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USSR: Domestic Fallout From the Afghan War

An Intelligence Assessment

Top Secret

SOV RR-10009CX
February 1988
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Directorate of
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USSR: Domestic Fallout From the Afghan War

An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by , Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief. , SOVA.

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USSR: Domestic Fallout From the Afghan War

Key Judgments

Information available as of 8 February 1988 was used in this report.

Military involvement in Afghanistan has lasted longer than any previous Soviet war and, we estimate, has cost the USSR more than 12,000 lives and 15 billion rubles, approximately 3 percent of the Soviet defense budget. In his recent policy statement concerning conditions for a Soviet military withdrawal, General Secretary Gorbachev described the war as "bitter and painful." In fact, evidence from a variety of sources indicates that domestic concern about the war has been growing and increasingly coloring Moscow's views about its staying power in Afghanistan. The political and social pressures generated by the war have clearly influenced the Soviet leadership's deliberations on the critical issue of the timing and nature of any Soviet withdrawal.

Growing Debate, Polarization

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the attitude of the Soviet elite has changed from moderate support to concern about the war's human and societal costs. Although the Soviet populace, especially the Russians, has always demonstrated some ambivalence about the "burden of empire," no foreign involvement in recent years has received as much public attention as Afghanistan. In our view, there seems to be a correlation between a more open discussion of the war as a result of the growing number of Afghan veterans—now over 500,000—and the strengthening of both support for and opposition to the conflict's continuation.

Because Moscow has limited its reporting of Soviet losses, Soviet citizens must rely on anecdotal reporting, which overestimates the number of casualties. Rumors of 100,000-plus losses may have contributed to a growing polarization of the urban, educated portions of Soviets over the issue of the war:

- Public opinion polls [redacted] suggest that those who disapproved of the war increased from 25 to 40 percent between 1984 and 1987, while those who favored it increased from 24 to 33 percent. Those who had no clear opinion about the war correspondingly dropped from 51 to 27 percent during the same period.
- A survey [redacted] shows growing dissatisfaction with the war among the Soviet elite. Interviews with more than 50 Westerners who had contact with Soviet officials and intellectuals in 1986 found that 48 percent of party and government

apparatchiks and 66 percent of the intelligentsia disapproved of the war. Some 23 percent of officials and 50 percent of intellectuals also said the war was "shameful."

Repercussions of the War

The war has intensified some societal and health problems. Returning combat veterans have spread infectious diseases—especially hepatitis—and drug usage into Soviet military units and civilian society. [redacted] suggests that most soldiers in Afghanistan experiment with various types of drugs and at least 10 percent returned addicted to hashish. In addition, there are rumors that Afghan veterans have spread AIDS in the USSR.

Chronic corruption in the military induction process has been exacerbated by the war and is now an important target of the anticorruption campaign. Despite the reduction of draft deferments after 1985, draft evasion remains a serious problem. A senior Estonian official reportedly was arrested in July 1987 for accepting bribes from conscripts seeking to avoid service in Afghanistan. Since mid-1986, *Pravda* and the Komsomol (Young Communist League) press in several non-Russian republics have reported incidents of bribery by parents to ensure that their sons do not serve in Afghanistan. Draft evasion is feeding popular resentment of elite groups, who are better able to bribe their children out of military service.

The Afghan war has sparked at least 15 major demonstrations in the USSR since mid-1984. These protests suggest that sentiment against the war is greatest in, but not confined to, non-Russian areas. Samizdat (dissident publications) from the Baltic states and western Ukraine indicate that opposition is intense because the war is perceived as a manifestation of Russian imperialism. In addition, [redacted] indicate that opposition to the war and the trend toward polarization are now more pronounced in the non-Russian republics. By 1986 over half the Balts [redacted] and more than 35 percent of all Ukrainians, Belorussians, Central Asians, and Caucasians, did not support the war. In the Islamic republics, the Sovietized elites apparently support the war, while many younger intellectuals—with access to foreign radiobroadcasts—and much of the more traditional population identify with the Afghan resistance.

Gorbachev's Agenda

By intensifying problems of corruption, narcotics abuse, and nationality relations, the war has complicated Gorbachev's efforts to form a new "social contract" with the Soviet people. In early 1987 the General Secretary reportedly compared a settlement on Afghanistan to Lenin's Peace of Brest Litovsk in 1918—when the Soviet leader prevailed in a fierce intraparty struggle and ceded 30 percent of Russia's economic wealth in order to consolidate Soviet power. The comparison suggests Gorbachev's view of the war's liability as well as his assessments of the degree of political difficulty in terminating it.

Gorbachev's speech at the 27th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party on his agenda for domestic reform, which referred to the war as a "bleeding wound," implicitly sanctioned a more honest debate on the costs of the war and declared that Moscow wanted to withdraw soon. His most recent remarks suggest a genuine intent to do so on the best possible terms.

Considerations

Turnover in the Politburo since the 1979 invasion has given Gorbachev a freer hand in making a fresh assessment of policy toward Afghanistan. Of the current full Politburo members, only President Gromyko and Ukrainian leader Shcherbitskiy were full members in 1979; most of the Politburo members today bear no direct responsibility for the invasion. They probably can portray a policy shift on Afghanistan as part of an overall repudiation of Brezhnev's legacy in foreign and domestic policy.

At the same time, some key leaders today tend to assess the impact of the war differently from Gorbachev. "Second Secretary" Ligachev and KGB Chairman Chebrikov are probably among those most likely to have reservations about the impact within the USSR of any compromise settlement. [redacted] Ligachev believes that a lack of success in Afghanistan would intensify nationalist activities in Central Asia [redacted]

[redacted]

Among the older generation of officials there appears to be a widely shared belief that the USSR should never contract its military perimeter. Moreover, party officials in the Central Committee from the regions

bordering Afghanistan—much like the general public—probably are concerned about the specter of anarchy in Afghanistan that could follow a Soviet withdrawal.

The Soviet military may also have significant reservations about what will be certainly perceived by many as a military defeat if Moscow should withdraw its forces without guaranteeing the survival of a Communist regime. While the lack of tactical success has led to recriminations, and some segments question continued involvement in Afghanistan, the Soviet military has probably supported remaining in Afghanistan. The war has provided opportunities for testing and evaluating Soviet tactics and equipment. It will be psychologically hard for the military to accept the costs of the war as having been for naught and to be proved "wrong" in the initial assessment that the war was winnable.

The KGB may be more ambivalent. Because it is tasked with keeping tabs on the Soviet population and controlling dissent and public dissatisfaction, it has been deeply involved in monitoring antiwar activism and may have a better idea of the war's adverse impact on regime credibility. From the outset of the war, elements of the KGB's First Chief (Foreign Intelligence) Directorate apparently doubted that the war was worth the human or material cost to the Soviet Union. Local offices of the KGB in Central Asia and the Fifth (Antidissident) Directorate, however, probably share concerns about the spillover of Islamic fundamentalism from Afghanistan into Soviet Central Asia.

Outlook

Historically, the Soviets displayed an ability to stay the course as long as they viewed the gains outweighing the costs, but Gorbachev's statement suggests he may no longer see the war that way. The regime has never ignored public opinion altogether and Gorbachev, more than his predecessors, seems to believe mobilizing public support is important to the success of his overall program. The USSR appears to have crossed a threshold in its policy toward Afghanistan, and the domestic stresses caused by the war have evidently contributed to a reevaluation of political and diplomatic solutions eschewed only recently

A negotiated solution that resulted in a staged withdrawal of Soviet troops and the survival of a pro-Soviet Afghan government for some period of time undoubtedly would strengthen Gorbachev's domestic position. It

would enhance his popularity and help him to elicit support for his broader political agenda among key elites. It also would burnish the image of Soviet foreign policy and Gorbachev's authority as a statesman. These pluses would compensate for some adverse effects on Gorbachev's relations with the military and the KGB, as well as on those Soviet officials who believe that Gorbachev should "tough it out" to prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism.

A withdrawal from Afghanistan that led to a quick collapse of Moscow's Afghan client would almost certainly raise tensions between the leadership and the military, the KGB and some other elites. Gorbachev is under pressure to protect Soviet equities in Afghanistan, and opinions from various elites are likely to pressure him against totally abandoning the Afghan Communists to the Mujahedin. The Soviet leader presumably realizes that such a pullout would prove embarrassing to the military, the security forces, the party apparatus, and even much of the general population. Senior Soviet officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the party, and the Komsomol have up until recently told Western interlocutors that the USSR cannot be seen as abandoning its Afghan ally—as the United States did with South Vietnam. Nevertheless, Gorbachev's recent speech on withdrawal suggests that he has hammered out a Politburo consensus to run the risk of such an eventuality.

We believe that Gorbachev's announcement of prospective dates for a withdrawal—while designed to win the Kremlin the best terms possible—makes the indefinite maintenance of the status quo in Afghanistan less tenable domestically. The continuation of the protracted conflict would have an increasingly corrosive effect on Soviet society now that Gorbachev has made clear his determination to exit. By failing to end "Brezhnev's war" now, Gorbachev would risk alienating those who identify the war with his predecessor's period of misrule and look to him as one who is charting a new course for the country. He would be hard pressed to deflect public expectations of bringing the troops home. Efforts to shift the blame to the Mujahedin, Pakistan, and the United States—if a settlement proves elusive—would not offset the major disappointment among the Soviet public if the war were to drag on. In fact, by going public, and raising domestic and international expectations, Gorbachev has made it increasingly difficult for any would-be domestic opponents to reverse field and argue for a long-term continued presence of Soviet troops.

