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Directorate of Intelligence

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The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Five Years After

An Intelligence Assessment

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The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Five Years After

Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 19 April 1985
was used in this report.*

More than five years after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, they are bogged down in a guerrilla war of increasing intensity. The Soviets have had little success in reducing the insurgency or winning acceptance by the Afghan people, and the Afghan resistance continues to grow stronger and to command widespread popular support. Fighting has gradually spread to all parts of Afghanistan. The Soviets control less territory than they did in 1980, and their airfields, garrisons, and lines of communication are increasingly subject to insurgent attack.

The serious shortcomings of the Afghan Army have forced the Soviets to shoulder more of the combat burden than they anticipated. But the Soviets have shown little imagination in developing counterinsurgency tactics, and they have relied mainly on stereotyped search and destroy operations that often give the insurgents advance warning of an assault. Poor intelligence has also been a continuing problem.

Although Soviet military tactics are clearly designed to minimize losses of personnel and equipment, we estimate they have suffered roughly 25,000 casualties, including about 8,000 killed, and lost over 600 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft and thousands of armored vehicles and trucks. We estimate casualties in the Afghan Army at about 67,000 and insurgent casualties at some 40,000, excluding civilian sympathizers.

Meanwhile, the Soviet program to transform Afghanistan into a reliable Communist client state is having little impact:

- Efforts at media indoctrination of Afghans fail because of Afghan illiteracy, distrust of the regime, religious beliefs, and adherence to traditional values.
- The regime has bought only temporary loyalties by bribery and occasional truces with insurgent groups.
- The Afghan school system is in a shambles, and trainees sent to the USSR often become antagonistic toward the Soviet system. Many cannot find appropriate or attractive positions upon their return to Afghanistan.
- The Afghan ruling party is riven by factionalism.

The insurgents have serious problems of their own. They have few local leaders of quality; rivalries among insurgent leaders and factions inhibit cooperation and often result in bloody fighting; and inadequate training and supply shortages are common.

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We believe the fighting in Afghanistan will increase in the next two years. The insurgents are likely to show greater aggressiveness as they receive better weapons and more training. The Soviets are showing renewed resolve to break the military stalemate and have begun to adopt a more aggressive posture. They are stepping up efforts to halt insurgent infiltration, and we expect to see a greater use of airpower along the Pakistani and Iranian borders.

Over the next two years, as improvements in the insurgency become evident, we believe it most likely that the Soviets will increase their forces incrementally, perhaps by another 5,000 to 10,000 men. Such an augmentation would probably include contingents of specialized forces, such as security battalions and specialized combat and support units. Less likely—either because of continuing frustration or if their situation deteriorates more drastically than we believe probable—the Soviets could expand their forces by several divisions, possibly as many as 50,000 men, and increase efforts to garrison and hold large areas. Even then, however, they would not have enough troops to maintain control in much of the countryside as long as the insurgents have access to strong external support and open borders.

We cannot rule out a more serious deterioration of the Soviet position in Afghanistan, which could arise if the insurgents improve their coordination, adjust their tactics, and assimilate increased outside assistance more rapidly than we anticipate. This train of events would probably force the Soviets to review their basic options in Afghanistan and could result in a greatly expanded military commitment and an even wider war.

We also cannot rule out greater progress by the Soviets in building a political and military infrastructure in Afghanistan. This development would be more likely if Soviet pressure or internal instability in Pakistan resulted in Islamabad's limiting its support for the resistance. Even so, the Soviets could not completely pacify the country and withdraw a sizable number of forces.

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The Soviets, in our view, are unlikely to make real progress toward quelling the insurgency in the next two years. The more aggressive Soviet tactics over the past year, however, suggest that Moscow continues to hope its policies will, over the long term, grind down the will of the insurgents to resist and allow the Kabul government to consolidate Communist rule in Afghanistan. Soviet officials claim and probably expect that their efforts to rebuild the Afghan armed forces and gain converts by indoctrination, bribery, and internal reforms will bear fruit in the long term.

War weariness does not appear to present a problem for either side, and the Soviets have shown no interest in compromising their maximum demands. Prospects for a political settlement remain dim because of Soviet opposition.

Soviet losses, together with the strains of a counterinsurgency campaign, have worsened morale and discipline problems in the Army and produced some grumbling at home. We believe that Moscow's effort to limit the human and financial costs of the war have held domestic political and social dissatisfaction to a level acceptable to the leadership. Moscow probably believes it has weathered the worst of the international censure for its actions in Afghanistan.

Although the new CPSU General Secretary Gorbachev presumably will want to solve the Afghanistan problem in some way and may eventually put his stamp on Soviet Afghan policy, we believe that he will be occupied over the next year or so with consolidating his power in the Soviet leadership. In our view, he has a strong interest in avoiding positions that might make him look weak or adventurist. He is unlikely, therefore, to seek sharp revisions in Soviet goals or strategy.

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Scope Note

This assessment examines the position of the Afghan insurgents and Soviet and Afghan forces five years after the Soviet invasion. It discusses their strengths and weaknesses and the likely course of the fighting over the next few years, and it provides an evaluation of the military, economic, and political costs to the Soviets and prospects for the growth of the insurgency.

More detailed information on costs, the performance of Soviet and Afghan forces, and the dynamics of the insurgency is available in an Interagency Intelligence Memorandum and a Special National Intelligence Estimate issued in 1985 and in CIA Intelligence Assessments and Research Papers. A list of the CIA papers is included in the appendix.

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Five Years After

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, assassinated its Communist Prime Minister, and installed a new Communist regime. [

] Moscow expected that the accession of a more malleable regime in Kabul under Babrak Karmal, coupled with the Soviet military presence, would bolster the Afghan Army, intimidate the insurgents, and allow Moscow to avoid a protracted military engagement.

The Soviets [] concede that the leadership miscalculated, and they acknowledge that they have paid a higher price than they anticipated. They are still searching for an effective way of pacifying Afghanistan short of a massive infusion of military forces. The insurgents are stronger than at any time since the invasion, and the overwhelming majority of Afghans continue to oppose the Soviet presence.

A Developing Insurgency

The Afghan resistance consists of hundreds of fighting bands who often place parochial interests ahead of any national effort. They generally share a tradition of opposition to central government authority, a hatred of the Soviets, a desire to preserve local customs, a culture that glorifies warfare, and an interest in the profits to be made from guerrilla fighting. They disagree widely on the goals and strategy of the war and have no clear idea of what they would put in place of the Soviet-style regime.

Most Afghans have never had much sense of national identity, and many bands—probably the majority—tend to place local interests first. Some bands follow Islamic fundamentalists, who say they want to make Afghanistan into a theocratic state. A smaller number voice allegiance to moderate Islamic figures, who envision a secular government similar to those before the Communists came to power.

The number of insurgents has grown steadily, and the total would be much higher if we included villagers who have arms but fight only when attacked. On the basis of sources of varying reliability, we estimate the number of full- and part-time insurgents at 150,000.

and probably many times that number have aided the resistance in some capacity. We believe that there are about 30,000 full-time Afghan insurgents at any given time. Many of the insurgents hold jobs in the civilian economy during the day and fight at night; the fighting time of others is limited by the agricultural cycle or winter weather. Resistance bands have had little difficulty replacing combat losses.

