

Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan, the Saur Revolution and the Cold War
By Trevor Blondin

In April 1978, the Saur Revolution saw a communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) take control of the country in a coup that culminated in Kabul. The Soviet backed group seized control from Mohammed Daoud Khan and the Republic of Afghanistan, killing Daoud Khan and his family in the process. This coup saw the PDPA placed in power and Soviet influence in the area solidified. Almost immediately following the Saur Revolution, a new uprising began against the PDPA. The Soviets, while initially hesitant to provide military assistance, eventually invaded Afghanistan with the goal of putting down the insurgencies and stabilizing the government. This paper focuses on how this attempt at stabilizing the PDPA would fail due to a number of reasons: First, gross mishandling of the situation prior to the invasion. Second, the Soviets were ill equipped or prepared to combat guerilla fighters in the mountainous terrain along with misconduct and incompetence within the military itself. Third, the unpopularity of the war both in the international community and within the USSR, fourth being the United States aid to the mujahideen, and fifth the failure by the Soviets to fully recognize the tribal nature of Afghan society and the strong influence of Islam in the region.