабул, развернулась новая война. Они нападали на людей, грабили. Как хищники. Были большие жертвы. Перед моими глазами людей убивали на улицах. Это был ужас. Это были сложнейшие годы для афганского народа. Когда "Талибан" захватил власть, в Афганистане закрыли все женские учебные заведения, люди не имели прав. Царили безработица, нищета. Сейчас жизнь людей немного улучшилась, хотя до сих пор нет работы и есть люди, которые страдают от голода, но все же уровень жизни намного лучше, чем во времена "Талибана" и во времена моджахедов.

Когда в Афганистан пришла коалиция (Международная коалиция, ISAF - возглавляемый НАТО войсковой контингент, действовавший на территории Афганистана с 2001 года. - Би-би-си), народ надеялся, что война уже закончена. И воспринимали приход американцев очень тепло, жизнь людей улучшилась. Но после начала вывода американских

thought that this was the start of some sort of nightmare in the history of our country. And indeed, that is really what happened: the war started, and it still goes on.

When there were Soviet soldiers in the country, buildings were constructed for example, take the second and third subdivisions. The Afghan Army was very well armed and trained. The Afghan people regarded the Soviet soldiers with sympathy and kindness.

When the Soviet Army withdrew from Afghanistan, everyone and the army - hoped that this would be the end of the war, hoped for peace and thought that the war was over. To their great misfortune, it turned out to be the opposite. As soon as the mujahideen went into the cities, especially in Kabul, it turned into a new war. They attacked people, looted. Like predators. There were large losses of life. People were killed on the streets before my eyes. It was horrible.

These were extremely complicated years for the Afghan people. When the Taliban captured power, they shut down all women's educational institutions in Afghanistan, people did not have rights. Unemployment and poverty reigned. Now the lives of the people have somewhat improved, although there is still no work and there are people who suffer from hunger, but nevertheless, the level of life is a bit better than in the time of the "Taliban" or in the time of the mujahideen.

When the coalition entered Afghanistan (International Security Assistance Force, ISAF - chaired by the NATO military contingent, who has acted in the territory of Afghanistan since 2001 - BBC), people hoped that war was already over. And they perceived the American deployment very warmly, and people's lives improved. But after the start of the American military withdrawal, more

<p>военных появились большие трудности: безработица, уровень жизни снова упал. Но все равно не так плохо, как при талибах.</p> <p>Лицо Кабула вообще изменилось, строились здания, фабрики, заводы, люди пошли на работу. Когда есть мир, работа тоже есть, когда мира нет, работа тоже останавливается.</p> <p>Честно говоря, сейчас народ Афганистана очень переживает, что американцы уходят. Переживают, что опять начнется война.</p> <p>Самый лучший выход сейчас - чтобы все стороны прекратили огонь, а после прошли выборы. И еще нужно забрать у людей оружие. Сейчас почти в каждом доме в Афганистане оно есть - пистолет или "Калашников". Продают его, конечно, нелегально, но этот рынок никто не контролирует. Торгуют в основном бывшие моджахеды. И люди покупают у них, чтобы защищаться. Уровень преступности очень высокий.</p> <p>Люди по улицам ходят свободно, но боятся, конечно, ведь преступники могут, например, убить человека ночью, чтобы машину его украсть. Грабеж повсюду, к сожалению. Наркобизнес тоже есть. И торговля боеприпасами.</p> <p>Люди в Афганистане сейчас не доверяют России, относятся настороженно, думают, что Россия начинает вмешиваться в дела Афганистана.</p>	<p>challenges appeared: unemployment, quality of life fell again. But all the same it was not as bad as under the Taliban.</p> <p>The face of Kabul generally changed, buildings were constructed, factories, mills, and people went to work. When there is peace, there is also work, when peace stops, work also stops.</p> <p>Frankly speaking, right now the people of Afghanistan want the Americans to leave. They want war to end again.</p> <p>Withdrawal is the most important thing right now - so all sides can stop firing, and afterwards elections can go on. Now in almost every home in Afghanistan there is a pistol or Kalashnikov. The illegal market, of course, can't be controlled by anyone. They are mainly traded by the mujahideen. And people buy them to defend themselves. Crime rates are very high.</p> <p>People walk freely on the street, but fear, of course criminals might kill a person at night in order to steal his car. There is robbery everywhere unfortunately. There is also the drug trade. And arms trafficking.</p> <p>People in Afghanistan do not trust Russia right now, it's spoken of warily, people that Russia begins to interfere in Afghan matters.</p>
<p>Таджвар Какар, правозащитница: "Советские войска оставили после себя покалеченные судьбы и души"</p> <p>Когда СССР вторгся в Афганистан, я работала учительницей в школе. Еще до вторжения, когда к власти пришли местные коммунисты, меня заставляли вступить в коммунистическую партию, но я раз за разом отказывалась.</p>	<p>Tajvar Kakar, a human rights activist: "Soviet soldiers left behind themselves crippled fates and souls."</p> <p>When the USSR invaded Afghanistan I worked as a schoolteacher. Before the invasion, when local communists took power, I was pressured into joining the communist party, but I refused time and again.</p>