The Spread of the Insurgency

Before the Soviet invasion, the Afghan Government had lost effective control of central Afghanistan, and the insurgents were highly active in the eastern provinces. Despite some serious outbreaks of fighting—such as the uprising in Herat in March 1979—western and northern Afghanistan were generally quiet. Six months after the invasion there was armed resistance in every province

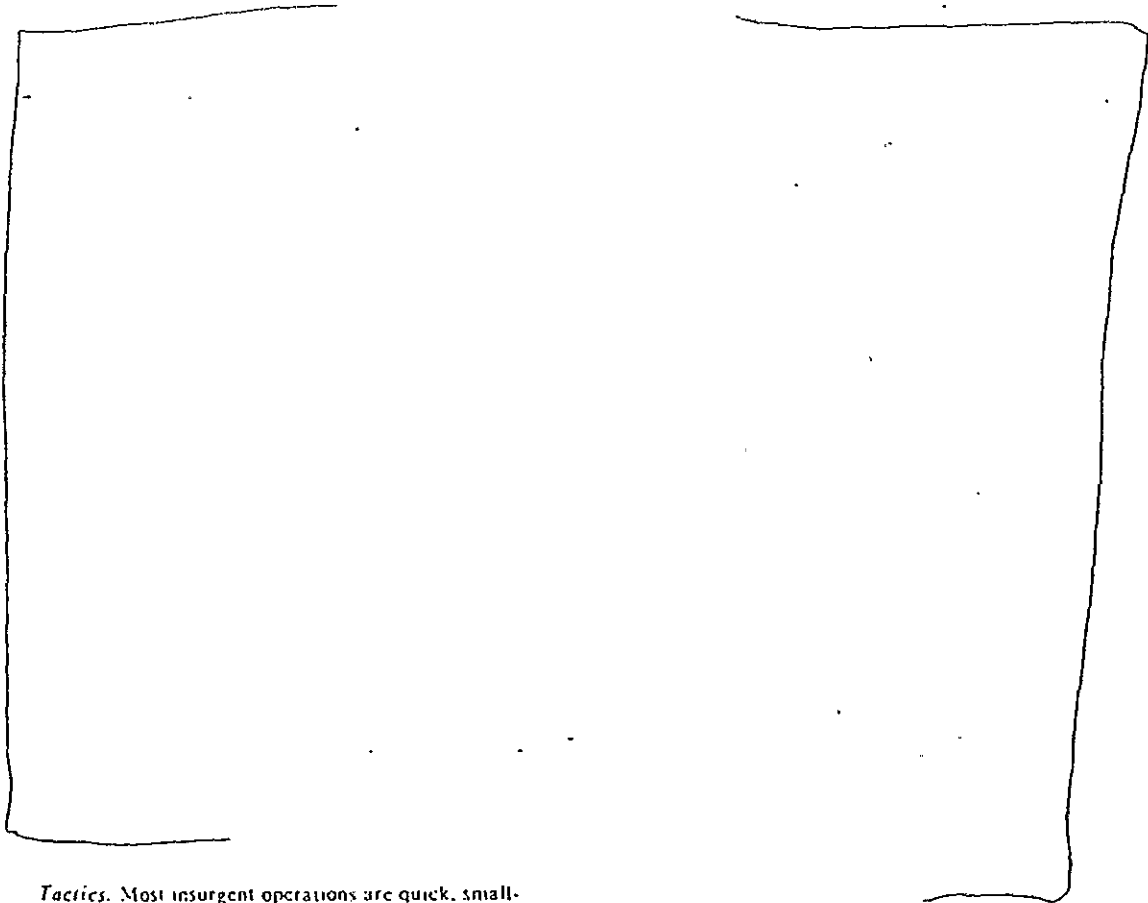
Intensity. The intensity of the war—as in all guerrilla struggles—varies in different areas and at different times of the year. Some commanders—particularly those in the eastern provinces—maintain fairly constant pressure on government outposts and convoys. Others, because of lack of nerve, ammunition, or weapons, only occasionally challenge the Communists. Some insurgents simply wait for the enemy to make the first move. Fighting is normally at its most intense in the late spring and early fall, when good weather permits improved mobility and more rapid resupply. Many insurgents withdraw from the fighting to harvest crops or to winter with their families in Pakistan or in Afghan cities

We judge, on the basis of a review of reports on the fighting, that the intensity of the overall insurgency has gradually increased. In 1983 and 1984, insurgents increased attacks on airfields, garrisons, and other military targets. Major roads remain insecure despite patrolling and periodic Soviet and regime sweeps and retaliatory strikes. In 1984, [] resistance actions were responsible for temporary but significant shortages of food, fuel, and electricity in Kabul. Several large-scale sweeps since the invasion have not notably decreased insurgent activity in Herat and Qandahar

Factors Influencing Military Effectiveness

	<i>Weaknesses</i>	<i>Strengths</i>
<i>Insurgents</i>	<i>Many disorganized groups</i> <i>Political/religious differences</i> <i>Shortages and unequal distribution of weapons</i> <i>Many poorly trained groups</i> <i>Fighting among groups</i>	<i>High morale</i> <i>Broad civilian support</i> <i>Increasing military expertise</i> <i>Increasing manpower</i>
<i>Soviets</i>	<i>Weapons and tactics unsuited to terrain and counter-insurgency warfare</i> <i>Poor intelligence and command and control</i> <i>Unreliable, incompetent ally</i>	<i>Unlimited manpower and equipment</i> <i>High mobility in open areas</i> <i>Superior firepower</i> <i>Reliable, well-trained troops</i> <i>Air superiority</i>
<i>Afghan Government Units</i>	<i>Desertions</i> <i>Seriously under strength</i> <i>Lack of equipment</i> <i>Political factionalism</i>	<i>No major strengths</i>

Weaponry. Over the past five years, travelers from the countryside have reported that the insurgents have gradually become better armed as their antiquated weapons have been supplemented from outside sources and by weapons captured from Soviet and regime forces—including heavy machineguns, mines, rockets, and a small supply of heat-seeking missiles. Despite differences in skills and supplies of weaponry, trained observers report the insurgents are growing more capable in weaponry use.



Tactics. Most insurgent operations are quick, small-scale attacks on road convoys and military posts. The guerrillas usually disperse before Soviet and Afghan forces can strike back, and, as in most guerrilla wars, these attacks generally result in little crippling damage.

Although the insurgents are gradually improving as a result of increased experience, guerrilla bands frequently show little expertise in small-unit operations.

A few leaders such as Panjshir and Masood in Kapisa Province, Abdul Haq in Kabul Province, and Ismail Khan near Herat are improving tactical training. Masood, who has communications equipment, has shown he can coordinate attacks, withdraw in good order before superior forces, and sustain rudimentary political structures.

Political Development. In our judgment, the insurgency is gradually improving its cohesiveness.

It is indicated that in 1983 insurgent groups began cooperating in attacks on Kabul.

It is reported that ethnic Tajiks belonging to the Jamiat organization have been most effective in overcoming local differences and in developing cohesive intergroup military structures that have demonstrated an ability to plan and orchestrate operations. We believe even the fractious Pushtuns are more often cooperating in attacks against government garrisons in provinces along the eastern border.

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Popular Support [] report that while there is occasional war weariness among civilians, support for the insurgents remains high. Sustained Soviet military pressure has only temporarily reduced civilian support for the resistance in some areas—the Panjsher Valley in 1983, and Qandahar and Herat in 1982 and 1983—but the Soviets have not been able to permanently pacify any area.

