



# THE ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE SERVICES IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. CASE STUDY: THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN (1979-1989)

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*This paper aims to present the role of intelligence services in the American foreign policy using as a case study the Afghan conflict from 1979-1989. Thus, this paper underlines the actions (or inactions) of the American intelligence services, highlighting their limitations from this period. It is important to describe the context that contributed to the start of the soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the two perspectives (American and Soviet) over the conflict. In this regard, we considered necessary an analysis on the Soviet point of view regarding the conflict and, most importantly, concerning the American involvement, having in mind the purpose of objectiveness while presenting the context and events. Using the relevant documents, testimonies and statements of former CIA officials from that period, the paper underlines the way foreign policy decisions were taken by the Administrations from Washington, during the Soviet-Afghan war, and how American intelligence services influenced the foreign policy decision-making process and the evolution of the conflict.*

**Keywords:** *intelligence services; USA foreign policy; conflict; covert operations; insurgency forces.*

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## Introduction

Nowadays, there is a tendency to consider the international arena as less stable and more volatile compared to the period of the Cold War. But even in the context of bipolarity and the balance of power between the communist East and the democratic West, there were critical moments that had the potential to destroy the architecture of international security, with the prospect of throwing all nations into chaos and destruction.

In this regard, it is relevant to discuss the situation of the Afghanistan War (1979-1989) as a significant and surprising event developed in the Cold War period. The event marks an atypical moment in history, especially in the context in which the Soviet Union invades an allied state with whom it has a strong tradition of bilateral relations, unintentionally favouring the political and subversive involvement of the United States in the Middle East. What seemed then to the United States as an opportunity to create a force of anti-Soviet insurgency, has transformed over time into an atypical non-state opponent that they will face later, especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The methodology used in this paper consists of methods of qualitative research and analysis, through a desk-based research, the historical context, causes and factors that led to developments and escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan. For this, relevant works of specialists in the field of international relations and American foreign policy were used, as well as documents and reports declassified by the USA and the Russian Federation. The paper also presents some testimonies of prominent historical figures during the conflict, opinions that were gathered by Tim Weiner in the paper “CIA. A Secret History”, by analysing some official documents, verbal reports of American officers and officials, and also by attending interviews with CIA officers and veterans. These statements are intended to validate the hypotheses of this paper and to bring a unique perspective, from within, on the events and the way in which the CIA is involved in American foreign policy. Given the topic of the paper, the methods of quantitative research were used in a limited way, being used only in the analysis of financial and military aid provided by the US to the mujahideen.

### 1. The Political and Historical Context of Afghanistan

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a surprising act both for the Eastern block and the West, especially if we take into account the bilateral relation between Afghanistan and the USSR that they had managed to build over time. Thus, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union were the first states to recognize each other's existence, providing economic assistance, military security and agriculture assistance



to each other with regularity.<sup>1</sup> Relations became even closer after the success of the coup in Afghanistan, organized in April 1978 by the Democratic People's Party, where the party, led by Nur Mohammed Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, managed to establish a Marxist-Leninist leadership. In December 1978, a delegation led by Nur Mohammed Taraki and consisting of members of the political party and state apparatus came to Moscow for direct meetings with the Soviet counterparts to clarify the development trend of relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union and sharing views on international politics.<sup>2</sup> The delegation's visit had a positive effect on Kremlin counterparts, and Brezhnev "( ... ) pointed out that the relations between the Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan were assuming a completely different nature. These relations are now based on class belonging; they are imbued with the spirit of friendship and revolutionary solidarity."<sup>3</sup> In essence, the meeting and discussions led to the signing of an agreement/treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two states. The premises of the new Afghan leadership seemed promising for the Soviets, but for Westerners, and especially USA, USSR seemed to win in the Middle East.