В 1980-м году меня арестовали якобы за пособничество моджахедам. В тюрьме меня пытали электрошоком, били ногами и палками. Многие мои сокамерницы погибли. Я никогда не забуду этой жестокости.

Я вышла из тюрьмы через год с огромным желанием бороться с оккупацией. Что оставляли после себя правительственные силы и советские войска? Очень много мин, покалеченные судьбы и души, сильнейшие разрушения в деревнях за пределами Кабула. Тысячи людей пострадали от вторжения, и особенно сильно страдали женщины. В 1984 году мой муж, я и семеро наших детей вынуждены были бежать из Афганистана в Пакистан. Моему младшему сыну было тогда всего восемь дней.

После ухода советских войск я была счастлива. Хотелось поскорее вернуться домой. Но моджахеда оказались очень эгоистичными. И именно при моджахедах женщинам в Афганистане приходилось хуже всего.

Я вернулась в Афганистан в 2000 году. Вскоре на нашу землю пришли американские войска. В ходе переговоров с высокопоставленными лидерами "Талибана" мне удалось убедить их в необходимости открыть школу. Там я и работала до тех пор, пока школу по ошибке не разбомбили американцы. Война - это всегда страдание. Но мне кажется очень важным, что американцы постоянно ведут диалог и с талибами, и с местными властями. Также очень важно, что в отличие от времен советской оккупации, у нас сейчас есть независимые СМИ, есть свобода слова. Это важный шаг на пути к миру и нормальной жизни. Мы верим в бога, мы должны быть едины, а правительство должно исправить ошибки и бардак. Верю, что нынешние власти смогут удержать страну под контролем. Люди

In 1980 I was arrested for allegations of complicity with the mujahideen. In jail I was tortured with electric shock, my legs were beaten with sticks. Many of my cellmates were lost. I will never forget this cruelty.

I left prison after a year with a great desire to fight against occupation. What's left after the government forces and Soviet troops? There are many mines, crippling the fate of the souls, with the worst destruction in the world on the outer limits of Kabul. One thousand people were casualties of the invasion, and women suffered especially badly. In 1984 my husband, our seven children and I were forced to flee from Afghanistan into Pakistan. My youngest son was then only eight days old.

After the Soviet fighters left I was happy. I wanted to return home quickly. But the mujahideen turned out to be egoists. And precisely under the mujahideen, everything was worse for women in Afghanistan.

I returned to Afghanistan in the year 2000. Soon American fighters came to our land. Conversations with Taliban leaders managed to convince me it was necessary to open the school. There I worked for a while, until it was mistakenly bombed by Americans. War - it is always suffering. But it seems very important to me that Americans constantly lead the dialogue with the Taliban and the local authorities. Also, it is very important that in a time different from that of the Soviet occupation, we now have independent mass media and freedom of speech. This was an important part of our path to peace and normal life. We believe in God, we need to be single, and the government must deal with mistakes and brothels. I believe that present power holders can maintain the country under control. The Afghan people must think and decide their futures.