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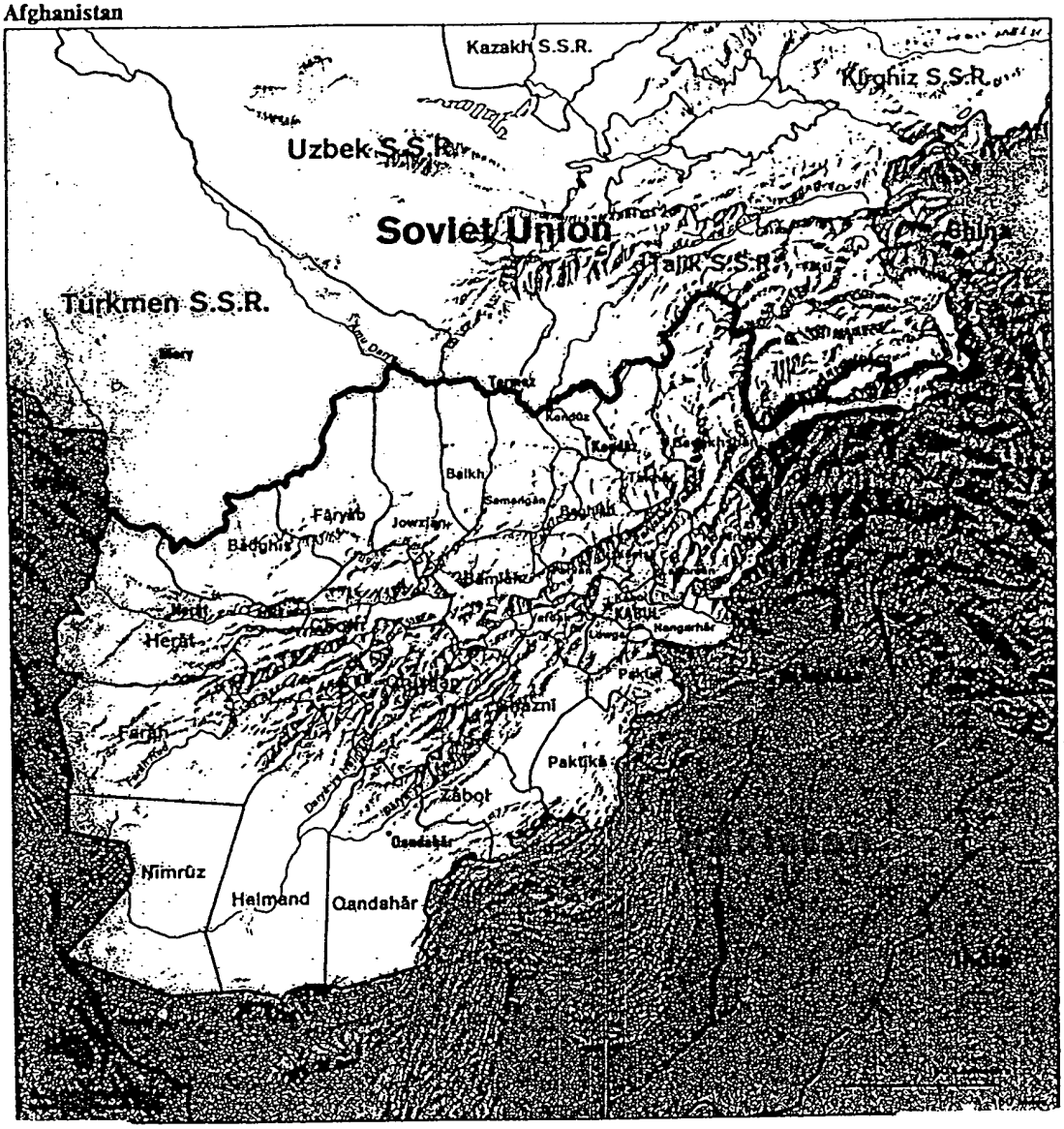
Scope Note

General Secretary Gorbachev's 8 February announcement of a decision to begin the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan within two months of a Geneva accord suggested a determination to end Moscow's military involvement in a "bitter and painful" conflict. This study investigates the domestic background that has clearly influenced Soviet deliberations by outlining growing public polarization and dissatifaction with the war. It also provides an analysis of elite sentiment—including sources of concern over a pullout among the military, police, and some party leaders—which Gorbachev has had to consider and which might constrain his flexibility or be used against him politically should Moscow's clients in Afghanistan fail to survive the withdrawal of 115,000 Soviet troops. The paper does not attempt to deal in depth with the military situation in Afghanistan or the economic costs of the war, which have been addressed in earlier publications.

Afghanistan



USSR: Domestic Fallout From the Afghan War

Does Soviet Public Opinion About the War Matter?

The regime has good reason to be concerned about negative public attitudes toward Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, which has dragged on for over eight years. Keeping Soviet young men out of foreign wars and providing the population with the security it values so highly have been major sources of regime legitimacy; the war in Afghanistan has weakened these props to the system. Moscow's involvement in the war has also damaged the aura of foreign policy successes that, since World War II, has enhanced the regime's image of power and invincibility among the Soviet public.

Public opinion in the Soviet Union takes much longer to crystallize and has less of an immediate impact on regime behavior than in Western democratic societies. The Soviet system lacks institutional channels through which public opinion can directly be brought to bear on official policy; the regime has greater resources to repress dissent and fewer constraints against doing so. Historically, the USSR has shown an ability to stay the course in implementing policies as viewed in the regime's interests even when they have produced enormous distress for the Soviet population. Nevertheless, the regime has never ignored public opinion altogether and cannot afford to do so today. Public opinion has had a significant influence at some critical junctures in the past, and Gorbachev has demonstrated a greater sensitivity than his predecessors to the relationship between public morale and the vitality and stability of the economic and political system.

Public Opinion Polls

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, Soviet public opinion on the war has changed from grudging support to growing concern about the war's human and societal costs. A variety of sources have noted that public support for the Afghan war began to decline in late 1982, and a shift in perception began to be more clearly manifested in 1984. Evidence from a number of polls, reinforced by reporting by Western journalists and diplomats, indicates that Soviet society is increasingly divided in its attitudes toward the war.

Our knowledge of public attitude toward the war was long hampered by the lack of comprehensive sociological research and public opinion polling. Initially, a handful of unscientific polls based on narrow samples and conducted by opponents of the war, who had surreptitiously surveyed public opinion, were the only ones available. Not surprisingly, these polls tended to show a great degree of public opposition to the war.

they suggest that in the past three years public opinion on Afghanistan has become polarized and opposition to the war is increasing:

- Between 1984 and 1987, the number of people with "no firm opinion" about the war has decreased from 51 percent to 27 percent.
- In the same period, the number of people opposed to the war increased from 25 percent in 1984 to approximately 40 percent in 1987, while those supporting their government's policy increased less dramatically, from 24 to 33 percent. Furthermore, "strong disapproval" of the regime's Afghan policy increased from 9 to 14 percent overall, while "strong approval" dropped from 14 to 13 percent overall.

In some key segments of society, majority opinion evidently has come to favor a withdrawal from Afghanistan. [redacted] a project to determine the attitudes of Soviet officials and intellectuals [redacted] found that 66 percent of the intellectuals disapproved of the war and 50 percent found Soviet action in Afghanistan "shameful." Moreover, one scientific poll taken in Moscow last summer indicated most residents of the capital city now oppose the war. The poll, a random telephone survey of 1,100 Muscovites between the ages of 18 and 65 and conducted by a Franco-Soviet sociological team for a French newspaper, found 53 percent favored a withdrawal of Soviet troops and only 27 percent felt troops should remain in Afghanistan.

The Soviet Intelligentsia

Evidence from samizdat publications circulated among the intelligentsia over the past three years suggests that the turn in public opinion reflects growing concern over the cost of the war. Reporting from a variety of [redacted] sources, in turn, suggests that many intellectuals are especially concerned about casualties and the long-term effect of the brutal counterinsurgency. According to [redacted] nuclear physicists at Novosibirsk and its satellite science city, Akademgorodok, felt that the Soviet Union should withdraw because of the human cost of the war. The widely circulated samizdat publication, *Manifesto of the Movement for Social Renewal*, stated, "For the first time in the history of the Soviet state, the Soviet armed forces are conducting in Afghanistan an undeclared and hopeless war which brings glory neither to the Soviet Union nor its armed forces." According to [redacted] these concerns may be reinforced by the perception of many intellectuals that Soviet youth is increasingly being polarized into "hippy/pacifists" and "nationalistic thugs."

A few members of the literary intelligentsia, who had not previously spoken out against the war, seem to have been emboldened by *glasnost* to admit their opposition. The poet Yevgeniy Yevtushenko told a Western journalist in late 1987 that he had drafted an antiwar poem in the early 1980s, but had earlier refrained from publishing it because of its potential use by Western intelligence services. Gorbachev's decision to release Andrei Sakharov, who was sentenced to years of internal exile in Gor'kiy for his opposition to Soviet intervention in 1979, has also probably been an important factor in increasing debate on the war

Younger members of the intelligentsia who have served in Afghanistan are now publicly discussing the war and its impact on Soviet society. At an informal seminar at the Leningrad Youth Palace in December 1987 attended by a US diplomat, a group of intellectuals—approximately 30 of whom were veterans—openly discussed casualties, the effect of war on the army, and their Afghan "allies."