In spite of the Soviet intelligence services' presence in Kabul for two decades before the outbreak of the revolution that would lead to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, KGB and Yuri Andropov (head of the Soviet intelligence services) did not anticipate the anticommunist revolt that would arise. Moreover, neither the Soviets, nor the Americans have paid enough attention to the Iranian Revolution and the ideology of Islamism that would propagate the Middle East<sup>4</sup> (for Americans, "the idea that religion was to prove itself as a compelling political force was unacceptable in the late twentieth century"<sup>5</sup>; although CIA was perceived in Iran as "a great omnipotent power with a great force over their lives"<sup>6</sup>, the CIA office in Iran had, in fact, only four people, all newly arrived in Iran, with no relevant experience and knowledge of the local language and customs). Thus, when the new communist leadership in Kabul introduced women's education, confiscated land owned by tribal elders, legislated freedom of choice in marriages, and proclaimed

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<sup>1</sup> \*\*\*, "U.S.S.R. and Afghanistan sign «friendship treaty»", in *History*, URL: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/ussr-and-afghanistan-sign-friendship-treaty>, republished on 02.12.2019, accessed on 03.02.2021.

<sup>2</sup> \*\*\*, "Information about the visit of the Afghan party and state delegation, headed by prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Nur Mohamed Tarakhi to the USSR", *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, Digital Archive. International History Declassified, URL: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112458>, accessed on 03.02.2021.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars*, Penguin Books, 2005, pp. 36-37.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Weiner, *CIA. O istorie secretă*, transl. Raluca Pușdercă, Litera Publishing, Bucharest, 2019, p. 507.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 508.



universal education according to Marxist dogma, radical Islamist groups opposed these measures.<sup>7</sup>

In short time, the situation began to deteriorate as a consequence of the outbreak of violent riots in mid-March 1979, in Herat –village near the border with Iran –, resulting in the death of 5.000 people, including 50 Soviet advisers along with their families.<sup>8</sup> From the discussion of the March 18, 1979, between the Soviet Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin, and the Prime Minister Nur Mohammed Taraki, it appears that the forces of insurgency had managed to obtain large quantities of weapons and hold control of military warehouses (“Taraki: All ammunition and depots are in their hands”). Moreover, the Afghan leader noted that “there is no active support on the part of the population. It is almost wholly under the influence of Shiite slogans (...)”<sup>10</sup>. For the Soviet prime minister, the situation in Afghanistan was “a complex political and international issue”<sup>11</sup>. Over the months, the internal situation in Afghanistan deteriorated so much that the Afghan leaders began to fight among themselves; Taraki tried to assassinate Hafizullah Amin, without success, and was arrested and executed at Amin’s order. This is significant because Taraki’s execution upset Brezhnev (with whom he had a close friendship), and, at strategic level, the Soviet intelligence services were beginning to express concerns about the possibility that Amin, who had studied in the USA, work with CIA and to refuse any Soviet aid or intervention, instead requesting assistance from the USA, which could have set up control and intelligence centers right on the border of the USSR.<sup>12</sup> In the light of these events and prospects, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan became a certainty and a necessity.

## **2. The Afghan Revolution and the First Measures Taken by the Americans**

The decision of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not very popular among the Politburo in Moscow, many Soviet statesman learning information about the military campaign from the press. However, the USSR could not afford not to interfere in Afghanistan, mainly due to the fact that about 40 million Muslims lived in the Soviet republics of Central Asia, and the loss of Afghanistan would have set a

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<sup>7</sup> Steve Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Războiul Rece*, transl. Diana Pușcașu Țuțuianu, RAO Publishing, Bucharest, 2009, p. 268.

<sup>9</sup> \*\*\*, “Telephone conversation between Soviet premier Alexei N. Kosygin and Afghan premier Nur Mohammed Taraki”, *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, Digital Archive. International History Declassified URL: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113141>, accessed on 03.02.2021.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Steve Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *op.cit.*, p. 269.



dangerous precedent (Yuri Andropov said on March 17, 1979, that “we cannot lose Afghanistan”<sup>13</sup>).