<p>Афганистана должны сами думать и решать свое будущее.</p>	
<p>Мохаммед Тахир Яргал, офицер полиции в отставке: "На прощание я подарил цветок советскому солдату"</p> <p>Четко помню день, когда советские войска вторглись в нашу страну. Конечно, я был в шоке и ужасе. Но позже, когда начался вывод войск, я стал оглядываться назад и осознавать, что произошло, что СССР оставляет после себя. У Афганистана появилась полностью работоспособная профессиональная армия. У нас был совсем другой уровень амуниции - включая автоматы Калашникова и "Скады" (советские одноступенчатые баллистические ракеты Р-17 - прим. Би-би-си). Мы поняли, что у наших военных наконец-то хватает вооружения и патронов. Это была тренированная армия, способная защищать страну, - третья по силе во всем регионе.</p> <p>Когда советские военные уходили из Афганистана, на улицах были демонстрации. Да, мне не нравилось, что Советы вторглись в мою страну. Но, оценив, что они успели сделать для Афганистана, я даже подарил цветок советскому солдату на прощание.</p> <p>В Афганистане СССР потратил кучу денег. Вся инфраструктура, которая у нас есть сейчас, осталась от них - здания, дамбы и т.д. Для сравнения - у США был только один сельскохозяйственный проект в провинции Гильменд.</p> <p>Но не все так просто и однозначно. Огромная проблема была в том, как СССР выводил свои войска. Они просто ушли и все - без условий и переговоров.</p> <p>Афганские власти были не готовы к этому! В итоге оппозиция быстро набрала силы, атаковала просоветское правительство сразу по нескольким фронтам и смяла его. Советы оставили после себя инфраструктуру, но не оставили сильной</p>	<p>Mohammed Tajir Yarhal, a retired police officer: "I bid Soviet soldiers farewell with flowers."</p> <p>I clearly remember the day when Soviet soldiers invaded our country. Of course I was in shock and terror. But later, at the start of the troops entering, I started to look around, backwards and become aware of what the USSR left in its wake. It appeared Afghanistan had a completely efficient, professional army. We had totally different levels of ammunition - including Kalashnikovs and Skadiis (Soviet single stage ballistic missiles R-17 - BBC) We understood that our military in the end had sufficient weapons and ammunition. It was a trained army, free to defend the country, - the third strongest in the entire region.</p> <p>When Soviet soldiers left Afghanistan there were protests on the streets. Yes, I Didn't like that the servient invaded my country. But, by evaluating what they succeeded in doing for Afghanistan, I even gave Soviet soldiers flowers as a farewell.</p> <p>The USSR in Afghanistan spent heaps of money. All the infrastructure which we have now was left over by them - buildings, dams and so on. For comparison, the USA had only one agricultural project in Helmand province.</p> <p>But not everything is so simple and unambiguous. The main problem was the USSR sending it's soldiers. They simply left and everything - without conditions and negotiations. The Afghans in power were not ready for this! As a result the opposition quickly gained power, attacked the pro-Soviet government immediately for several reasons on the front and crushed it. The Soviet left infrastructure behind, but did not leave a strong transition, and did not leave some kind of center in place.</p>