These men see the Afghan war as bleeding Russia and wasting national resources in a war not in the vital interests of the motherland at a time when human and material resources must be conserved to revitalize the country. For example, a recent manifesto of Pamyat, a conservative nationalist association, demanded that the "instigators" of the Afghan war be put on trial. A samizdat version of the purported text of the speech by former Moscow Party boss Boris Yeltsin—a hero to many reform intellectuals—included a call for Soviet troop withdrawal as soon as possible, probably reflecting the prevailing mood among Moscow's intellectual community.

Like the general population, the intelligentsia is not unified on the Afghanistan issue[redacted]

[redacted] that many members of the Writers' Union have wholeheartedly supported the regime's policy in Afghanistan. More extreme nationalist writers such as Aleksandr Prokhanov, who styles himself as the "Soviet Kipling," tend to see the war as an important test for Russia. They glorify the Russian "mission" to civilize Central Asia, and much of their writing has a strong racist character. At the May 1987 conference of the Writers' Union, Prokhanov excoriated writers who knew nothing of the war in Afghanistan. His speech was strongly seconded by the deputy chief of the Main Political Directorate of the Armed Forces, Col. Gen. Dmitriy Volkogonov, who described the pacifistic writings of the liberal intelligentsia as "political vegetarianism."

Prokhanov's short stories and novels glorify the role of the Soviet soldier fighting in Afghanistan and argue that war is better than peace, because in peacetime Soviet society and military "degenerated." Other exponents of military intervention are having a similar impact by publishing articles, poems, novels, and even children's stories about the exploits of Russian soldiers. Although many of the stories are potboilers, Soviet statistics indicate they have a wide readership.

Growing Concern Over Casualties

Of the over 500,000 Soviet soldiers who have served in Afghanistan, the Intelligence Community estimates that 35,000 have been wounded and more than 12,000 killed. The regime has never disclosed official casualty figures, however, and [redacted] from a variety of sources strongly suggests that Soviet citizens believe the number of Soviet casualties is much higher than the US estimate:

- A senior official of the USSR Procuracy Office reportedly said in a 1985 speech that the Soviet Union lost 15,000 killed annually in Afghanistan.
- [redacted] in 1986 that over 150,000 Soviet soldiers had died in Afghanistan, the majority from cold and exposure.
- [redacted] that the Soviet Union had suffered approximately 25,000 killed and 63,000 wounded.
- At a meeting of the Leningrad Writers' Club in November 1987, a member of the audience asked a party lecturer why it had been necessary to suffer the loss of 100,000 young men in Afghanistan.
- At the December 1987 seminar of Soviet intellectuals, one former soldier claimed that the Soviet Union had suffered 150,000 killed and 350,000 wounded.

Other evidence makes clear that Soviet casualties in Afghanistan have become a cause of serious concern to the Soviet public and the Soviet elite:

- Last May[redacted] "We are losing in Afghanistan . . . you may believe that public opinion is meaningless, but the question of casualties is causing considerable concern."
- [redacted] casualties were a major source of public dissatisfaction.

Antiwar Demonstrations, 1984-87

1984	
Kazan', RSFSR	*, following military funerals, a mob of Tatars burned draft board building.*
Kuybyshev, RSFSR	*mob burned draft board building in protest against war.*
Riga, Latvia	*riots at the city draft board by mothers protesting deaths of their sons in Afghanistan.*
Termez, Uzbekistan	*major riot at draft board . . . troops called to maintain order . . . violence spread to other villages in southern Uzbekistan.*
1985	
Yerevan, Armenia	*journalists reported demonstrations at draft board.*
Tbilisi, Georgia	*demonstrations at draft board . . . hundreds involved.*
Kalinin, RSFSR	*Riot started by mother protesting regime's refusal to return son's body for burial . . . 500 reported involved, according to samizdat account.*
Stanitsiya Beslan, Severo-Osetin ASSR	*Riot by draftees protesting service in Afghanistan . . s demonstration supressed by regular troops.*
Moscow	*demonstration at cemetery by mothers of soldiers killed in war.*
Khar'kov, Ukraine	*Samizdat reports public self-immolation of mother whose son perished in combat . . . suicide followed by riot.*
Astrakhan', RSFSR	*Samizdat reported a major demonstration by Chechen conscripts . . . sources report several draftees killed in violence.*
Ul'yanovsk, RSFSR	*A worker sabotaged weapons consigned to Soviet army in Afghanistan . . . dissident sentenced to term in asylum.*
Mary, Turkmen SSR	
1986	
Ashkhabad, Turkmen SSR	*major riot at draft board by young draftees.*
1987	
Moscow	*public protest by five to 10 demonstrators on eighth anniversary of Soviet invasion.*
Leningrad	*two demonstrations by 20 to 30 protesters on anniversary of invasion.*

• [redacted] casualties were a divisive issue and that the most frequently asked question at his lectures was: "Why didn't we do something in Afghanistan before blood was shed?"

Out of a desire to avoid provoking public indignation over casualties, the regime has taken extraordinary measures to minimize public knowledge about the dead and wounded. For example, [redacted] public anger with the war had caused the Soviet authorities in 1985 to discontinue bringing back the bodies of local men killed in Afghanistan. Also, special hospitals were reportedly created in Central Asia for those severely handicapped or mangled in the war, at least in part to keep them out of view.

Such measures have created considerable resentment. Over the last year or so, Soviet media have begun to carry stories revealing cases of callous treatment of stricken families:

- One father reported being incredulous when the party and military officials who came to his home to inform him of his soldier son's death were accompanied by the police, who instructed him to hold a low-keyed funeral.
- In November 1987, a party official writing in *Pravda* noted that it was only recently that the authorities had finally allowed parents to enscribe on their sons' tombstones that they had died in Afghanistan.
- Another article noting bureaucratic insensitivity concluded that, by hiding the losses of the war, "we are depriving our children (of a heritage) . . . as if admitting to some kind of mistake . . . and may be the indifference to the fate of these kids flourishes because we do not speak aloud of their deeds."
- In a clear response to such sentiments and concerns, Gorbachev in his 8 February statement proclaimed that "the memory of those who have died a hero's death in Afghanistan is sacred to us." He went on to stress the intent of authorities to take care of bereaved families

Signs of Increased Social Strain Over the War

Increased dissatisfaction with the war has also been manifested in an intensification of a number of Soviet societal problems and the aggravation of political tensions in the non-Russian republics. Since early 1986, the Soviet media have provided somewhat more frank information about some of these war-related domestic problems.

Antiwar Demonstrations and Political Activism

Immediately following Soviet intervention, there were reports of a select number of small demonstrations against the war in the non-Russian republics. Between 1980 and 1982 news of nine such demonstrations reached the West.

Antiwar sentiment has apparently caused greater political violence in the past four years. In 1984, reports of political opposition at scattered locations in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Russian Republic grew dramatically (as did military casualties in the ill-fated Panjsher Valley and Paktia Province offenses). Although some demonstrations have been peaceful and involved only a few dozen people, others have degenerated into bloody riots that have been suppressed with a significant number of casualties.

Since mid-1984, there have been reports of at least 15 major antiwar demonstrations in the Soviet Union. According to samizdat, there have also been a number of carefully orchestrated peace vigils as well as instances of disseminating antiwar literature:

• [redacted] in late 1986 that several peace activists had painted antiwar graffiti in Moscow condemning Soviet intervention.

Although antiwar sentiment has not generated any coordinated opposition such as the network of human rights organizations of the early 1970s, evidence from

a variety of sources suggests that antiwar political groups have been formed at several locations in the USSR:

- In August 1987, a United Opposition Party was formed by an "alliance" of nonparty intellectuals in Leningrad. Its initial manifesto called for an end to the war in Afghanistan because of the loss of life. This group staged a demonstration in October, during which an Orthodox priest held a sign denouncing the war.

- In early 1987, [redacted] an underground antiwar movement had recently been organized to speak out against the war in Afghanistan. [redacted] "While this underground movement is not antigovernment, it is beginning to speak out and propagate slogans that are critical of continued Soviet involvement in Afghanistan."

- An [redacted] a group of intellectuals in Moscow had founded an antiwar group in the winter of 1986-87 to discuss the war. She reported that they had invited her to a meeting of their circle and to meet with veterans. She also reported that many of the members of the circle were children of senior officials and important intellectuals.

- The dissident peace circle, The Group to Establish Trust Between the USSR and the USA, periodically reiterates its call for the immediate and total withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Since 1980, several of its members have been imprisoned for refusing to serve in the military and for other pacifist activities.

Contacts between antiwar groups appear minimal. Antiwar activists continue to be harassed by the authorities, prosecuted for previous membership in these still proscribed organizations, and threatened with conscription. For example, two Soviet pacifists—one of whom is blind in one eye—were taken to the Moscow draft board in March 1987 and threatened with induction.

Evidence suggests that the security services even under Gorbachev have been tough on peace activists in the non-Russian republics. Several Central Asians who were sentenced to forced labor camps in the early 1980s for protesting the war have subsequently been sent to harsher labor camps, [redacted] Furthermore, according to recent Soviet samizdat, several Muslim religious leaders in Central Asia, who are reported to have been actively antiwar, were arrested in the summer of 1987.

Youth Alienation

There is evidence that, at least in major urban centers, a high percentage of Soviet youth are passively opposed to the war and cynical about military service:

- In the Soviet movie *Is It Easy To Be Young?*, one young veteran of the war states, "The feeling will remain with me that I have been involved in something dirty, something not really human." Another veteran tells a friend that he is ashamed to wear medals from service in Afghanistan, adding, "War doesn't make you mature, it makes you old."