In much of Afghanistan, the relationship between the resistance and civilians is such that distinctions are artificial. We believe that the migration and periodic displacement of perhaps half the population have had mixed effects. Villagers who remain in Afghanistan apparently grow enough to feed the guerrillas, and some insurgents return from Pakistan or the cities both to fight and to farm.

Intelligence. Because they enjoy the support of the overwhelming majority of the population, resistance intelligence on Soviet and regime plans is superior to that of the Soviets and the Kabul regime. Good intelligence has been critical to the insurgents' success in avoiding enemy offensives and launching attacks. Panjsher commander Masood claims to have had weeks or months of warning before Soviet offensives into the Panjsher Valley, permitting him to prepare his defenses and mine approaches. Before last year's offensive, he succeeded in covertly evacuating the civilian population from the valley. [] Afghan party factionalism has prompted members of the Afghan armed forces to collaborate with insurgents, in some cases helping them to arrange assassinations or prepare sabotage.

Territorial Control. We believe that the Soviets have less control over Afghan territory today than they had five years ago (see figures 1 and 2). By late 1983, Afghan Government statistics indicated that the insurgents controlled almost twice as many local districts in Afghanistan as the government. We believe the regime lost further ground in 1984 because of increased insurgent activity in the cities and the decline in security in some areas of the countryside.

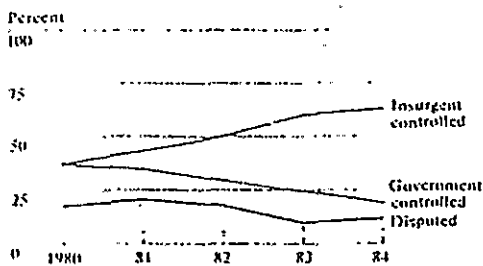
[] convoys remain subject to frequent insurgent attacks and that no Afghan town is completely free of the insurgents.

In our view, after five years, regime control is greater than it was in December 1979 in Konarha, Kapisa, and Kabul Provinces because of extensive and repeated Soviet operations and the flight of civilians to Pakistan or Kabul. Control is significantly less, however, in Faryab, Jowzjan, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Takhar, Konduz, Nimruz, and Helmand Provinces. The insurgents have made minor gains in the rest of the country—except in provinces in which the regime presence was already limited to the provincial capital at the time of the invasion.

Casualties. On the basis of sources of varying reliability, we believe that the insurgents have suffered some 40,000 casualties over the past five years. The estimate, however, does not account for casualties among civilian sympathizers who aid the insurgents with

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Figure 1
Afghanistan: Insurgent Versus Government
Control of Local Districts, 1980-84



intelligence and provision of food and shelter, and thus, in a sense, belong to the insurgency. Because medical care is so limited, the insurgents' killed-to-wounded ratio is very high. We believe civilian deaths from the fighting may exceed 150,000.

Insurgent Vulnerabilities

Weaknesses in local leadership and economic constraints make it difficult for the insurgents to create a cohesive force or pursue sustained objectives. Part-time insurgents usually cannot be spared from agricultural production for long periods; some groups fear heavy casualties that would make it even more difficult to sustain agriculture. Many groups cease fighting during the winter, when bad weather limits mobility. Rivalries among tribes, clans, and religious and political factions result in bloody bickering and hinder effective military coordination. Rivalries between Jamiat-i-Islami and the Hizbi Islami, for example, have hampered operations and resupply efforts of Masood's Panjsher Valley insurgent.

The threat of air and artillery retaliation on civilians prevents guerrillas from continuing operations in a single area. In the countryside, insurgents sometimes cease operations to avoid retaliation against nearby villages.

Soviet and regime surveillance networks and informants also hamper the insurgents.

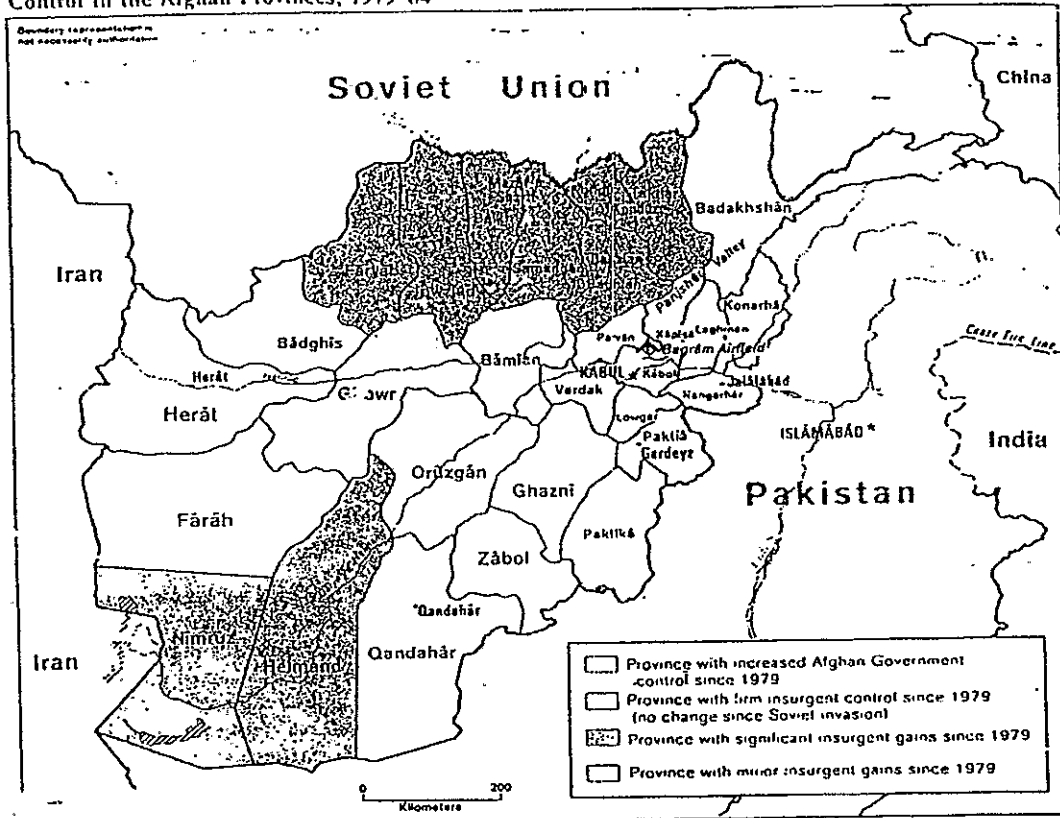
Groups based in the countryside must often send boys or old men into the cities to gather information or procure supplies, fearing that men of other ages will be identified or conscripted.

Despite the improvement in the insurgents' weapons and skills, we believe they are still handicapped by lack of expertise with weapons such as rockets and mortars as well as by occasional shortages of weaponry and ammunition. The thousands of vehicle losses testify to their skills with mines and antitank rockets, but they still have little technical knowledge of explosives and how to use them for maximum effect. Despite improved supplies, insurgent groups periodically suffer from unequal distribution of weaponry and ammunition.

Thus far, the insurgents have not been seriously hampered by shortages of food. Food shortages, especially in rural areas, sometimes occur because of local crop failures, distribution problems, private stockpiling and hoarding, and the destruction of food in storage. Local observers nevertheless indicate that the destruction of crops and farms caused by military operations affects only a small portion of cultivated land. Food supply would deteriorate if the Soviets embarked on a deliberate crop destruction policy and if increasing numbers of farmers were dislodged from their land.