President Carter was informed, by the CIA, in early March 1979, of the situation in Afghanistan, and the CIA’s proposal was to launch an anti-Soviet propaganda campaign to support the efforts of the Afghan rebels (an action that the USSR imputed to the Americans anyway), which Carter disagreed with. The chief analyst on Soviet affairs told the CIA director at that time, Admiral Turner, that a possible disintegration of the Afghan regime could force the USSR to militarily intervene in Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup>

The Agency was suffering from congressional hearings that drew attention to the covert interventions in Cuba and Latin America, and the new internal procedures transferred the control of covert operations to the President and Congress; moreover, CIA’s clandestine service budget had been reduced. Despite this, the CIA was able to establish informal channels of communication with Islamabad and obtain a promise to support Afghan rebels in Pakistan, but only if the USA protected Pakistan in the event of a Soviet attack.<sup>15</sup> At the meeting of the Special Coordinating Committee on March 30, 1979, it was stated that the Carter Administration wanted “to reverse the current Soviet trend and presence in Afghanistan, to demonstrate to the Pakistanis our interest and concern about Soviet involvement, and to demonstrate to the Pakistanis, Saudis, and to others our resolve to stop extension of Soviet influence in the Third World.”<sup>16</sup>

However, no decision has been taken in this regard. The escalation of the conflict between Afghan rebels and Soviet troops led to the intervention of Soviet air forces in Bagram, which led President Carter to authorize, in July 1979, the use of just over 500,000 dollars for propaganda and psychological actions in Afghanistan, as well as for the provision of radio equipment, medical supplies and cash to the Afghan rebels, but transported in such a way that the American aid would not be obvious.<sup>17</sup>

The kidnapping of the American Ambassador in Kabul, Adolph Dubs, by the Afghan rebels (supported by Pakistan in the fight against the pro-Soviet Kabul), and then his murder during the Afghan police intervention on the hotel where he was detained, raised real concerns and discussions in Washington about a possible US intervention in the area. However, President Carter was not informed by the CIA of the impending invasion of Afghanistan because “the Agency had a fairly accurate idea of Soviet capabilities, but did not understand any of the Russians’

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<sup>13</sup> Tim Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

<sup>14</sup> Steve Coll, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.



intentions”<sup>18</sup>, and the classified report sent to the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department on March 23, 1979 by the *National Intelligence Daily* stated that the Soviets would not want “the introduction of a large number of ground forces into Afghanistan”<sup>19</sup> (however, 30,000 Soviet troops were on the Afghan border that week). CIA’s intelligence sources in Afghanistan were few, which explains the Agency’s inability to predict the 1978 coup, but also the Soviet invasion of 1979 (a memorandum sent by the CIA to Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser, in September 1979, states the fact that the CIA did not actually know what the Soviets were doing in Afghanistan<sup>20</sup>).

Although the Soviets continued to send troops to Afghanistan, CIA informed the president that there is no intensification of Soviet intervention, and after an effort of interception and analysis of information, experts of the Agency “have come to a unanimous conclusion that Moscow would not invade Afghanistan”<sup>21</sup>. Although Soviet troops continued to enter Afghanistan until December 1979, the CIA considered these actions only to defend the Soviet air base at Bagram.

At the meeting of the Special Coordination Committee (composed of the President’s most experienced advisers, including Zbigniew Brzezinski) in December 1979, it has been discussed the presence of 5,300 Soviet troops at the Bagram Air Base and the fact that the CIA did not consider this presence an attack preparation, but there was no discussion of a Soviet invasion. Moreover, CIA analysts stated (on December 19, 1979) that “the pace of the deployment of Soviet troops does not suggest ... the eventuality of an emergency”<sup>22</sup>, so they did not foresee a possible attack by the USSR. However, three days later, there were news in Washington that the invasion of Afghanistan was underway, forcing President Carter to sign a covert order to allow the CIA to arm the Afghan forces.<sup>23</sup>

### **3. The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the American Response**

In a memorandum dated December 26, 1979, addressed to the President of the United States<sup>24</sup>, Zbigniew Brzezinski indicated potential strategic landmarks which could fundament the Soviet action: pressuring Pakistan and Iran in the idea of having access to the Indian Ocean to increase their sphere of influence and the proximity of the Soviet presence to Persian Gulf and Oman Gulf. Based on this

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<sup>18</sup> Tim Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 502.