- In Moscow [redacted] to avoid the draft he would fake suicide and spend a little time in a psychiatric hospital. "The army is a waste of time," he explained. "The army makes people stupid."

- According to an article in a Central Asian Komsomol newspaper last fall, several youths objected to service in Afghanistan doubting that "it was necessary to go to a foreign country for heroism."

The regime is clearly sensitive about negative attitudes toward the war among the young, especially at a time when Gorbachev is making a major effort to persuade Soviet young people that their interests are compatible with, rather than at odds with, those of the regime. Over the last several years, senior regime spokesmen—including Defense Minister Dmitriy

Yazov—have expressed concerns [redacted] and publicly that patriotism has weakened, and several high-level military spokesmen have decried with unusual fervor the growth of pacifist tendencies among the young. During the US-USSR television program broadcast from a secondary school in Moscow, a student's reported remarks—"My brother died in Afghanistan. I am willing to die for my country, but not someone else's."—were censored.

Draft Dodging and Class Tensions

The war in Afghanistan has exacerbated chronic corruption in the military induction process. Those who can afford it frequently bribe their way out of duty in Afghanistan or out of military service entirely. The price of avoiding Afghan service is high, ranging from 500 to 2,000 rubles.

Since many ordinary citizens cannot raise such large sums, much of the population correctly believes it is the "common people" who are bearing the brunt of the fighting:

- In an article last fall in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, the author noted that the majority of the soldiers in Afghanistan were the "children of workers and peasants." A party official admitted in *Pravda* last December that few children of the elite served in Afghanistan.

- In letters to the Ukrainian-language Komsomol newspaper, a mother of two soldiers noted that the burden of service in Afghanistan fell on the working class and that she doubted whether any of the children of the "bosses" were serving in the war zone, and another Ukrainian noted that children of the elite in one oblast served as guards in military museums.

Gorbachev evidently believes it is necessary to combat the ordinary citizens' resentment of privilege in the highly stratified Soviet political and social system in order to overcome widespread popular alienation from the regime and to mobilize grassroots support for his policies. To this end he has touted the principle of "social justice," which is taken to mean greater equality of burden sharing, including military service. Accordingly, harsh measures have been taken against those trafficking in deferments:

- Former Uzbek First Secretary Usmankhodzhayev in February 1987 stated that "hundreds of Komsomol members had been prosecuted for draft dodging" during the previous two years, and acknowledged that those avoiding conscription had increased "significantly" in the past five years.

- The Russian-language press in Kazakhstan reported that senior party officials had been dismissed from their positions and others are facing prosecution for purchasing deferments for their children.

- An official of the Estonian procuracy told a [redacted] in July that the chief of the Estonian draft board, a member of the Estonian party Central Committee, had been arrested for accepting bribes of 1,000 rubles for deferments to avoid service in Afghanistan. *Krasnaya Zvezda* admitted in October that the draft board chief was guilty of mismanaging the board.

Despite these moves, the Soviet regional media, including the military press, and intelligence reporting have noted that draft dodging remains a serious problem. [redacted] recently reported, for example, that draft deferments still can be purchased illegally from corrupt medical officers at draft boards.

Moreover, educational deferments still enable many elites to protect their sons. In 1981 and again in 1985 university deferments were restricted somewhat. But in the spring of 1987, a new system of deferments was proposed to exempt science students from conscription. To the extent that children of the elite have continued to evade the draft, the war contributes to undermining the credibility of Gorbachev's "social justice" claims

The Veterans Problem

The more than a half million Soviet soldiers who have served in Afghanistan, known as *Afgantsi*, and their families pose an additional social problem. Those veterans who survive, like the American veterans of Vietnam, return home without the benefits of parades or popular acclaim. The question of veterans' rights as well as their reintegration into Soviet society have become issues that the Gorbachev regime has had to confront.

Most veterans share a feeling that their sacrifices have not been appreciated by their countrymen judging by the Soviet media. On Soviet television last February, a veteran in his early twenties told a sympathetic interviewer how he was received with hostility even by World War II veterans, one of whom asked how he dared to wear medals "from that war." One story in the Ukrainian Komsomol paper (republished in *Pravda*) reported that a doctor told a legless veteran requesting assistance, "I didn't send you to Afghanistan." Stories in the provincial press indicate other wounded veterans have committed suicide after being refused basic services.

Veterans appear to have little in common with their peers who remained safely at home. Many veterans have developed very conservative social and political attitudes and regard their contemporaries as an unpatriotic lot immersed in hedonism and lacking in discipline. This difference in outlook has led to friction:

- Soviet nonconformist youth, who were passing a petition requesting a pardon for the West German pilot who flew to Red Square, told [redacted] that they were fed up with Afghan veterans, for whom they obviously had no respect. The sentiment was apparently returned in kind by veterans, who reportedly roamed the city beating up nonconformists.

- In the newspaper of Latvian State University, a student journalist reported that veterans could not understand "the animosity, the indifference, the rudeness, the squabbles, the hissing comments: 'we have seen you Afghan types'."

Antiwar Poetry in the War Zone

Poems found in the journal of a 19-year-old conscript from Kirov killed in fighting mirror the low morale of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan:

Our so brief time flies quickly by,
And no one seems aware—
Ask our young soldiers of their lot
And be prepared to hear them swear

Take heed, young lad, the day will come
When soldiers this land 'round
Hear one command, that sweet refrain—
You're homeward, homeward bound.

Other underground lyrics more directly challenge the official explanations for the war:

Not on the Mamaev Hill [Stalingrad]
Not for Rostov, not for Kalad.
My friend died in Afghanistan
He died without glory as an executioner.

It's the fault of the Kremlin elders
That their shameful war goes on
And those who don't agree—are imprisoned
This is what my country stands for.

- *Komsomolskaya Pravda* noted last April that some letters to the editor from veterans "essentially call for lynch law," while others register depression about the corruption of Soviet society and the failure of the authorities to crack down on social disorders.

Venting pent-up frustration over how they have been received at home and hostility toward what they see as a trend toward social disintegration, some veterans have banded together in extralegal vigilante organizations in several cities in the RSFSR and the Ukraine.

These groups, which have attacked black-marketeers, prostitutes, and hippies, are part of a broader movement among nationalistic Soviet youth against Westernized culture

Afgantsi have also staged a number of demonstrations, which the regime seems increasingly reluctant to disrupt with force. According to two separate sources, in 1982 former paratroopers who served in Afghanistan—some in uniform—marched down one of Moscow's busiest streets chanting, "Long live the military dictatorship." During the past two years, authorized demonstrations have been reported in several cities, including Donetsk and Leningrad [redacted] reported that in Leningrad the police detained two people who protested the veterans' "fascism" but allowed the veterans' demonstration to continue through the main streets of the Soviet Union's second city

Soviet officials may be concerned that brutalizing experiences in Afghanistan have made many veterans prone to violence. Soviet deserters have reported that, during so-called punitive missions against Afghan villages suspected of assisting partisans, Soviet troops engaged in veritable rampages of indiscriminate killing that they believe have a profound psychological impact on young conscripts. The Russian ruling class has traditionally been apprehensive about latent violent tendencies in the population at large, and Soviet elites may fear that Afghan veterans are less easily intimidated by police control measures than most Soviet citizens, and that their protests have the potential of getting out of hand

Over the past several years, and especially since Gorbachev's succession, the regime has taken a number of steps intended to defuse the veterans issue. In his recent statement, he praised their "self-denial and heroism" and endorsed priority treatment in education and in the work force. Articles in the central press indicate Moscow is pressuring provincial and state organs to restructure their treatment of veterans, and in August the Ukrainian press announced that a number of rayon-level officials had been punished for "callous, formal bureaucratic" treatment of disabled veterans. In the fall of 1987, monuments for Afghan veterans were established in Dushanbe and Moscow, and in early November Moscow announced the formation of a national veterans' organization.