<p>смены, не оставили какого-то единого ядра из местных.</p> <p>Американцы пытаются избежать этой ошибки. Они выводят войска только с рядом условий. НАТО сейчас ведет переговоры и работает с афганцами - они пытаются сперва гарантировать стабильность и мир, а только потом окончательно уйти. Такая стратегия дает надежду на мир.</p>	<p>Americans tried to flee from this mistake. They left troops only in close conditions. This strategy gave us hope for peace. NATO is conducting negotiations and working with Afghans right now - they are trying to guarantee peace and stability first, and only leave afterwards. Such a strategy gives hope to the world.</p>
<p>Вали Олах Бадлун, бывший военный: "Надеюсь, люди вспомнят, что бог дал им жизнь не для того, чтобы убивать"</p> <p>Сейчас, оглядываясь назад, я могу сказать, что ввод войск был первой большой ошибкой советского руководства, а вывод контингента стал второй ошибкой, которая обернулась трагедией для афганского народа. Это решение привело к созданию условий, которые позволили американцам вторгнуться в Афганистан.</p> <p>По сути Советский Союз не сдержал свое слово, а ведь обещал помощь афганскому руководству. Военные всегда друзья, пока они воюют, поэтому я сейчас подбираю слова, чтобы сказать помягче. Но они убежали. Тогда афганская армия была способна отбивать атаки, но советское руководство вообще прекратило оказывать помощь.</p> <p>Война идет до сих пор: афганцев убивают, страна разрушается. Советское руководство выдержало девять лет, американцы с НАТОвской помощью - 18, но сейчас они тоже хотят убежать. И опять афганский народ переживает, что начнется такое же безвластье, как при выводе советских войск.</p> <p>Простые афганцы часто сравнивают американцев с советскими военными и удивляются эгоизму первых. Говорят, что советские солдаты по своей культуре и своим традициям были ближе к нам. Хотя их называли агрессорами, но все же мы с</p>	<p>Vali Ola Badlun, a former soldier: "I hope people remember God did not give them life, not for them to kill."</p> <p>Now, looking back, I can say that the deployment of troops was the first large mistake of the Soviet leadership, and withdrawing the contingent was the second mistake, which turned into a tragedy for the Afghan people. This decision led to the creation of conditions that allowed the Americans to invade Afghanistan.</p> <p>In fact, the Soviet Union didn't keep its word but promised to help the Afghan Government. The military is always friendly while at war, so now I'm choosing the words I say softly. But they left. Then the Afghan Army was free to fight off attacks, but Soviet leaders stopped offering any help at all.</p> <p>The war goes on still: Afghans are killed, the country falls apart. Soviet control endured for nine years, Americans with NATO support - 18 years, but now they also want to run off. Once again, the Afghan people are worried that the same anarchy will begin, like with the Soviet withdrawal.</p> <p>Afghans often compare Americans with the Soviet soldiers and first of all were surprised by the egoism. They say that Soviet soldiers in their culture and their traditions were close to ours. Although they were called aggressors,</p>

ними понимали друг друга.

В Советском Союзе я однажды встретил майора, который потерял ногу на войне. Он мне сказал: "У меня есть мечта попасть в Афганистан". Я пошутил, говорю: "Чего, тебе вторая нога мешает?" А он рассмеялся и ответил: "Ты меня не понял. У меня мечта приехать в Афганистан как турист. Не с автоматами и не с танками. Хочется еще в жизни побывать в мирном Афганистане, потому что афганский народ очень гостеприимный".

С американцами такого нет - они необщительные, очень боятся. В каждом афганце видят врага. Они просто стоят в военной форме с оружием в руках и не общаются. Но вообще война есть война. И советские, и американские, и талибы, и моджахеды - каждый воин стреляет и убивает.

40-летняя война разрушила всю нашу страну - она не дает афганцам времени даже ничего строить, потому что они вынуждены воевать, сопротивляться, обороняться и попутно разрушать свою страну. Законы не выполняются, почти все вооружены, наркобизнес процветает - это все результат войны.

От американцев все-таки шли деньги - построили школы, больницы, но с одной стороны что-то строится, а с другой - тут же разрушается. Советы тоже помогали афганскому правительству, но сложно сравнивать тогдашнее состояние советской экономики с нынешним состоянием американской. Что могли, Советы сделали, но тогда разрушения были не такие значительные, как сейчас.

Афганцы живут очень тяжело, они думают только об одном - как остаться в живых самим и уберечь своих детей. Никто даже не задумывается о том, как обучить малышей, как их вылечить - только о том, чтобы выжили. Сегодня дети уходят

all of us understood one another.