<sup>20</sup> Steve Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Tim WEINER, p. 503.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 503-504.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 504.

<sup>24</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan”, *The White House*, Memorandum, Washington, December 26, 1979, p. 1.



document, he recommended that the USA changes its policy towards Pakistan by providing political support, especially in the context of Pakistani aid to insurgent forces in Afghanistan; to provide financial and technical-military assistance (sending instructors and weapons) to the insurgency forces; to encourage China to support insurgent forces in Afghanistan; warning the Soviets about the effects that their actions on Afghanistan could affect the SALT agreement and use of information operations and covert actions to help the insurgency forces (operations exploiting the Muslim element as ideological factor against Marxism-Leninism).<sup>25</sup> In another memorandum, Brzezinski stated that “our ultimate goal is the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Even if this is not attainable, we should make Soviet involvement as costly as possible.”<sup>26</sup>

As previously mentioned, following the briefings received from the CIA on the situation in Afghanistan, the Carter Administration authorized, initially, the engagement in covered activities by the CIA. However, these actions had a pretty shy start, as they were limited to providing non-lethal support to Mujahideen insurgents, consisting of psychological operations and propaganda, without providing weapons.<sup>27</sup> However, in order to make the intervention against the Soviets successful, it needed the coagulation of neighbouring states in a joint effort, which pushed Carter to try to repair USA-Pakistan relations, which resulted in a modest collaboration between the CIA and ISI (Pakistan Intelligence Service).<sup>28</sup> USA foreign policy actions were not limited to this, having impact also on Soviet Union by cancelling all scheduled visits and imposing economic sanctions, which resulted in the cessation of grain exports to the Soviet Union, the cancellation of fishing rights, setting restrictions in negotiations in the fields of culture, trade, exchange of goods, etc. In the framework of altering bilateral relations, the Carter Administration decided to authorize a new set of CIA-led covert measures, this time including the indirect transfer of weapons to the Mujahideen, mediated by the Pakistani government.<sup>29</sup> In terms of funding, the effort was to be co-financed by the US and Saudi Arabia; by 1980, \$30 million had already been allocated, and a year later the amount reached \$50 million, with insurgent funding also mediated by Pakistan<sup>30</sup> (which, in turn, would gather, arm and form the most radical insurgent fighting groups).<sup>31</sup> It should be appreciated

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Steve Coll, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Riedel, *What We Won. America's Secret War in Afghanistan, 1979–89*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2014, p. 99.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 103.

<sup>30</sup> Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan. The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy. The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p. 114.



that although the actions of the Carter Administration in the context of the Afghan war were fast and without a solid foundation of intelligence – given the speed of deterioration of the relationship between Soviets and Afghans – the Americans managed to establish a network of covered operations consisted of CIA, ISI, GID (Jordanian intelligence service) and MI6, with the general purpose of supporting the Mujahideen in their anti-Soviet Afghan war.