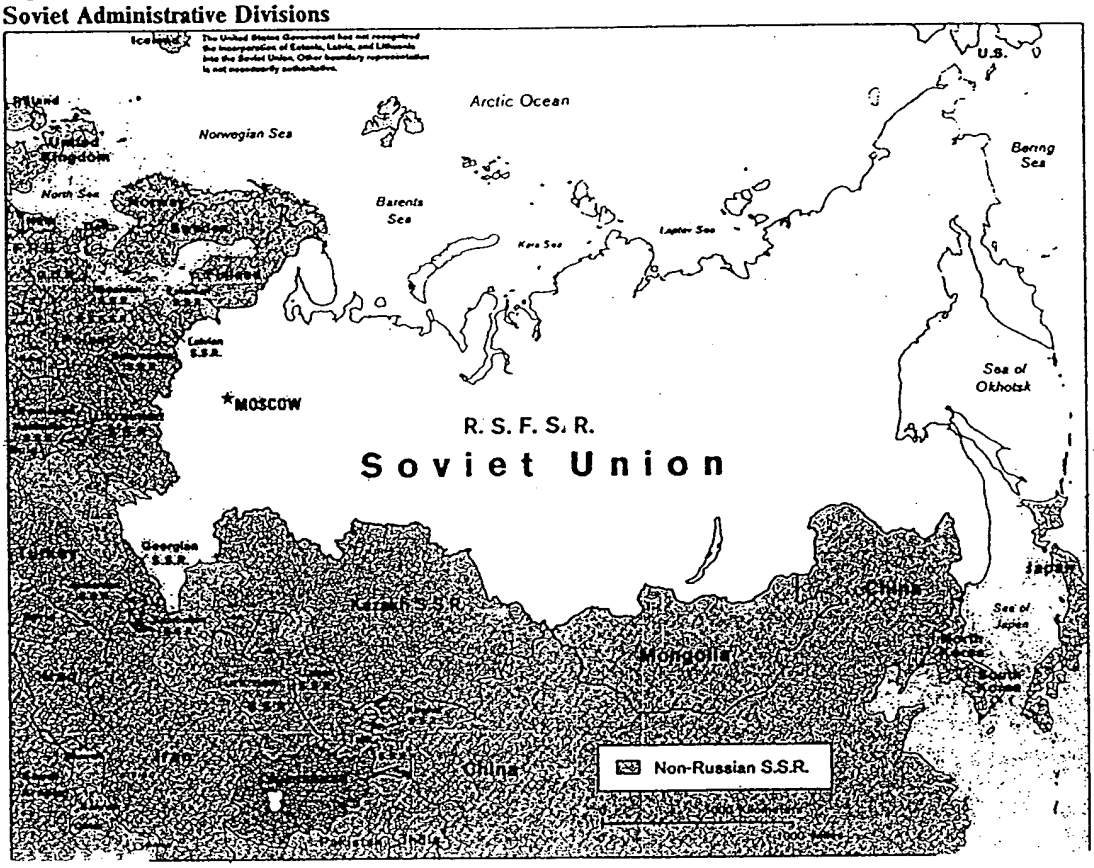
Preferential treatment of veterans is resented by many Soviet citizens, however, who do not welcome the creation of yet another privileged group whose benefits come at the expense of the average man. At a public lecture in December, for example, a party lecturer's attack on special educational benefits for Afghan veterans was applauded by some students in attendance. Furthermore, some employers would rather not hire veterans because they are entitled to various job-related privileges. As the size of the veterans population increases, the perceived burden on society will increase and tensions will probably grow.

Nationality Problems

The greatest societal problem for the regime in dealing with the Afghan war may be its effect on the non-Russian minorities, many of whom are frustrated with the implicit pro-Russian tilt of many of Gorbachev's policies: democratization and *glasnost* have gone further for Russians; regional development priorities have favored Slavic areas; the anticorruption drive has hit hardest in the non-Russian areas; and a pro-Russian bias has been seen in Gorbachev's personnel appointments. Overall, the non-Russian population appears more critical of the regime's Afghan policy, although local elites in Central Asia evidently have become more supportive of the war, perhaps because of the threat to their authority posed by instability in their backyard

[redacted] opposition to the war and the trend toward polarization are even more pronounced in all the non-Russian republics. By 1986, over half the Balts surveyed and more than 35 percent of all Ukrainians, Belorussians, Central Asians, and Caucasians did not support the war.

Figure 2
Soviet Administrative Divisions



The Western Republics. Ukrainian and Baltic samizdat provide substantial information about opposition to the war. Many Balts and Ukrainians probably see the war as another round of Russian imperial aggression.

Information from samizdat indicates that Balts and Ukrainians believe they are providing a disproportionate number of soldiers to fight what they see as a Russian war. In the Baltic areas, demographic factors may heighten concern about casualties. Since families are small, the death of a son usually means the end of a family line. Casualties in Afghanistan are seen as depleting the indigenous nationalities in the Baltic republics, which already are experiencing less than zero population growth, and making it harder for them to retain separate identity and resist Russification pressures:

- An article in Ukrainian religious samizdat described local casualties in Afghanistan as "gains for Moscow—losses for Ukraine." Giving equal emphasis to national as well as moral aspects, the author noted, "Ukrainians do not wish either to fight, nor do they want this unjust war."

Figure 3

- Estonian intellectuals told a [redacted] that Estonian casualties had been high and that many veterans had returned emotionally scarred and inclined to violence.

- Baltic samizdat has repeatedly called for youths to refuse service in Afghanistan, viewing a sentence in the Gulag as preferable. One underground Lithuanian publication recommended in late 1985 that Lithuanians refuse service in the war zone, to avoid "being cowardly tools of the occupying power." Other Estonian samizdat notes that "Ukranians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, themselves oppressed, are obligated to fulfill the brutal orders of Russian officers and spill their own and Afghan blood.'

Caucasian Republics. Protests in Yerevan and Tbilisi in 1985 [redacted] suggest that Georgian and Armenian nationalists also oppose the war. [redacted], an Armenian Communist noted that the war had strained relations between Armenians and Russians. [redacted] cnoted rising Russian-Georgian tensions as a result of the war

There is also increasing evidence of opposition in the heavily Muslim northern Caucasus and Azerbaijan:

- [redacted] recently told US Government officials that antiwar sentiment among Aseri intellectuals had increased.

- According to samizdat, Aseri resistance increased in the mid-1980s because of popular concern about casualties.

- [redacted] in the late 1980s both Christian and Muslim Osetiyans who live in the mountains of the Georgian republic felt a kinship for the Afghan Mujahedin [redacted] in February 1985, a company of Osetiyan conscripts refused to serve in Afghanistan. The soldiers were later surrounded by a larger unit and arrested. After incarceration, they still ended up in Afghanistan.

Central Asia. Evidence from the [redacted] poll and from [redacted] indicates that the war has polarized public opinion more in Central Asia than in any other region. The 1986 poll indicated that support for the war there has increased markedly, while opposition has only grown marginally; those polled are almost evenly divided on the issue with few holding no opinion on the war.

Support for the war presumably is strongest among various local elites. This is most clearly the case with Central Asian political elites whose privileged positions depend on the maintenance of Soviet rule. But many other well-educated Central Asians—especially those in scientific and technical fields—probably believe that, despite flaws in the Soviet system and the inferior status of non-Slavs in it, continued association with the USSR is preferable to the alternative posed by the Islamic fundamentalists. Those who have satisfactory professional employment probably believe they have a personal stake in the continuation of Soviet rule; in a sense they have been co-opted into the system. Although nationality and religious differences persist, many believe the Soviet system is carrying out modernization that is desirable, and they fear what might happen if religious fanatics replaced the present government. These people clearly are repulsed by the violence of religious fundamentalists in Iran and among the Afghan insurgents. For example, [redacted] implicitly endorsing this world view, told [redacted] that in Afghanistan the "Soviet Union is bringing civilization to Afghanistan, a process which is meeting with resistance from the backward elements of society."

There is increasing evidence, however, that younger urban intellectuals in Central Asia as well as much of the traditional rural society apparently are either ambivalent or oppose the war. Reporting in the Soviet press, as well as [redacted] indicates growing interest in Islam and Islamic nationalism among these elements in Central Asia:

- Crimean Tatar samizdat from the mid-1980s contains expressions of support for the Mujahedin. Tatars in the 1970s and 1980s have played a role in the Islamic resurgence in Central Asia and have significant contacts with the Islamicized intelligentsia in Uzbekistan.

- According to [redacted] Soviet intervention in Afghanistan contributed to the renaissance of Islam and Islamic nationalism in the Soviet Union

Support for the insurgents in Central Asia seems strongest along the Afghan-Soviet border [redacted] last summer that there was widespread support for the Afghan insurgents among Tajiks. Mujahedin commanders since 1980 reportedly have periodically crossed the Soviet border into the Turkmen, Tajik, and Uzbek Republics to distribute religious material, collect money and food for their troops, and occasionally raid Soviet targets. For example, a [redacted] from Turkmenistan reported that posters inciting the Turkmen to drive out the Russians have been brought in illegally from Afghanistan. We can independently confirm four or five Mujahedin military raids against targets inside the Soviet Union, but sources close to the Mujahedin report there have been scores:

- In April, *Pravda* twice reported that Mujahedin attacks on civilian and military targets inside the USSR had caused Soviet casualties. [redacted] that there had been a number of such raids and that Soviet losses had been high.

- [redacted] in the spring of 1987 that 250 Soviet Tajiks crossed into Afghanistan to join the resistance and said that they wanted to learn how to fight Soviet troops to liberate Tajikstan eventually [redacted] the Tajiks had

Elite Edginess About Islamic Fundamentalism

Fear of the effect of Islamic fundamentalism on the five predominantly Muslim republics of Soviet Central Asia was reportedly one reason for Brezhnev's decision to intervene in 1979.

that concerns about the impact that the fundamentalism of Islamists in the Middle East could have on their coreligionists in the USSR was an important factor in the Kremlin's decision.

The spectre of Muslim activism inside the USSR probably makes it difficult for the Kremlin to withdraw. In 1982
and a published article by the Azerbaijan KGB chief revealed Moscow's belief that the United States could manipulate the Islamic fundamentalist movement against the USSR. These concerns may be accentuated by Mujahedin efforts to distribute propaganda and recruit fighters within the USSR.