In the Soviet Union, I once met a mayor that lost a leg in the war. He told me: "I have a dream to reach Afghanistan." I said jokingly: "What does your second leg dream of?" And he laughed and responded: "You do not understand me. I have a dream of going to Afghanistan as a tourist. Not with automatic weapons and not with tanks. In my life I still want to exist in the Afghan world, because the Afghan people are quite hospitable."

With Americans it is not so - they are unsociable, very scared. In every Afghan they see an enemy. They simply sit in fatigues with rifles in hand, in silence. But in general, war is war. And Soviets, Americans and the Taliban, and the Mujahideen - in every war are shot and killed.

The forty year old war destroyed all of our country - it didn't give Afghans time even to rebuild, because of that they were forced to fight, resist, defend and destroy our country along the way. Laws did not endure, almost everyone is armed, drug trafficking prospers - all this as a result of the wars.

From the Americans, after all there was money - building schools, hospitals, but one side lined up but the other side immediately fell apart. The Soviets also helped the Afghan government, but it was difficult to compare the condition of the Soviet economy then with the present state of the American economy. What Soviets were able to do, they did, but then destruction was not as significant as now.

Afghans live very hardily, they have only one thought - how to keep themselves alive and protect their children. No one even thinks of how to teach kids, how they are cured - only of how they survived. Today children leave to study and parents never know if they will

<p>учиться, а родители никогда не знают, вернутся ли они домой. Есть надежда на молодое поколение афганцев, на то, что они вспомнят, для чего бог дал им жизнь, - не для того, чтобы убивать, а чтобы жить по-человечески.</p>	<p>return home. There is hope for the young generation of Afghans, that they remember God gave them life, not for them to kill, but to live humanely.</p>
<p>Мохсен Вахид, бизнесмен: "Война - это всегда плохо. Но во времена советской оккупации у нас была почти нормальная жизнь"</p> <p>Когда к нам пришли советские войска, я был школьником. Четко помню тот день. Была зима, было много снега вокруг дома. Я вышел и увидел рядом с домом советский танк, на нем сидели солдаты и подозрительно смотрели на всех. Это был мой первый опыт встречи с иностранцами и с чужими военными. Было страшно.</p> <p>АВТОР ФОТО, SHEPARD SHERBELL/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES</p> <p>Правда, с этими же солдатами связаны и другие мои воспоминания. Мой отец был задержан и брошен в тюрьму при [Хафизулле] Амине. Когда пришли Советы, двери тюрем, где содержались политические заключенные, открылись. Было радостно видеть, как люди выходят на свободу. Многие благодарили СССР.</p> <p>Правда, моего отца замучили в застенках тюрьмы раньше. Но было радостно за других. Потом была война. Война - это всегда плохо. Но во времена советской оккупации у нас была почти нормальная жизнь. Бизнес развивался в разных частях страны. Я начал торговать и мог кормить семью, мои родственники смогли поехать в СССР, получить высшее образование. Мы могли построить новый дом. Мой младший брат получил квартиру в новом микрорайоне в Кабуле - этот район построили Советы. Мне кажется, американцы не построили нам столько жилья.</p> <p>Тогда я был молод, а теперь волосы мои седые. Тогда вся моя семья была со мной. А теперь, устав от войны, многие уехали. Мои дети за границей - один в Швеции, другой во</p>	<p>Mosen Vahid, a businessman: "War is always awful. But in the time of Soviet occupation we almost had a normal life."</p> <p>When the Soviet soldiers came to us I was a schoolboy. Today it is clearly understood. It was winter, and there was a lot of snow near the home. I left and saw next to the building a Soviet tank, and on it there were sitting Soviet soldiers and watched everyone suspiciously. This was my first experience meeting with foreigners and with alien soldiers. It was horrible.</p> <p>It's true, my other memories were connected with the same soldiers. My father was detained and thrown into prison under [Hafizullah] Amin. The doors to the prison where political prisoners were held were opened when the Soviets came. It was a joy to see how people come out towards freedom. Many thanks to the USSR.</p> <p>True, my father was tortured in prison before. After, there was war. War, this is always bad. But during the time of Soviet occupation, we had nearly normal lives. Business developed in different parts of the country. I started trading and could feed my family, my family was able to go to the USSR and get higher education. We were able to build a new home. My younger brother bought an apartment in a new micro-neighborhood in Kabul - this development was built by the Soviets. It seems to me that the Americans didn't build anything, even housing.</p> <p>Then I was young, but my hair has greyed.</p>