With the arrival of Reagan Administration at the White House, the USA foreign policy regarding the Afghanistan issue continued, on one hand, for reasons of national interest and trying to stop a possible extension of the Soviet campaign to Pakistan and Iran, and, on the other hand, as a commitment to Reagan's anti-communist attitude. During this period, the CIA acted cautiously; all risks were borne by ISI, and the CIA only financed the operations. Therefore, the Pakistanis had full access to the Mujahideen, and control over the evolution of the conflict; the Mujahideen were trained only by Pakistani forces, and the CIA could only train ISI troops in the use of new equipment while the ISI troops pass those skills to the Afghan fighters.<sup>32</sup> Robert Gates will state that “the CIA could put some pressure, but it was President Muhammad Zia ul Haq and ISI who decided.”<sup>33</sup> At Washington, especially in the first half of the 1980's, was decided that, in foreign policy, the approach concerning the war not to be overt, but to allow the USA adopt, when the situation requires, a narrative of “plausible denial” to avoid a possible retaliation from the Soviets. The weaponry that have to be delivered to Mujahideen could not be USA weaponry, so the Americans opted for diversification of weapons supplies consisting of European anti-aircraft batteries, Swiss Oerlikon anti-aircraft cannons, British Blowpipe portable missiles, Chinese missiles and weapons with Soviet patent (including Dashika 12.7 mm field machine guns), Soviet assault weapons (Kalashnikov AK-47, SA-7 surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank grenades) consisting of captures and model purchases made in Egypt, also with Soviet patent.<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that Egypt does not have the resources and technology to replicate armaments exactly according to the Soviet patent, so that CIA gave Egyptians technical support and funding in order to support the flow of weapons to the Mujahideen and to maintain their cover. However, while tactically such a diversity of weapons was not effectively helping the anti-Soviet insurgency fight, at the political level it marked the synchronization of visions between the Reagan Administration and the Head of CIA, William Joseph Casey (Reagan's former chief of campaign and former director of espionage at OSS in London), by implementing, at the tactical level, the USA foreign policy where the goal was not just to “transform Afghanistan into a

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<sup>32</sup> Bruce Riedel, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>34</sup> Rodric Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69, 155, 158-159.





Soviet Vietnam”, but the total defeat of the Soviet Union was intended.<sup>35</sup>

Under the pressures of Congress and the Republicans, the Reagan Administration signs Decision No.166 on National Security (March 1985), authorizing the initiation of actions and activities that would lead “by all possible means” to the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> Through this directive, USA foreign policy shifts from prudence and reserved actions to overt and direct actions, making its goal and participation in the conflict more visible. In the Afghan theater of operations, the CIA redefines and expands its military training and education programs to a core of 150,000 Mujahideen –gathered and brought by ISI – who are initiated into guerrilla warfare tactics. Regarding the weaponry, the insurgents received light American weapons (at the time being higher quality than the original or copied Soviet variants), the most representative being the Stinger ground-to-air launcher which later provided them with a significant advantage against Soviet MI-24 assault helicopters.<sup>37</sup> The expansion of CIA programs proved effective, especially after the Mujahideen were armed with Stinger launchers, as the Soviets began to suffer more and more material and human losses. According to an analysis of the US Army, from the time of equipping insurgents with Stinger launchers until the end of the conflict, the Mujahideen were able to strike down 279 of Soviet aircrafts and helicopters.<sup>38</sup>

The sudden increase of the combat effectiveness of Afghans insurgents after 1985 was not ignored by the leadership in Moscow, because, in addition to the usual forces and the GRU, KGB and MVD (forces of Ministry of Interior), a special task force that belonged to the GRU and was composed of soldiers better prepared, better equipped and skilled in guerilla warfare was sent to the Afghan operations theatre (asymmetrical warfare). While the KGB and MVD were involved in infiltrating among the Mujahideen, gathering information and capturing US military advisers, the purpose of the GRU task force was to stop, as far as possible, the transfer of weapons from the CIA and ISI to the Mujahideen, and to ambush insurgent groups.<sup>39</sup> However, only in March 1988, GRU sent to Moscow a memorandum regarding the aid offered by the USA to Mujahedin. The document mentioned CIA’s actions to equip “counterrevolutionary” troops with Stinger launchers – 600 in 1987 – and the training of rebels, with weapons transferred through the port of Karachi, and from there being distributed by subunits of the Pakistani armed forces and special services. The document also mentioned an intensification of arms shipments from the United States, since 1988, and distributed through the ports and airports of Saudi

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<sup>35</sup> Bruce Riedel, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> Diego Cordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Ewans, *Conflict in Afghanistan. Studies in Asymmetric Warfare*, Routledge, New York, 2005, pp .115-116.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> Rodric Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.