The Soviet media and senior party officials have expressed continuing concern about the vulnerability of the southern tier to Muslim influences:

- *General Secretary Gorbachev in November 1986 demanded in a speech in Tashkent that the Central Asian parties purge themselves of closet Muslims. Since the speech, several senior Central Asian Communists have been purged because of what the Soviet press has claimed is "dual allegiance" to Islam and the CPSU.*
- *Gorbachev told a of his concern that Iran could instigate dissent in the Muslim republics.*
- *Since 1982, the number of articles on the KGB border guards on the southern frontier has increased in the central and regional press. On the eve of ethnic violence in Kazakhstan in December 1986, border guard commanders were excoriated for slipshod performance in preventing the infiltration of anti-Soviet material.*
- *In May 1987, a party official noted in Leningrad that the war in Afghanistan was causing "major difficulties" in Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, and Tajikistan.*
- *A June 1987 document summarizing Soviet propaganda policy noted Soviet concerns about the spread of fundamentalist Islam in Soviet Central Asia.*
- *some senior Soviet officials believed in mid-1987 that their country could not withdraw from Afghanistan because defeat would intensify Islamic fundamentalism in the southern republics.*
- *An editorial in the Uzbek Komsomol press last spring urged young men to ignore the pleas of "religious fanatics" not to serve in Afghanistan. The Tajik press has also carried articles noting the reluctance of young men to serve against their coreligionists in Afghanistan. A similar editorial in the Turkmen press reported that some youths were refusing to serve in the military because of the preaching of "reactionary" mullahs.*

been previously recruited by Afghan insurgent commander Ahmad Shah Masood and some had taken part in a raid against a Soviet border post.

a major clash took place near Mary in Turkmenistan between Soviet troops and Mujahedin in 1986. some Soviet Muslim conscripts joined the guerrillas.

The war also appears to have intensified dissatisfaction among Central Asian conscripts in the Soviet Ground Forces

indicate a few Soviet Muslims have gone over to the Mujahedin or have clandestinely provided the resistance with information.

a high level of discontent among Central Asian conscripts. Although brutal hazing by Russian "senior soldiers" and noncommissioned officers is an even greater source of disaffection than religious or national differences, the war is straining tensions in the multinational army. An Estonian veteran of the war noted that most of his Central Asian colleagues held a "blind hate" for European soldiers and officers.

Following the Alma Ata riots in December 1986, nationalist anti-Russian demonstrations may have taken place in Soviet garrisons in Afghanistan judging by the comments of an academic reporting on Soviet television about nationality problems.

Shortly after the Alma Ata riots, the Soviet military press reported that political officers in 40th Army units held special political meetings—that is, indoctrination sessions—to "discuss" the riots with the Kazakh troops, suggesting that tensions may have continued for some time.

Drug Abuse and AIDS

The link between the drug problem and the war also may be coloring public attitudes about involvement in Afghanistan and feeding popular concern about the emergence of AIDS as a significant problem.

suggest that in the war zone a majority of Soviet conscripts use drugs. Ministry of Interior officials have acknowledged publicly that large amounts of Afghan opiates and hashish are smuggled into the USSR. Some of the illicit drugs bound for the USSR are brought in by returning Soviet troops and security officials—a fact that Soviet officials now ruefully admit:

- In January 1988 a that a Soviet general had been arrested for smuggling drugs. Furthermore, last July, the Soviet press announced a senior MVD official in Turkmenistan had been jailed for 13 years for smuggling drugs into the USSR from Turkmenistan.

- in 1983 a Ministry of Defense investigation implicated 270 Soviet military personnel in a smuggling operation that involved drugs, hard currency, and gold.

- On several occasions during the period 1984-86, Soviet soldiers were prosecuted for smuggling drugs. in 1984-85 indicated that the KGB was investigating the smuggling of drugs into the USSR in military aircraft.

Both the security services and the military, as well as the party, consider the drug problem a serious embarrassment, if not a threat. After foreign customs officials discovered Afghan opiates and hashish on a number of Soviet aircraft and merchant vessels, Soviet security agencies have broadened their contacts with Western drug enforcement agencies.

Many Soviet citizens reportedly blame the war for turning their children into drug addicts that in Kiev many Ukrainians believe the majority of veterans are addicts. Our

information [redacted] may exaggerate the number of soldiers who have become addicted, [redacted] reported that one study found that 10 percent of the veterans used drugs after their demobilization.

Although we have no hard evidence about the incidence of AIDS among Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, there is a widespread public perception that AIDS is being spread inside the USSR by returning veterans. [redacted] rumors of a special military hospital in Central Asia for soldiers suffering from AIDS, and a party lecturer in Leningrad last May noted that there was growing public concern about the spread of AIDS by *Afgantsi*.

The threat of the spread of AIDS by Afghan veterans parallels popular concern about the spread of hepatitis, another highly infectious disease sometimes associated with AIDS. [redacted] the number of hepatitis cases among Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan is very high, and Soviet military statistics indicate the incidence of hepatitis in the Soviet 40th Army has increased seven-fold since 1979. A Soviet journalist noted that the public recognizes Afghan veterans by their jaundiced complexion, indicating the close association in popular thinking between the war and hepatitis.

Elite Perceptions of the War

Opinion within the political elite has a more direct bearing on regime policy decisions than sentiment among the population, although the views of many in the elite are partly molded by those factors. [redacted] the Soviet elite seems dismayed with both the cost of the war to the Soviet population and the loss of Soviet prestige abroad. [redacted] shows that the war is widely viewed as Brezhnev's war, part of his legacy of unresolved problems. Elite concern over the war is increasingly focused on its retarding effect on Gorbachev's ability to build a more positive image for the regime and to mobilize support for domestic reforms.

[redacted] since late 1985 indicates the Afghan issue has had greater saliency for the elite. Within the Soviet establishment, opinion is increasingly polarized between those who—while often regretting that the Soviet Union ever intervened—believe the continued prosecution of the war is necessary, and those who believe that finding a quick political solution to the war is essential.

The Party

The party itself has not been immune from the debate affecting the general populace and the intelligentsia. [redacted] splits within the party on Afghanistan, as well as on other broader security questions. Furthermore, discussions of the human cost of the conflict as well as youth opposition to it are appearing more frequently in the Komsomol press and suggest that similar concerns probably are percolating within the party as well.

[redacted] the early 1980s indicates that Brezhnev and his colleagues decided on intervention—a decison consistent with the preferences of party ideological officials—because they believed that intervention would preclude the defeat of a Communist ally and that it would be a short and low-cost affair. [redacted] that the Brezhnev generation initially expected, in 1979 and 1980, that victory would be attained in 12 to 18 months. Most of these sources indicate that the issue of domestic repercussions—outside the issue of Muslim fundamentalism—did not figure in Politburo deliberations

As the war dragged on and it was clear there was little prospect of a near-term victory, the Brezhnev leadership decided to hunker down for the long haul, believing that time was on the side of the Soviet Union. [redacted] the men of Brezhnev's generation saw little choice but to keep a large contingent of regular troops in Afghanistan for "a generation or more." These men evidently regarded the war's cost in human and material terms as bearable ones that could be sustained indefinitely. [redacted]

In the course of the talk, he noted that the USSR annually lost 40,000 to 50,000 people in car accidents and 30,000 to 40,000 in drowning. against these losses the death of a few thousand men annually in Afghanistan was portrayed as "relatively insignificant."

Even those older party officials who were concerned about the consequences of a protracted war tended to think that escalation rather than negotiation was the best way to bring an end to the conflict

more than 100 times before party groups during 1981-84, his audiences were generally disturbed by the level of military casualties but invariably reacted by asking: "Why don't we simply wipe the bandits out?"

in September 1984 that many men of the older generation favor escalation.

With the passage of time and the coming to the fore of a younger generation of party officials, the dominant outlook on the war has evolved toward greater pessimism.

many younger officials have referred to Afghanistan as the Soviet Union's "Vietnam." They believe the USSR is mired in a war that is draining the country's human and material resources. For example,

that the USSR could not win in Afghanistan, and noted ironically, "We're stuck there."

The noted this shift in attitudes on Afghanistan. Interviews found that 48 percent of them disapproved of the war and 23 percent found the war "shameful," suggesting that a significant minority condemned the war on moral grounds and almost half opposed it for either moral or political reasons. The found that over a quarter of those polled claiming party membership disapproved of the war

Soviet samizdat reinforces the impression that some party members and low-level officials believe the war is spiritually damaging the USSR. One party member wrote in a Marxist samizdat publication that "the war in Afghanistan has turned into an endless, senseless nightmare not only for the Afghans, but for ourselves as well. It is impossible to justify our involvement in Afghanistan on moral grounds."

Other party officials in the Russian Republic apparently are concerned by the cost of the war to the Slavic people in practical terms. Just as the Baltic nationalities believe they are overrepresented in Afghanistan, many Russians suspect they are being discriminated against. For example, at a public Znaniye Society lecture in Moscow in early December, a party activist asked a Central Committee lecturer why such a high percentage of Slavs were being sent to Afghanistan. Similar questions have been raised at other public lectures in Moscow and Leningrad, according to

The Security Apparatus

The KGB and the Soviet military have significant domestic as well as foreign equities involved in the Afghan war. They were directly involved in consultations before the 1979 invasion and their views are certainly considered by the current leadership as it shapes policy on Afghanistan. Because of their long involvement in Afghanistan—going back many years before the invasion—and their direct access to objective information on the war, their appreciation of the war's cost is probably even more realistic than that of the Soviet political leadership. This is probably tempered by their concern for the prestige both of the nation and of their institutions in the event of withdrawal from Afghanistan under circumstances that left the country in the hands of a regime not closely aligned to the USSR.

The KGB

The KGB, which has maintained a large presence in Afghanistan throughout the war, is primarily responsible for assessing the local situation and making judgments on the foreign policy implications of the war. Besides the foreign intelligence role carried out

by the First Chief Directorate, other KGB components are tasked with keeping tabs on the Soviet population and controlling dissent and public dissatisfaction within the USSR. They have been deeply involved in monitoring antiwar activism and ferreting out antiwar groups. As a result, the KGB may have a better perspective than any other organization on the war's cost to Soviet regime credibility at home, on the Afghan regime's political viability, and on the war's impact on Soviet international interests.