The Afghan resistance continues to be hampered by a lack of overall unity, despite initiatives to achieve that objective. We believe the absence of an organization able to speak for the resistance as a whole limits its efforts to influence international opinion, to have a voice in negotiations on an Afghan settlement, to ensure continued diplomatic and material support, and to coordinate military efforts.

Figure 2
Control in the Afghan Provinces, 1979-84



Goals of the Soviets and the Afghan Regime

Moscow's goals in Afghanistan have changed little since the invasion. The Soviets are seeking to create a situation where the Afghan Communists can rule on their own without a large Soviet military presence—and do so at the lowest possible cost in terms of Soviet lives and resources. We believe the Soviets realize that accomplishing this goal requires both political and military measures that combine military suppression of the resistance with longer term efforts to train a new generation of more effective Communist leaders:

The primary Soviet goal in Afghanistan is to maintain a Soviet-dominated regime. This enables Moscow to:

- At a minimum, ensure against chaos and anarchy or the emergence of another fundamentalist Islamic state on Soviet borders.
- Ensure that there is no drastic setback to Soviet international prestige that would follow the fall of the Afghan Marxists.

Source



Kabul: Soviet woman purchasing fruit.

showed a continued unwillingness to risk high combat losses. The Soviets have gradually increased their role in combined operations with the Afghan Army and tailored their tactics to suit a counterinsurgency

The Soviets generally have relied on search and destroy operations so stereotyped that the insurgents have ample warning and can depart before the initial assault. A persistent lack of intelligence about insurgent groups or their plans hampers Soviet offensives and has made it difficult to organize ambushes and other small operations. According to [] an unprec- edented high-altitude bombing during the Panjsher Valley campaign in spring 1984 was inaccurate and ineffective. Soviet intelligence apparently failed to discover that most guerrillas and their civilian sup- porters had left the valley

- Transform Afghanistan into a Communist society.
- Ensure a regime that is responsive to Soviet political and strategic concerns and enhance Soviet ability to apply military and political pressure on Pakistan, Iran, and other regional states; reduce Western influence in the region; and contribute to isolating China

The Soviet Counterinsurgency Effort

The shortcomings of the Afghan Army and the scope of the insurgency soon forced Moscow to shoulder much of the combat burden. The Soviets invaded with the intention of using their forces to secure major cities, strategic civilian and military facilities, and major lines of communication. []

[] say Soviet forces intended to leave as much of the counterinsurgency as possible to the Afghan Army

The Soviets have tried two basic tactical military approaches, but so far neither has paid off. After finding little initial success in large sweep operations in 1980, the Soviets resorted to small-unit actions. The change in tactics did not work well, and by late 1981 the Soviets were again emphasizing large sweeps. Increased use of heliborne assaults in the Panjsher and Andarab Valleys in the spring of 1984 had limited effect because of poor intelligence on insurgent positions and movements, and the Soviet forces

Expanding Soviet Military Commitment
Over the past year, the Soviets have made changes in their approach to the war that suggest growing impatience with the stalemate and a new resolve to gain the military initiative. The Soviets have augmented their troop strength, introduced more capable artillery and aircraft, stepped up their efforts to restrict infil- tration routes, increased pressure on Pakistan and Iran, and tried new organizational and tactical ap- proaches to improve their performance. Many of the changes were implemented after Konstantin Cher- nenko replaced Yuriy Andropov in February 1984, but they were probably in the planning stage for some time and almost certainly reflect a leadership consen- sus that more must be done to make headway against the insurgent

In our opinion, tactical force adjustments have so far been implemented on only a limited basis and have not materially improved the security situation. The Soviets have not been willing to adopt the aggressive, potentially costly tactics—for example, low-altitude bombing and helicopter attacks—that could im- prove their effectiveness against the insurgents

Source

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Figure 3
Major Afghan and Soviet Forces in Afghanistan



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Soviet Force Adjustments in 1984

According to the Soviets:

the

Soviet fixed-wing combat aircraft in Afghanistan, the SU-25 is particularly useful in mountainous terrain because of its weapons load and high maneuverability

- Augmented their forces by 4,000 men, bringing their troop strength to 110,000, and launched their largest military operation of the war in the Panjsher Valley.
- Mounted a more aggressive military effort to restrict infiltration routes from Pakistan and Iran, relaxed restrictions on cross-border strikes against insurgent targets, and stepped up diplomatic pressure on Islamabad and Tehran to reduce their support for the insurgents.
- Significantly increased the number of missions their air forces fly in support of ground forces in Afghanistan. For several days in April 1984, the Soviets for the first time used medium and light bombers flying from bases in Soviet Central Asia for saturation bombing of resistance targets in Afghanistan. The Soviets' use of more aggressive air tactics and improved coordination of air support with ground operations have been limited, however, by concern about growing aircraft losses.
- Deployed a second SU-25 attack squadron in October and upgraded airpower across the border in the Turkestan Military District. The most effective
- Replaced older Soviet helicopters by newer variants of Mi-8s with more powerful engines and more firepower and more modern Mi-24s.
- Introduced a limited number of special forces to assist in difficult small-unit combat assignments.
- Replaced and restructured some ground units to provide greater tactical flexibility and improve firepower.
- Introduced a new photomapping unit at Kabul that may improve Soviet intelligence on terrain and insurgent positions.
- Deployed an Army-level radio-intercept regiment to Kabul in the spring with advanced high-frequency equipment capable of locating the positions of insurgent radio transmitters in mountainous terrain and coordinating actions of a large number of field element

The Reluctant Afghan Military

Despite continued Soviet and regime efforts, the Afghan military has remained ineffectual over the past five years. The regime is still troubled by its inability to conscript sufficient soldiers and to retain their allegiance. Factionalism in the Afghan ruling party affects all ranks of the armed forces but especially the officer corps. It hinders the development of military cohesion and the emergence of competent, dependable commanders, and morale remains low.

Although the regime has managed to stabilize the size of the force at about 50,000, desertion rates remain high. On the basis of

we believe desertion rates are about 30,000 a year. report that shortages of equipment, low equipment-readiness rates, and the technical inability of many soldiers to use much of the available equipment diminish the military's effectiveness in operations. The Afghan intelligence service, KHAD, has continued to suffer from factionalism and disloyalty

Following a review of Afghan forces in 1983, Soviet Defense Minister Sokolov—then First Deputy Defense Minister—commented that Afghan troops were

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Table 1
Changes in the Soviet Air
Order of Battle, 1984 *

	Change	Total Aircraft in Afghanistan
January 1984	12 SU-25s transferred from Shindand to Bagram	72
	15 SU-17s arrive at Shindand from the USSR	87
March 1984	15 SU-17s replace 15 MIG-21s assigned to the reconnaissance squadron at Bagram	87
June 1984	30 MIG-23s replace 30 MIG-21s at Bagram and Shindand	87
	15 MIG-23s arrive at Qandahar from the USSR	102
September 1984	12 SU-25s arrive at Bagram from the USSR	114

* Soviet fixed-wing combat aircraft in Afghanistan on 1 January 1984 included 45 MIG-21s, 15 SU-17s, and 12 SU-25s.

illiterate, ill trained, unready for combat, and without military bearing or discipline.