Arabia, Oman and other neighbouring states, the weapons supply actions being corroborated with a wide offensive information activity focused on psychological operations and transmitted subversively through more than 50 radio stations run by the CIA and the United States Information Agency (USIA).<sup>40</sup>

The passage of time and the increasingly unpleasant results that the Red Army had on the ground, in conjunction with the public's sense of aversion to the occupying troops and the efforts of the Arab and American intelligence services to support the insurgents, lead to the Moscow leadership's decision to end the military campaign in Afghanistan. Between May 15, 1988, and February 15, 1989, the last Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan; the war left behind an apparent victory of the United States and its allies, a radical religious faction that would express an anti-imperialist and anti-Western feeling, and a country which had to recover economically, politically and socially from the long confrontation, but which has not been able to benefit from post-conflict reconstruction.

Regarding the way in which the actions (or inactions) of the intelligence services had influenced the American foreign policy during the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, it should be noted that, between 1981 and 1982, three individuals succeeded in running the CIA clandestine service, the last of which was Robert Gates. In 1982, he stated that "the CIA is slowly turning into the Department of Agriculture" and "was in an advanced stage of bureaucratic atherosclerosis."<sup>41</sup> Also, there were only mediocre and poorly trained officials in the CIA, which was the main reason for "the decline in the quality of intelligence gathering and analysis of the last fifteen years" (including the failure of the invasion of Afghanistan) and the reason why the CIA had missed almost every major USSR event and its involvement in Third World states.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the findings of CIA analysts were rewritten to fit the vision of the Director of Central Intelligence Services, William J. Casey.<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusions

The war in Afghanistan is one of the major events of the Cold War period, but this is not necessarily due to its magnitude. Compared to other regional wars, such as the Korean Peninsula or Vietnam, it does not have very different combat characteristics, but the management of the conflict of which the actors involved

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<sup>40</sup> \*\*\*, "Soviet Military Intelligence (GRU) memorandum, 'About us aid to the counterrevolutionaries' (Excerpt)", *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, Digital Archive. International History Declassified, URL: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117276>, accessed on 03.02.2021.

<sup>41</sup> Tim Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 518.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 518.



was atypical. The military intervention of Soviet troops against one of its allies highlighted the lack of imagination in providing, in the framework of Afghanistan's internal effervescence, a complex and dynamic solution to prevent the internal destabilization of the Afghan state and, subsequently, the disastrous outcome of the intervention.

On the other hand, in the context of countering Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, USA foreign policy has been negligent and not based on sufficient information and analysis. In this sense, American statesmen were forced to make hasty decisions with geopolitical relevance, relying more on their own experience, intuition and on the opinions of specialists. The absence of a consistent information gathering activity, but also a lack of full understanding of cultural differences, forced the USA to spend substantial sums that did not lead, apart from the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan, to significant geopolitical or geostrategic gains. This episode highlighted the dysfunctions of the American intelligence services that delivered insufficient and sometimes incorrect information to the decision-makers regarding the Soviet intentions, the regional particularities, and the perspectives of the evolution of the conflict. The Soviet intelligence services were not very effective either, and their approach was based on an extreme use of force. In this regard, neither the KGB nor the CIA were able to gain any significant advantage, both services working more with estimates and less with concrete information gathered from the field.

The absence of a tactical and strategic plan based on the particularities of reality in the theater of operations has determined, conjecturally, the emergence of an insurgency force that is gradually radicalized, being armed by the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and which, regarding its own religious ideology, perceived the world in Hobbesian terms. Thus, the brutal policy of the Soviet Union on Afghanistan, the American desire to defeat the Soviet troops by any means, and the inefficient use of intelligence contributed to the popularization of radical Islam and, ultimately, to the emergence of global terrorism.

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