From the outset of the war, elements of the KGB's First Chief Directorate reportedly opposed the invasion, although probably for operational and perhaps bureaucratic reasons rather than because of concern about negative repercussions inside the USSR.

were concerned that intervention by the military could backfire, and favored use of covert and paramilitary operations supervised by the KGB to achieve Moscow's goals. Other reporting indicates that, from the war's beginning, many First Chief Directorate officers have doubted that the war was worth the human or material costs to the Soviet Union.

even officers in the KGB who had initially favored intervention began to have doubts by the winter of 1981-82, reporting that "a majority of KGB officers felt that it was time to close the matter of Afghanistan because the Soviets had become too involved there.' noted that, when Gorbachev—whom he and his colleagues regarded as a reformer—came to power in March 1985, this sentiment became more pronounced within the KGB.

The war has placed a major burden on the Third Chief Directorate, which is responsible for overseeing loyalty and discipline in the military. The TCD has investigated hundreds of soldiers charged with crimes ranging from theft to atrocities against Afghan civilians to desertions. Although the war has enhanced its importance, the TCD has undoubtedly developed a keen appreciation of the serious problems the war has produced in troop morale.

Other KGB components may be more hawkish. Local offices of the KGB in Central Asia, and the Fifth (Antidissident) Directorate are operationally more involved with domestic security questions, and probably share concerns that Islamic fundamentalism is percolating into Central Asia from Iran and Afghanistan.

The KGB border guards, who have suffered casualties inside Afghanistan and on the Soviet border, probably are even more concerned about the vulnerability of the Soviet border to raids carried out by the Mujahedin as well as cross-border dissemination of anti-Soviet pamphlets.

The Military

The military has good reasons for wanting to continue vigorous prosecution of the war in Afghanistan. Having argued as an institution in favor of committing Soviet forces at the outset and having made repeated claims of progress since then, the military may not want to be proved "wrong" in its assessment that the war was winnable or to see its reputation for competence further tarnished. Moreover, it is probably psychologically hard to accept the sunken costs in the war as having been for naught. Also, the war has provided an excellent training ground for a whole generation of officers. These parochial considerations, combined with larger concerns about the implications for the USSR of losing face and suffering a strategic loss by pulling out of Afghanistan, almost certainly have made the military a key institutional supporter of the war.

Despite the military's reasons for wanting to continue the war, Gorbachev apparently has Politburo support for a withdrawal if he can get the right conditions, indicating he has overcome military reservations. His ability to do so may have been strengthened by personnel changes in the military, including the retirement of former Defense Minister Sokolov—who as First Deputy Minister oversaw the war for several years—and the fact that, even within the military, there is evidence of war weariness.

The military high command has experienced considerable turnover since 1979, so that the current hierarchy could not be completely saddled with responsibility for advocating invasion. But many current top officers have been closely involved in waging the war. These include Chief of the General Staff, Sergey Akhromeyev, and his first deputy, Gen. Valentin Varennikov. Defense Minister Yazov was indirectly involved as Commander of the Central Asian Military District from 1981 to 1983. There is little evidence in public statements to suggest that senior officials of the Ministry of Defense had altered their views on Afghanistan since Gorbachev became General Secretary. Statements by Yazov and Akhromeyev, as well as Gen. Andrey Lizichev, chief of the Main Political Administration, and Gen. Petr Lushev, First Deputy Minister of Defense, emphasize the duty of "Soviet internationalists" to protect the Kabul regime.

They might be especially inclined to question the wisdom of a disengagement plan that failed to guarantee a pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. In any assessment of blame that might develop if a withdrawal led to their client's collapse, they might be tempted to blame civilian leaders but would be vulnerable to criticism themselves for failing to defeat the insurgency.

Military publications have reviewed recent films such as *Is It Easy To Be Young?* that raise questions about the futility of the war. An army general writing in *Krasnaya Zvezda* noted, "In my opinion it inadvertently casts doubts on the need for young people to fulfill their military duty." Last year, General Volkogonov explicitly endorsed the views of the writer Prokhanov, who questioned the ability of civilians to make judgments on war, and who decried pacifism among the population.

Military newspapers and professional publications for the officer corps continue to show widespread sentiment for continuing operations in Afghanistan to secure the USSR's southern frontiers. A reporter for the daily publication of the Minister of Defense noted in mid-May, "In the light of the events of March and April on our southern frontier [Mujahedin raids], we should ask ourselves what would have happened on our southern frontiers without the limited contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan." Military spokesmen at public forums have [redacted] cited the same strategic necessities in lectures. In Leningrad in March, a spokesman noted "our troops will have to remain . . . if we leave the Americans will move into the area. We will find ourselves even more encircled with American bases and listening posts. . . . Our most important concern is our security."

Pluses for the Military

[redacted] *some senior officers place a high premium on the opportunities that the war has afforded for testing Soviet tactics and equipment:*

- [redacted] *told Soviet Bloc officers in July 1986 that he hoped all officers in the military would gain combat experience in Afghanistan.* [redacted]
- *In October 1986, a* [redacted] *that there were powerful forces in the Soviet military who did not want to withdraw from Afghanistan. These officers believe that the combat experiences gained by Soviet troops and the use of Afghanistan as a testing ground for new weapons have been far more important than the propaganda or political advantages that could be gained by withdrawal.*

[redacted]

[ ] the Soviet military would probably prefer to continue the war, there is growing awareness of the costs within the military officer corps. There are signs that, in a period of resource constraints, the 3 percent of the military budget consumed by the war may seem excessive to some officers. [ ], specifically stated that the decline in Soviet naval activity was due in part to the diversion of funds from the military to the civilian sector to improve the overall Soviet economy, and in part to the cost of the Afghan war.

A few tactical commanders [ ] reportedly also believe that intervention is not worth the cost in human terms, especially since the military is not allowed to pull out all the stops in fighting the war. There is growing evidence that lack of tactical success in Afghanistan has led to recriminations and frustrations within the military, producing pressure on the civilian leadership either to up the ante or pull out:

- In August 1984, a [ ] officer told [ ] that the Soviet military was increasingly concerned about the situation in Afghanistan, did not believe it could defeat the resistance with current troop strengths, and feared it could even lose ground.

- [ ] has claimed that, while many officers see the war as an opportunity for personal advancement, a number of lieutenant colonels and colonels see it as disastrous for the USSR on strategic, economic, and moral grounds.

- A Mujahedin commando captured a Soviet military document in early 1985 that advised Moscow to either pull out or to drastically increase its troop strength, because of low military morale, high casualties, and the unreliability of the Afghan army.

- [ ] Soviet Ministry of Defense document, recommending that the Tanzanian military not become further involved in the Mozambique civil war, noted that the Soviet military had badly misjudged the difficulty of fighting a war in Afghanistan.

- In a public forum on Afghanistan in November 1987, a Soviet general officer—while defending the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan—noted, "We have had enough of sacrificing our young soldiers."

[ ] also show grudging respect for the Mujahedin by the Soviet officer corps, and a sense that the war is a stalemate [ ] that the *dushmany* (a Pushtu word meaning enemy and universally used by the Soviets) were patriots fighting for their country. Military lecturers have noted that the insurgents are a formidable enemy and that to defeat them the Soviet force in Afghanistan would have to be increased by a factor of four or five.

Some Soviet officers may also have become defeatist because they are convinced the civilian leadership no longer has the will to sustain the war for a prolonged period. [ ] that in early 1987 Gorbachev had given the General Staff two years to win the war. [ ] that the military is keenly aware of the political leadership's mounting frustration about the cost of the war.

There is also reason to believe that some officers are becoming increasingly apprehensive that the war is aggravating social problems within the military rank and file, abetting pacifistic tendencies among Soviet youth and generally tarnishing the military's reputation:

- [ ] in early 1986 showed concern by the Main Political Directorate about nationality tensions and homosexual relations among soldiers in Afghanistan.

- The Soviet military press also has exhibited more concern about drug abuse (*narkomania*), brutal treatment of conscripts, and nationality tensions among troops in the 40th Army during the past year.

- The military press, along with the party press, has lamented in many articles that Soviet youth is far more pacifistic than the older generation. In a recent address to Soviet writers Yazov made pointed remarks to this effect.

A More Realistic Assessment of the War

During the past year, the Central Committee's guidance to the party's propaganda organs evidently has called for a more honest and pessimistic assessment of the war. Media treatment of the situation in Afghanistan has been less than euphoric in its assessment of the Afghan regime's level of popular support and the effectiveness of the Afghan military.

Similarly, party lecturers in Leningrad and Moscow—who also take guidance from the Central Committee Propaganda Department—have admitted in the past two years that Soviet diplomats and party officials earlier had been too optimistic about the success of national reconciliation, that Najibullah enjoys the support of less than half the population, and that the resistance is stronger in two-thirds of the country's provinces than is the government. For example:

- At a lecture in Leningrad in January 1987, a party official argued for a diplomatic solution: "Comrades, there is simply no other way out. People are dying in Afghanistan, including our boys. There is no end in sight—not after five years or even 10. . . . The Soviet Union is losing the political struggle—the USSR is isolated and its proposals to end the war are getting nowhere."

- At another political lecture in Leningrad in March, a party spokesman told an audience of 300 that "the Central Committee had been advised that the Afghan issue could not be settled militarily." The speaker also noted that the United States might well have ratified SALT II had the Soviet Union not gone into Afghanistan

Various explanations are possible for the increase in Soviet media discussion of the war and the character of media coverage. The overall shift toward a pessimistic assessment of prospects for early Soviet victory could be interpreted as intended to prepare the population for either a prolonged war or for striking a political settlement. Yet the particular items that are appearing in the press do not seem to follow a consistent line. Many of them at least implicitly urge persevering for the long haul. Others clearly reflect a desire to leave Afghanistan soon, as well as a belief that the war is not in the USSR's best interest.

