



# VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University  
**VCU Scholars Compass**

---

Undergraduate Research Posters

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program

---

2015

## The Role of Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in the Breakdown of the USSR

Ezoza Nomazova

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uresposters>

 Part of the [Economic History Commons](#), [Political Economy Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

© The Author(s)

---

### Downloaded from

Nomazova, Ezoza, "The Role of Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in the Breakdown of the USSR" (2015). *Undergraduate Research Posters*. Poster 180.

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uresposters/180>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Posters by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).



VCU

# The Role of Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in the Breakdown of the USSR

Ezoza Nomazova, Faye O. Prichard

## Abstract

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was one of the biggest historic events of XX century. Much like the Roman Empire, the USSR breakdown was due to an aggregate of factors, some internal, and some foreign. Unlike, the Roman Empire, the Soviet Empire collapsed suddenly. Among the reasons for the fall of the Union, the invasion of Afghanistan was one of the poorest decisions that was made by the Soviet government. What factors did this event contribute to the fall of the USSR?

The Russian invasion of Afghanistan had big impact on the attitude of the developing countries and third world against Russia. And for years the Soviets were preaching that they were supporting the developing countries to maintain their freedom. However, when the USSR invaded Afghanistan, people found that Russia was not a reliable ally. The same way Soviets invaded Afghanistan they could invade any country as well. The occupation of Afghanistan caused irreversible internal conflicts between the Soviet republics and the Soviet government. By the time Mikhail Gorbachev took position of general secretary in Community Party and ordered the Red Army to withdraw from Afghanistan, the economic and military resources for the invasion were drained.

Four following categories were identified as the effects of the war: domestic conflict, economic crisis, political situation, and military confrontation. The analysis exposed a number of issues and controversies relevant to the topic at hand, and the further study is required in order to figure out whether it could have been achieved to save the USSR.

## Introduction

The war in Afghanistan was the most large-scale, long and tragic of the local wars that the troops of the USSR involved. Relevance of the topic is much higher than it might seem at first glance. The Soviet-Afghan war had a direct impact on the final period of the Soviet Union and the formation of a new government. Western Intelligence believed that the purpose of the Soviet invasion was either to obtain entrance to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf or start WWII in order to justify their own militarization and the staying by military personnel of the USSR. One of the reasons the Soviets totally miscalculated the situation in Afghanistan was that the Soviet leaders saw the world “through the prism of communism”, where no dissent by the public is allowed or accepted (Paul Dibbs, 2010, p. 501).

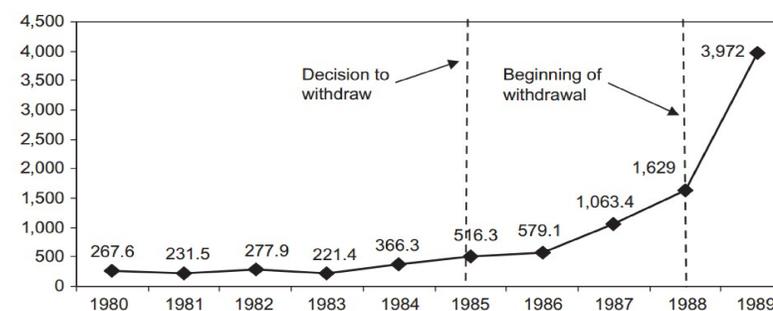
The Soviets were also not familiar with Afghan culture and society, both of which are very difficult to deal with. The US is finding the similar difficulties since the incursion into Afghanistan post 9/11.

A variety of sources, including government documents which were classified at the time, were used to analyze the contributions of the event to the Soviet collapse.

## Results/Discussion

During last four years of the war in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union was obliterated from inside (Leon Aron, 2006, p. 22). There was a profound break in its establishments. The gap between the government and society was the main conflict. The non-Russian population of the Soviet Empire feared from the Soviet government and didn't trust them when their livelihoods were in jeopardy. The people with power were only concerned about their own privileges. The government wanted to maintain monopoly it had in everything including ideology, leadership, decision-making, and ultimately the society.

The financial crisis of the USSR associates with an acute political situation: the debilitated separation of the Soviet Union into independent republics; the obliteration of the arranged economy; a business sector weakening in the global impact of the USSR, and a debilitating of its military security (George Collins, 1986, p. 6). The Soviet could no longer afford to keep pace with the military expenditure of the United States. The civil sector of the economy developed extremely slowly, with billions of rubles spent on the weapon race and the military forces. The defeat of the USSR in Afghanistan flagged the other Soviet regions that Moscow would not be a solid accomplice for the despots in other Soviet impacted nations.



**Figure 1** Soviet military spending on Afghanistan from 1980 -1989 (Minkov & Smolyneec, 2010, p. 603)

## Conclusion

Within the USSR, the authoritarian regimes such as Poland and Chechnya pushed out the regimes because they could not depend on the Soviet government to spare them against prevalent capture. Therefore, the affiliation within the Soviet countries crippled. The economic losses were calculated as 9 billion rubles towards the occupation of Afghanistan (Figure 1). These kinds of spending were outrageous in the country, where the goods deficit was growing. Not just was the war wasted hundreds of billions of rubles every year, except it additionally diverted the initiative from more imperative issues and was a hindrance to enhancing relations with China and Iran, the later nation being particularly noteworthy now that Soviet-Iranian relations had been at a low point.

The Afghanistan War cost the feeble Soviet economy a huge number of dollars, murdered approximately 15,000 Soviet troopers, and prompted strategic seclusion of the Soviet state as the US responded by closure armistice. Taken together, these components unquestionably did not fortify the USSR. Because political, military, economic and internal deteriorations were developed due to the invasion of Afghanistan, the collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable. Although it was not *the* reason the sequences of events led up to the USSR's breakdown.

## Works Cited

- Aron, L. (2006). The "Mystery" of the Soviet Collapse. *Journal of Democracy*, 17(2), 21-35.
- Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence. (1987, February). *The Cost of Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan* (Report No. SOV 87-10007). Retrieved from [http://www.foaia.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_conversions/89801/DOC\\_0000499320.pdf](http://www.foaia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000499320.pdf)
- Central Intelligence Agency, Special National Intelligence Estimate. (1988, March). *The USSR: Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Report No. SNIE 11/37-88). The National Security Archive. Retrieved from <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/us9.pdf>
- Collins, G. (1986). The War in Afghanistan. *Air and Space Power Journal* 1986 March-April 2: 1-8. Retrieved from <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/doi/10.1080/10357718.2010.513366>
- Hyder, J.A. (2004). Cold War (1972-1989): the Collapse of the Soviet Union. In K. Lee Lerner & Brenda Wilmoth Lerner (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Espionage, Intelligence, and Security* (Vol. 1, pp. 238-241). Detroit: Gale.
- Minkov, A., & Smolyneec, G. (2010). 4-D Soviet Style: Defense, Development, Diplomacy, and Disengagement in Afghanistan during the Soviet Period. Part III: Economic Development. *Journal Of Slavic Military Studies*, 23(4), 597-616.
- Prakash, A., & Reuveny, R. (1999). The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union. *Review of International Studies*, 25, 693-708. Retrieved from <http://faculty.washington.edu/aseem/afghanwar.pdf>

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Faye Prichard for encouragement, patient guidance and assistance in keeping my progress on schedule. I greatly appreciate UROP for financial assistance.