At a meeting in December 1983 attended by 400 Afghan field commanders,

a senior Soviet adviser accused the Afghan military of being cowardly in battle, having a treasonous attitude, and lacking the will to fight. Regime units often participate in joint operations with the Soviets but frequently leak word of pending operations to the resistance and desert under fire.

Soviet commanders take extensive precautions to try to prevent Afghan informants from passing operational information to the insurgents, and the Soviets have increasingly conducted independent operations to prevent damaging leaks of their plan.

The Frustrated Sovietization Process

Reporting from numerous sources indicates that the Soviet effort to transform Afghanistan into a reliable Communist client state is having little impact. Lack of security prevents Communist workers from trying

Table 2
Estimated Afghan Army Deliveries
From the Soviets and
Equipment Losses

Deliveries, 1980-June 1984	
Tanks	290
Armored personnel carriers	445
Engineering vehicles	100 to 125
Trucks/miscellaneous vehicles	3,000 to 3,900
Losses, December 1979-June 1984 *	
Trucks	1,500 to 3,000
Armored vehicles	575 to 850

* We believe these numbers represent the minimum figures for equipment delivered and lost. The Afghans, with Soviet assistance, most likely have repaired some damaged equipment.

to implement regime programs in more than two-thirds of the country. Even in areas of regime presence, Sovietization measures have failed to develop significant support for the Afghan Government:

- The Afghan education system, which in 1979 reached no more than 20 percent of the school-age population, according to Western observers, now reaches a smaller proportion of the population and is widely distrusted.
- It is often counterproductive to send Afghans to the USSR for training, since they frequently become antagonized rather than indoctrinated. Upon return, many cannot find positions to spread regime influence and become cynics¹ as a result, according to
- Soviet and Afghan media are ineffective instruments for indoctrinating Afghans because of Afghan illiteracy, distrust of government-controlled sources, religious beliefs, and adherence to traditional values.
- The Kabul regime has bought only temporary loyalties by bribery and temporary truces with the insurgents.

The Soviet Basmachi Experience and Afghanistan

Since its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Moscow has combined military pressure with conciliatory policy changes intended to win popular support and thus secure long-term control. The Soviets apparently are applying lessons learned in Central Asia during the basmachi (bandit) rebellions against the Bolsheviks following the October 1917 revolution that lasted until the late 1920s. Soviet media call Afghan resistance fighters basmachi—a derogatory term with the implication of unprincipled predators—indicating that Moscow sees parallels between its experiences in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

There are many similarities between the two resistance efforts:

- In both instances the Soviets underestimated the size and intensity of the resistance and blundered through the first years of the fighting.
- Resistance is Islamic centered, but without ideology: the chief objective is to expel the Soviets, who threaten the traditional way of life.
- Resistance consists of numerous small tribal groups with narrow, local aims.
- Fighting is mainly on a small scale with resistance groups ambushing Soviet units and attacking garrisons, then taking refuge in the mountains.
- The major weakness of the resistance is lack of organization and internecine fighting, with splits along tribal lines.
- The Soviets moderate Communist rule and soften policies most antagonistic to local religion, custom, and tradition—such as increasing women's rights; land reform; and non-Islamic-based educational, government, and legal systems.
- The Soviets use troops, divide-and-rule tactics, introduction of Soviet institutions, tolerance for Islam, and carrot and stick policies to control the country.

Despite these similarities, the Soviets so far have failed to successfully quell the Afghan resistance. Religion has not been neutralized as an issue, nor has tribal support been secured for the Kabul regime. Basic differences between the two insurgencies help to explain the lack of progress:

- Central Asia had been subject to Russian rule before the Bolsheviks upset accustomed patterns. Afghanistan had never been welded into a unified state under foreign control and was only lightly controlled from Kabul before 1978.
- Central Asia had succumbed to invasions throughout its history; Afghanistan had always resisted external forces.
- The Bolsheviks initially respected Muslim figures on their side—most died in Stalin's camps later; the Afghan Communists were detribalized, atheistic politicians who failed to see the value of building broad coalitions in the opening phase of the revolution.
- Bolshevism was new in the 1920s; when it reached Afghanistan in the 1970s, some of the local population were children and grandchildren of basmachis who had fled the USSR and were raised on family memories of hatred for the Soviets.
- Although Soviet media have in recent years resurrected old charges of British and American aid to basmachis, the resistance 60 years ago was largely isolated and self-sustaining. The Afghan guerrillas get aid and shelter from Pakistan, Iran, and other nations.
- The Soviets have been unable to build an effective Muslim fighting force to counter the resistance. The appearance of the Muslim Red Army in Turkestan in the early 1920s had a considerable psychological impact on the local population and led to the creation of native Muslim militias. The Afghan Army is ineffective, few Soviet combat troops are Muslims, and the regime has had little success recruiting tribes to form militia units.

Longer term obstacles to Sovietization include Afghans' history of resistance to foreign domination as well as distrust of central government institutions and attempts to change traditional ways. Afghans widely disapprove of Soviet society as well as the Soviet presence.

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
The Soviets are no closer than they were in 1979 to resolving the split in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which is the principal instrument for reshaping the Afghan Government and society along Soviet lines. The schism between the Parcham (Banner) and Khalq (Masses) factions—rooted in social and ethnic differences—has caused armed clashes, desertions from the military, collaboration with insurgents, assassinations, and diversion of government leaders from the tasks of formulating and implementing government policy.

The Domestic Impact on the Soviets

Although the war in Afghanistan has entailed significant military, economic, and political costs for the USSR, we believe the costs have not reached a point where they would force the Soviets to reduce their objectives in Afghanistan or take more draconian measures. In our view, friction within the Soviet elite and the general population has not reached a point where it would force the Soviets to reduce their objectives in Afghanistan or take more draconian measures.

limits. On the whole, according to accounts [] Soviet citizens accept the government's rationale for their country's involvement in Afghanistan and view the conflict as a necessary evil.

Moreover, the international costs of withdrawal without securing a reliable regime are greater than the costs associated with remaining. Soviet diplomats have said [] and almost certainly believe that acceptance of a settlement that did not preserve the Communist regime in Kabul would have an even more damaging international impact than continued occupation, weakening their international posture, damaging Soviet credibility as an ally, and encouraging the West to increase its pressure on Soviet interests around the globe.

Impact on the Soviet Military

The Costs of the Fighting. We believe that Soviet casualties and equipment losses are a source of concern to the leadership and that Soviet military tactics are chosen with an eye to minimizing them. For example, Soviet bombers conduct attacks from altitudes too high to permit precision bombing; the Soviet military leadership shows great sensitivity to aircraft losses; and most Soviet ground operations generally have demonstrated a reluctance to chase the insurgents into the hills or fight outside the protection of

their armored vehicles. On the basis [] we estimate that Soviet casualties since the invasion amount to about 25,000, one-third of whom were killed. Inadequate medical care in the field makes the Soviet killed-to-wounded ratio (1:2)—comparable to the US experience in World War II—much higher than the 1-to-5 ratio the United States experienced during the Vietnam war. Afghan regime forces, in our judgment, have suffered some 67,000 casualties. Adding to Soviet problems, according to reliable sources, are an inadequate water supply, insufficient preventive medicine, and poor sanitary procedures, which have resulted in a high incidence of disease among Soviet troops—perhaps triple the number of combat casualties.