<p>Франции. Советы вышли, не заложив основы для крепкого мира. И мою страну снова растерзала война. Поэтому мое главное опасение - что будет после окончательного вывода американских войск. Я не знаю ответа.</p>	<p>Then all of my family was with me. And now tired of war, many left. My children are abroad: one in Sweden and another in France.</p> <p>The Soviets left and hadn't established a foundation for peace. And my country is torn apart by war. This is my greatest danger: that after the final withdrawal of American soldiers. I don't know the answer.</p>
<p>Валиджон, муниципальный служащий: "Советские солдаты раздавали нам конфеты"</p> <p>Я был очень маленьким, когда советские войска пришли в Афганистан, но я помню, что они относились к нам по-доброму, конфеты детям раздавали. Я тогда, конечно, не мог определить, оккупанты они или нет, но я видел, что они оставили после себя многое: целый микрорайон, центральную канализацию, отопление, технику.</p> <p>В 90-м году я эмигрировал и вернулся в Кабул только в 2007-м. И мне показалось, что я попал в другое измерение. Когда я был маленьким, люди в Кабуле были грамотные: я сам учился в школе, где мы с девочками сидели за одной партой, и никого это не смущало. Я приехал и увидел город, в котором до сих пор нет ни дорог, ни инфраструктуры, ни нормальных зданий, ни отопления, ни даже электричества - мы натурально мерзли.</p> <p>И люди уже были другие. Да, у них появилось больше денег, но я не увидел ни культуры, ни порядочности в них. Они не доверяют друг другу, все построено на деньгах - какая-то капиталистическая культура.</p> <p>Есть у афганского народа одна черта - максимализм, абсолютное преувеличение всего. Если афганцы гуманны, они гуманны до предела, если капиталисты, то до последнего.</p> <p>Но все же американцы тоже многое</p>	<p>Validjon, a municipal employee: "The Soviet soldiers gave us candy."</p> <p>I was very little when Soviet soldiers entered Afghanistan, but I remember they treated us with kindness and gave the children candy. I then of course could not comprehend if they were invaders or not, but I saw they left in much of their path: entire neighborhoods, central sewage, heating, appliances.</p> <p>In 1990 I emigrated and only returned to Kabul in 2007. It seemed to me that I fell into a different measurement. When I was little, people in Kabul were literate: I studied by myself in school, where the girls and I sat and I didn't hear anything. I arrived and saw the city, in which there are still no roads, no infrastructure, no normal buildings, no heating, not even electricity - naturally, we were cold.</p> <p>And people were already different. Yes, they had money, but I didn't see any culture or decency in them. They do not trust each other, everyone has built wealth in the capitalist culture.</p> <p>The people of Afghanistan have a trait - maximalism, absolute exaggeration of everything. If the Afghans are humane, they are humane to a limit, if the capitalists are humane, they are humane in the end.</p> <p>But Americans also did a lot. When there were Soviet soldiers in our country we didn't</p>

сделали. Когда в стране были советские военные, у нас не было свободы слова, многое запрещалось говорить. Жили в изоляции, продукты не поступали. В городе не было даже яиц, и папа где-то покупал яичный порошок. Сейчас свобода слова есть, но опять-таки - возведенная в абсолют.

have freedom of speech, many were prevented from speaking. We lived in isolation, supplies weren't sent. There weren't even eggs in the city, and dad had to buy eggs from someplace. Now there's freedom of speech, but again elevated into absolutes.