It seems likely, then, that the conflicting views and images that have been allowed reflect some genuine differences within the Soviet elite over policy toward Afghanistan. With the relaxation of central control over the media, different editors are probably pushing different lines on their own initiative without waiting for central directives. At the same time, it is probable that differences within the top leadership itself have accounted in part for divergent media coverage of the war. Now that Gorbachev has apparently enunciated an unambiguous policy preference, the media line may become more uniform.

Leadership Attitudes on the Domestic Costs of the War

Turnover in the Politburo since the 1979 invasion has probably given Gorbachev a freer hand in making a fresh assessment of policy toward Afghanistan. Of the current full Politburo members only Gromyko and Shcherbitskiy were full members in 1979, so that most of the Politburo members today bear no direct responsibility for the initial intervention. They consequently can portray a policy shift on Afghanistan as part of an overall repudiation of Brezhnev's legacy in foreign and domestic policy.

Gorbachev's Views

As a candidate member of the Politburo in 1979, Gorbachev probably played a secondary role in the decision to send Soviet troops. A Soviet official in

Glasnost *and the War*

In the early years of involvement, Soviet media barely acknowledged any Soviet military presence in Afghanistan and went to great lengths to prevent the population from learning that the "limited contingent" of Soviet troops was fighting rather than serving as advisers. The regime continues to suppress many details, but since Gorbachev, succession discussion of the war has expanded greatly in the media. Extreme views—both pro and con—have been allowed to surface

During Soviet programs on foreign affairs, many callers have advocated a Soviet escalation. One caller to a television program on Afghanistan last August called for "carpet bombing." Moreover, some nationalist organizations have become vocal in publicly demanding military victories in speeches and publications.

The great bulk of media coverage of the war is infused with Russian nationalist and neocolonialist motifs, extolling the virtues of the heroic Soviet soldiers fighting in Afghanistan and providing Soviet audiences with the moral imperative to protect innocent Afghans from the machinations of Western "imperialists." Similarly, most published Soviet literary works dealing with Afghanistan idealize the Soviet role there. Although the hardships of life in Afghanistan are acknowledged, the intent usually seems to be to encourage youth to prepare themselves for the rigors of military service

At the same time, since early 1987 Moscow has occasionally publicized adverse remarks by Soviet citizens on involvement in Afghanistan:

- *On the radio program* International Situation, *listeners last spring asked about Soviet casualties and criticized coverage of the war. In July, a member of the audience of the same program stated on the air that there was no legal basis under Soviet law for Soviet intervention.*
- *In the summer of 1987, a columnist in* Moscow News *openly argued for a withdrawal of Soviet troops without the preconditions that were invariably included in the official Soviet position. The author of the article wrote that a withdrawal would mean that death notifications "would no longer bring untold grief to Soviet families" and that the country "would be able to release the additional resources that are so needed" (in the Soviet economy).*
- Moscow News *also published an interview with Andrey Sakharov in December in which he called for a complete and immediate pullout of all Soviet troop.*

1981 claimed that Gorbachev was actually opposed to the intervention from the start, which explained why policy on the war was shifting. His 1986 reference to the war as a "bloody sore" and subsequent public statements suggest that he was more concerned than his predecessors about the negative impact of the war on the USSR internally. Having tied his future to a program of domestic economic and political revitalization, he apparently came to believe that the Afghan war is complicating his domestic efforts to bring about a reconciliation between the regime and the intelligentsia, the group perhaps most disturbed by the war. Having also made clear his interest in securing arms control agreements and reducing the

burden of military spending on the domestic economy, he apparently concluded that Afghanistan stood in the way of a more full-fledged East-West detente, and would pay handsome dividends if it could be resolved.

The General Secretary reportedly viewed the situation in Afghanistan as comparable to the 1918 Peace of Brest Litovsk—when Lenin accepted a treaty with Germany that ceded 30 percent of Russia's economic wealth to consolidate Soviet power at home. Since the 27th Congress, Soviet party officials close to Gorbachev, including those serving in the Central Committee's International Department, have openly criticized past policies in Afghanistan and have seemed willing to reexamine Soviet strategy there linking the changed perspective to the restructuring of Soviet society:

[redacted]

- In April 1987, a generally reliable source reported that a senior official of the International Department said that the leadership regretted its military intervention, noting the foreign and domestic burden of the war. The official reportedly said that domestic and foreign policy implications of military action had not been thoroughly thought out by the Politburo.

- In February 1986, International Department deputy chief Karen Brutens said he wanted to see a withdrawal "as soon as possible," suggesting that Moscow had badly overestimated the ability of the Afghan Communists to carry the burden of the war.

Other Leaders

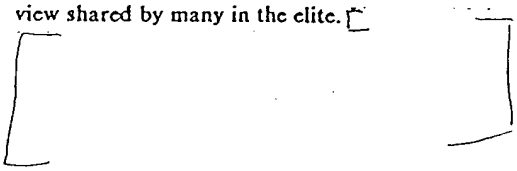
Although Gorbachev's 8 February announcement of revised Soviet terms for a withdrawal indicates a consensus within the leadership on the desirability of a military pullout, a number of key Politburo members may assess the costs and benefits of involvement in Afghanistan differently from Gorbachev. [redacted] party secretary Dobrynin told Italian Communist Party officials in mid-1986 that Gorbachev had run into stubborn and entrenched opposition to diplomatic initiatives to end the war. Leaders who may be the most concerned that a diplomatic settlement not result in the collapse of Moscow's Communist clients in Afghanistan probably include:

- "Second Secretary" Yegor Ligachev, who is [redacted] concerned in 1983 that defeat in Afghanistan could lead to a rise in nationalist agitation in Central Asia. Although he has given a strong public endorsement to Gorbachev's proposals as "brilliant," his chairing of a meeting of senior officials to coordinate and possibly increase economic assistance for Afghanistan suggests that he is among those most concerned with perpetuating a long-term Soviet influence in Afghanistan.

- Ukrainian First Secretary Shcherbitskiy [redacted] strongly supported the initial decision to intervene. His subsequent public statements do not suggest that he has changed his opinion.

- President Gromyko, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of the 1979 decision, also appears to have been a supporter of the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. [redacted] his hardline rhetoric at the time of the invasion and subsequent public defense of Soviet presence suggest he was supported in the initial decision. In a recent speech he praised Stalin's prolonged and determined diplomatic struggle for a "socialist Poland" in context suggesting he might see a parallel to the current need for a "socialist" Afghanistan.

- KGB Chairman Chebrikov has spoken and written in detail about the threat to the southern frontier, a view shared by many in the elite.



Domestic Factors and Gorbachev's Options in Afghanistan

While the domestic impact of the war will not necessarily be the decisive criterion in Moscow's continuing evaluation of Afghan policy, the evidence seems compelling that it has been an increasingly germane factor in the regime's evaluation of policy options. Gorbachev's 8 February announcement suggests that domestic considerations are a more important factor now than when the Politburo decided to intervene in late 1979.

Movement toward a negotiated solution that resulted in a staged withdrawal—much as Gorbachev recently proposed—probably will, on balance, strengthen Gorbachev's domestic position, particularly if it could leave a government not antagonistic toward the USSR in place at least for some period of time. Progress toward a diplomatic solution would benefit Gorbachev's political agenda by rallying support from the intelligentsia, and would go far to convince Soviet youth that the system was capable of radical change. Deescalation would also ease nationality tensions.

A withdrawal on terms that led to a quick or immediate collapse of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan–dominated regime would to some extent intensify tensions—already obvious over other issues—with the military and the KGB, as well as with ideologically oriented elements of the elite that would reject a compromise endangering a Marxist-Leninist ally. It could alienate many among the Sovietized Central Asian elite, who are concerned about the spread of Islamic fundamentalism across the border. Nevertheless, Gorbachev's 8 February proposal suggests that he has hammered out a Politburo consensus to run just this risk, which he apparently feels is manageable.

Having taken the initial steps, however, the General Secretary will continue to be under pressure to protect Soviet equities in Afghanistan by various elites who are convinced that the potential cost of the "loss of Afghanistan" is high. Although Gorbachev can manage such costs—and has managed to get Politburo acceptance to begin a process—it will be difficult to reverse—he will continue to be sensitive to steps that would be viewed as a sellout of his Afghan allies. Such concerns might also limit his tactical flexibility as the Geneva negotiations unfold.

Nevertheless, continuation of the status quo into the 1990s, if the two sides cannot agree on terms, also would have real—and perhaps escalating—domestic costs. A stalemated war would continue to engender corruption and other problems that over time would have an increasingly corrosive effect on Soviet society. Moreover, greater opportunities for dissatisfied groups to express their feelings under *glasnost* could lead to more unrest among disaffected national minorities—particularly among the USSR's growing Muslim minority—and would raise the spectre that the war could become a rallying point for the discontented among the elite, even in Slavic areas. Having gone public with a timetable for withdrawal, the regime has significantly raised domestic expectations that the troops will be returning home soon. Efforts might be made to shift the blame for any obstacles to the rebels, Pakistan, or the United States, but the public is not likely to accept significant delays complacently. Given these public expectations, it will probably be increasingly difficult for opponents in the bureaucracy or the leadership to block additional concessions Gorbachev might propose to bring the talks to a successful conclusion