Aircraft and Equipment Losses. Experience and the influx of heavy machineguns and SA-7 missiles have made the insurgents more adept at protecting themselves from air attacks and at shooting down Soviet and Afghan aircraft. We believe that aircraft losses began to increase significantly in 1983. [] we estimate that since 1979 the Soviets and Afghans have lost more than 600 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft in combat. Soviet and Afghan equipment losses, including armored vehicles and trucks, run into the thousands (see figure 5).

Morale and Discipline. The strains of the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan have worsened morale and discipline problems among Soviet conscripts who serve there. The Army's inefficiency in providing adequate food, potable water, clothing, shelter, and medical care for troops has contributed to those problems. [] Nevertheless, the morale and discipline problems have remained manageable, and maintaining a force of some 100,000 has not significantly reduced the overall readiness of the Soviet military.

The Soviet military's outlook on Afghanistan's potential as a testing ground for arms and military tactics probably is mixed. A small but growing group of career military personnel now have combat experience. Despite continuing Soviet problems in applying counterinsurgency techniques in Afghanistan, the Soviets have learned some lessons about the performance of specific weapons and equipment that may be helpful elsewhere. Although some of the lessons being learned in Afghanistan could apply in other Soviet counterinsurgency campaigns in the Third World, the nature of Afghanistan and of the conflict and Soviet

Figure 4
Afghanistan: Soviet/DRA Casualties,
December 1979-Present

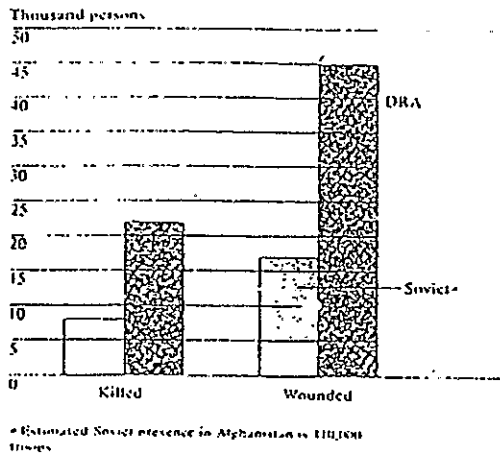
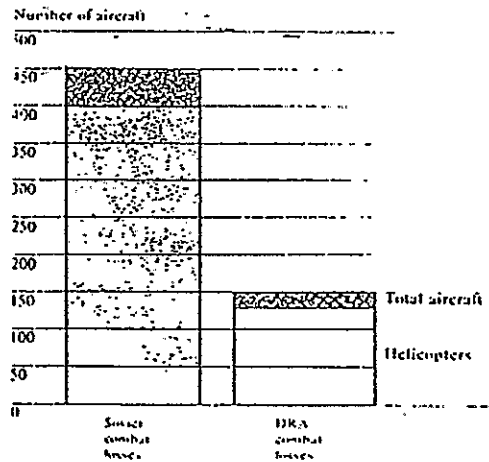


Figure 5
Afghanistan: Soviet/DRA Aircraft
Losses, December 1979-Present



frustrations and ineffectiveness probably limit the relevance of that experience to a war in Europe or China—the theaters on which Soviet planning is primarily focused

Economic Costs

For Moscow the economic costs of the war in Afghanistan have been much higher than ever anticipated. Direct military expenditures in Afghanistan account for about 1 percent of the USSR's annual outlay for defense. [] we estimate the direct Soviet military costs of the conflict from 1980 through 1984 at some \$16 billion.

The military costs have increased slowly over the course of the war, in our view. Manpower and construction costs generally stabilized after rising sharply in 1981 and 1982. [] estimate that direct expenditures for the replacement of equipment destroyed in combat or lost to noncombat accidents are rising. About 90 percent of these are replacement expenditures for aircraft, especially helicopters.

Preparations for the invasion temporarily caused a significant disruption to the civilian economy in the region just north of Afghanistan. Trucks carrying Soviet troops and supplies into Afghanistan were commandeered from the civilian economy and the callon of [] idled some factories. [] Military priorities in Afghanistan periodically disrupt transportation and construction in the same area, [] but overall these disruptions have not been a serious [] on the Soviet civilian economy.

In addition to these costs, Moscow has had to provide increased economic support to Afghanistan since the invasion in 1979. The Soviet Union has largely replaced Western lenders and donors, delivering about \$1.5 billion in economic assistance—including about \$1 billion in grants and \$400-500 million in development assistance. They also settled an outstanding Afghan debt of \$100 million in needed hard currency.

Western aid, meanwhile, has declined to almost nothing. The Soviets import about 90 percent of Afghanistan's gas production—about 2.8 billion cubic meters in 1984—its only major industry. Most of the proceeds go to pay for Soviet imports or repay prerevolutionary debts to the USSR.

Political and Social Costs

Reports that returning casualties from Afghanistan continue to trigger isolated popular demonstrations against the government. Reports from returning troops—specifically the contrast between what they tell and what Soviet media report—have increased popular cynicism about regime propaganda. Western visitors report that ordinary Russians do not relish risking the lives of their children in Afghanistan, and the lack of media coverage of the casualties indicates the regime is sensitive to their concerns.

Events in Afghanistan, along with those in neighboring Iran, have increased regime concern about the loyalty of Soviet Central Asians. In May 1984 a Moscow lecturer told a public audience that Islam represented a serious internal problem and that the regime was worried about the impact of events in Afghanistan on Soviet Tajiks. In addition, there are reports that members of other ethnic groups in the USSR complain they are bearing a disproportionate share of the combat burden. (Because of local mobilization, Central Asians were prominent among the Soviet invasion force, but the ethnic breakdown of Soviet forces now appears to reflect the population as a whole.)

Soviet media have acknowledged increased class tensions resulting from the fact that children of the elite can avoid service in Afghanistan. The leadership has also publicly shown concern over the growing alienation of youth in the USSR because of the Soviet involvement.

Soviet involvement in Afghanistan has tempted more Soviets into illegal activity and introduced elements of the population to new kinds of drug abuse. There have been several major contraband scandals involving civilian and military personnel and hundreds of minor ones. [] that Soviet conscripts in Afghanistan regularly barter gas and military equipment for food, scarce consumer goods, and hashish.

The Afghan Economy at a Glance

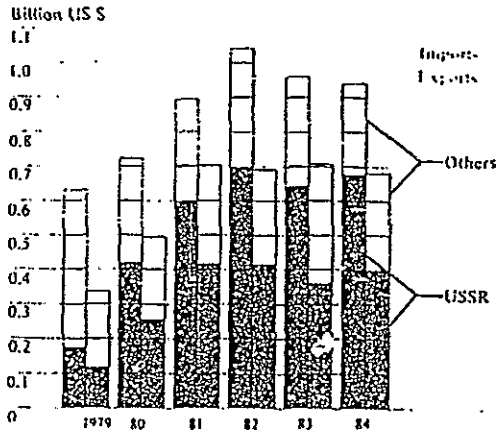
The compilation of national income statistics for Afghanistan involves a considerable degree of estimation because much of the information is unavailable or unreliable. The government's lack of access to much of the countryside and the fact that most of the food production is for on-farm consumption complicate the task. Using official government statistics, International Monetary Fund estimates, and other sources, we have compiled the following list of key economic statistics:

Population—midyear 1984	14 million
Natural gas production—FY 1984	2.8 billion cubic meters
Natural gas exports—FY 1984	2.4 billion cubic meters
Balance of payments—FY 1984	-\$170 million
Exports (f.o.b.)—FY 1984	\$680 million
Imports (f.o.b.)—FY 1984	\$940 million
Foreign exchange reserves—FY 1984	\$205 million
Foreign debt—FY 1984	\$2.4 billion
Exchange rate	
Official	Af 50 per \$
Bazaar—July 1984	Af 115 per \$

To limit the impact of these problems, the regime has:

- Sought to dilute popular skepticism about the war by playing up US involvement and emphasizing the dangers to Soviet security of an insurgent victory.
- Punished military officials who engage in black marketeering or perform ineptly and rewarded those who served well with higher pay, better benefits, decorations, and faster promotions. Many senior officers appear to have been promoted following service in Afghanistan.
- Appealed to the patriotism of ordinary Soviets by more candid media coverage of conditions Soviet troops face there.
- Cracked down on elite draft dodgers by tightening draft deferments.

Figure 6
Afghanistan: Changing Trade Patterns*,
1979-84^b



* Trade is based on government statistics and does not include smuggling or trade in areas controlled by insurgents. The increase in exports between 1979 and 1981 is attributable in large part to a near tripling of prices paid for natural gas by the Soviet Union.
^b Fiscal year ends 20 March.

- Launched new efforts to improve discipline within the military and combat the problem of youth alienation.
- Increased antireligious propaganda in Soviet Central Asia.
- Taken steps to relieve ethnic tensions, particularly in the military.
- Cracked down on Afghan drug traffickers and tightened security to prevent drug imports into the USSR.

We believe these steps—together with the relatively limited human and financial costs to date—have kept the war's domestic political and social consequences under control

Soviet Popular Protests Against the War

Reports of Soviet popular protests against the war in Afghanistan were more frequent shortly after the invasion. [] indicate that spontaneous, short-lived popular demonstrations against the war occurred, generally in response to the sight of coffins returning from Afghanistan. [] reported demonstrations in 1980 in Alma Ata, Tashkent, Dushanbe, and other cities in Soviet Central Asia. Subsequently, antiwar demonstrations occurred in the Baltic republics, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and the RSFSR. In the most recent report in October 1984, [] claims to have learned from a senior military officer that relatives of the killed and wounded burned the military commissariat in Kazan (450 kilometers east of Moscow). In addition, a Soviet [] learned from [] TASS and Novosti that they have received thousands of letters from Soviet citizens complaining about casualties and asking for further explanations of Soviet policy.

Charges of criticizing the occupation of Afghanistan have figured in the trials of Soviet dissidents. Andrey Sakharov and other dissidents condemned the invasion in January 1980. Sakharov was arrested five days after his interview with Western media and exiled to Gorkiy. An unusual incident of dissent within official ranks—albeit at a low level—occurred in 1983 when a Moscow Radio announcer, Vladimir Danchev, altered official news broadcasts on Afghanistan for foreign audiences to express opposition to Soviet involvement.

International Impact of the Soviet Involvement

The international community imposed unprecedented economic and political sanctions on the USSR because of the invasion of Afghanistan, and these endured much longer than sanctions imposed after other Soviet international misdeeds. Soviet actions

also reinforced international perceptions of Soviet aggressiveness; fueled increased Western, Chinese, and Japanese defense efforts; made Third World countries more wary of Soviet intentions; and hampered Moscow's efforts to exploit the Nonaligned Movement. In Southwest Asia in particular, the invasion of Afghanistan disrupted Soviet efforts to cultivate the Islamic regime in Iran and turned Pakistan into a major supporter of the Afghan resistance.

Moscow does not like being regularly condemned in the United Nations because of its Afghan policies, but it has reason to believe that it has weathered the worst of the international censure. Last year most of the remaining countries that had chilled relations with the USSR because of events in Afghanistan moved to resume more normal economic and political contacts.

The Current Mood in Moscow

The situation in Afghanistan does not figure prominently in the public or the private remarks of the Soviet leadership. Moreover, the leadership has recently promoted some key military figures who, it can be argued, are most responsible for the USSR's lack of progress. Newly appointed Defense Minister Sokolov, Chief of the General Staff Akhromeyev, and Commander of the Southern Theater of Military Operations General Maksimov all come to their jobs after having spent the better part of the past five years grappling with the war in Afghanistan. It seems unlikely that they would have been promoted had there been fundamental leadership dissatisfaction with their performance or the strategies they have followed.

Many middle-level diplomatic and military officials, who may or may not accurately reflect the views of the senior leadership, have become increasingly pessimistic about Soviet prospects over the past two years. For example, the failure last spring to locate and destroy the Panjsheri resistance—the key objective of the 1984 campaign—heightened frustration in Moscow and led to recriminations within the military over the cause of the poor Soviet performance.

Many middle-level military officials familiar with the situation now believe the war is unwinnable. To support this judgment, they cited the fact that less than 30 percent of Afghanistan is in government hands, the insurgents are becoming more numerous and better trained, and Soviet losses are increasing.

It is possible that the leadership has a less-than-accurate appreciation of the Soviet position in Afghanistan. First, it indicates that officials in Kabul regularly report to Moscow that more progress is being made than is actually the case. Second, the Soviet leadership, like most political elites that have paid a high price for a policy that is not working, probably is reluctant to admit it made a mistake and face the consequences that might result. Third, Soviet ideology dictates that most people want the kind of revolution the Afghan Communists are attempting to impose, and the Soviet leadership probably cannot accept the proposition that the Afghan people do not want such a revolution. Finally, and perhaps most important, the Soviet leadership has experienced a steady depletion in its ranks during the past five years, and the ill health of successive General Secretaries and their need to address more pressing problems at home and abroad probably have limited the time they devoted to the Afghan problem.

The new CPSU General Secretary, M. S. Gorbachev, like all other top leaders, has avoided significant direct comment on Afghanistan in public. As a key figure in the leadership during the last year, Gorbachev has presumably developed a degree of commitment to current Soviet goals and strategy in Afghanistan. It is likely that Gorbachev will chastise Islamabad over its policy toward Afghanistan. He would naturally wish to solve the Afghanistan problem in some way, but, while he is consolidating his power in the Soviet leadership over the next year or so, he has a strong political interest in avoiding positions that might make him look weak or open him to charges of adventurism. He, therefore, does not seem to have an immediate interest in seeking to revise Soviet goals and strategy.

Outlook

We believe the fighting in Afghanistan will increase in intensity in the next two years. The more aggressive Soviet tactics of the past year are likely to continue, and the insurgents are likely to demonstrate greater aggressiveness and skill as they receive better weapons and more training. Soviet casualties and equipment losses will continue to increase, although not dramatically unless Moscow adopts a far more aggressive strategy.

The Soviets probably calculate that they will be able to adjust to improvements in insurgent strength to avert an unacceptable increase in casualties. We are likely to see a slight increase in force structure in the near term, perhaps another 5,000 to 10,000 men. These are likely to include mostly specialized forces such as airborne troops, security battalions, and mobile combat and support units.

We believe the Soviets will place more emphasis on efforts to halt insurgent infiltration, mainly through greater use of airpower along Afghan borders with Pakistan and Iran. More bombing of suspected insurgent routes, efforts to upgrade intelligence by use of more informants and remote sensors, and more systematic use of special forces to ambush insurgent convoys are all likely. The Soviets may also attempt to increase their presence near the border, since past efforts by regime forces to do the job have not been successful.

Less likely, the Soviets might try to radically improve performance by introducing a few additional divisions—possibly as many as 50,000 men—to increase efforts to garrison and hold large areas after sweep operations. Such an increase, however, would require the kinds of regular ground force units that have been least effective so far. Moreover, the units would have to be mobilized and provided with refresher training and a logistic base—a process that would take many months. We believe that in such a situation the Soviets would be likely to consider larger scale incursions into Pakistan or Iran than we have seen thus far.

Nevertheless, the Soviets, in our view, are unlikely to make real progress toward quelling the insurgency in the next two years. Given the mountainous terrain and the numerous passes throughout the border area, we believe that even with a few additional divisions the Soviet force level would be too small to stem insurgent infiltration appreciably. Although the Soviets can drive insurgents from any area temporarily and will occasionally score victories against individual bands, they will be unable to establish control over much of the country.

We do not believe the Soviets foresee an early "victory" in Afghanistan or have any compelling reason to seek one. In our view, they probably cling to the hope that—despite the dismal results thus far—their efforts to buy support for the Kabul regime, rebuild the Afghan armed forces, and seek converts by promoting social and economic reforms will eventually bear fruit.

The Soviets probably believe that, with the exception of a few leaders such as Masood, most insurgent commanders can carry out military operations but have no disciplined political cadres capable of building an underground political and administrative structure. They probably see many insurgent leaders as local warlords who would like to get Soviet forces out of Afghanistan but who also are opportunists seeking to get what they can from both sides. The Soviets believe that most Afghans are apathetic and that war weariness will gradually erode the insurgents' support.

Although the temptation in Kabul to become passive and accept the Communist regime will probably increase as the younger generation grows up with an impression of regime pervasiveness, the insurgency—with continued outside support—is likely to prevent progress in Sovietization in the countryside over the longer term. Insurgent morale has remained high. [] when evidence of war

weariness appears among the people, it leads to thoughts of emigration rather than acquiescence to the Communists and the foreign invaders. Moreover, traditional Afghan resistance to any central government may prove insuperable. At the same time, although the slow evolution toward cooperation and coordination among commanders in various parts of the country is likely to continue, the myriad differences that have long divided Afghans will prevent the formation of an organization coherent enough to mount a national effort against the Soviets

Prospects for a political settlement are dim. The Soviets contend that the war can only be solved politically, but they remain uncompromising in their maximalist demands for a negotiated settlement. We believe Moscow will continue to use the UN talks on Afghanistan to portray itself as responsive to international criticism and probe for concessions by Islamabad, but the inability of any Soviet-backed regime to survive without the presence of Soviet troops renders the path to a political settlement highly perilous. Islamabad will feign interest in talks to relieve Soviet pressure {

Iran is not likely to become an important factor in the Afghan conflict so long as it continues to limit its support to pro-Khomeini groups {

**An Alternative Scenario:
Communist Rule Is Threatened**

We cannot rule out a more serious deterioration of the Soviet position in Afghanistan than we have estimated above. Such a deterioration could occur if the insurgents improved their coordination, adjusted their tactics, and assimilated increased outside assistance more rapidly than we anticipate. This train of events would probably force the Soviets into another basic review of their options in Afghanistan. We believe that a serious challenge to Soviet rule in Kabul would result in a move, not toward a political settlement, but toward an expanded Soviet military commitment and a wider war {

If the Soviet hold in Afghanistan were seriously threatened, we do not rule out a much more sizable reinforcement than those we have discussed:

- An increase of perhaps 100,000 to 150,000 men might allow the Soviets to clear and hold major cities and large parts of the countryside or block infiltration from Pakistan and Iran, although it probably could not do both. Reports of Soviet estimates of the force necessary to seal the border with Pakistan have varied from nine to 17 divisions.
- An even larger reinforcement of 200,000 to 400,000 men probably would allow Moscow to make serious inroads against the insurgency, if the effort could be sustained

Either of these options would require a long-term buildup involving large-scale mobilization of forces in Soviet Central Asia. A major reinforcement of Soviet troops would substantially raise the political and economic costs of the war, but we believe Moscow would bear them rather than face the consequences of a victory by the insurgency {

An Alternative View: The Soviets Prevail

Some close observers of Afghanistan, among them strong supporters of the resistance, believe that Moscow will inevitably prevail in Afghanistan. Basing their judgments on open literature, observations in Kabul, and knowledge of Afghan society, these observers argue that Soviet efforts to build a viable regime in Kabul are making slow but steady progress. They assert that divisions among the resistance groups will prevent them from providing an alternative to the pro-Soviet regime

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Drawing on observations in Kabul and conversations with regime officials, these observers point to the thousands of Afghans—estimates range up to 375,000—who are now in some way part of the Communist government. They are convinced that the Afghan Army already includes a core of highly motivated junior officers and is gradually increasing its effectiveness. They also share the Soviet view that the insurgents have no capability to build a political and administrative structure that could rule Afghanistan and suggest that war weariness will increasingly erode support for the insurgents.

We believe that this view underestimates insurgent morale and military performance in Afghanistan and exaggerates the progress of Moscow's effort to Sovietize the country. We believe that Soviet efforts to implement their political program on a large scale will remain handicapped by the continuing lack of security in the countryside.

Nevertheless, we cannot rule out greater progress than we predict by the Soviets in building a political and military infrastructure in Afghanistan. This development would be more likely if Soviet pressure or internal instability in Pakistan resulted in a move by Islamabad to limit its support for the resistance. Even so, the Soviets could not completely pacify the country and withdraw a sizable number of forces.

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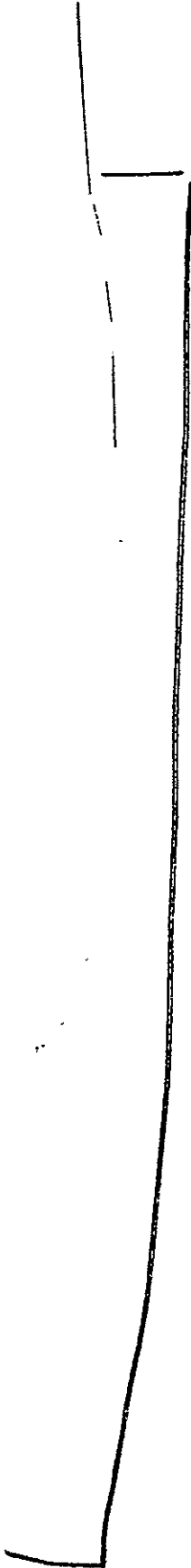
Appendix

Selected Intelligence Publications
on Afghanistan, 1983-85

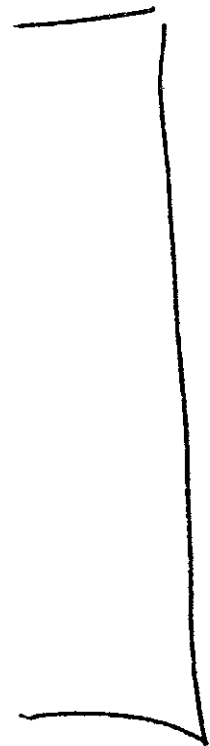
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