Crisis Committee Study Guide

The Soviet-Afghan War (1980)
The committee begins on January 20th 1980. Referring to any events that have taken place after this date will be considered as getting off policy and will not be taken into consideration during debate or crisis updates.

The Current Situation

It is January 1980, only a month after the Soviet forces (approximately 10,000 soldiers) successfully overtook a large part of Afghanistan, taking over lines of communication and major population centers including the capital city of Kabul. The Mujahideen and other rebellious factions started an insurgency in an attempt to overthrow the pro-soviet government backed by the Soviets.

Important Notes

1) The United States and the rest of NATO member states support the Mujahideen. Since the Soviet Union is the greatest political rival of the United States and the fact that NATO was founded in order to contain Soviet expansion and spread of Communism, it is in their interest to assist the Mujahideen.

2) Most of the Muslim countries support the Mujahideen and other religious factions during this holy war as well.

3) For the Soviet Bloc countries, as well as other socialist states, it is in their interest to assist the Soviets in achieving their goal and ensure that Afghanistan stays under the control of a pro soviet government backed by the USSR.
Background

The Soviet-Afghan war is one of the most important and consequential wars for taking over Afghanistan, because of Afghanistan’s strategic location as it is a key to connecting the west with the east and because it lies directly in the center of the Asian continent. Moreover, Afghanistan separates the USSR from Iran and the Islamic revolution.

These factors led the USSR to invade Afghanistan on the 24th of December, 1979, in order to ensure that Afghanistan stays under the rule of the pro-Soviet government from Termez and Kushka heading to Kabul and Herat. The Soviet Union deployed a force numbering in the tens of thousands by air and ground. (Note: see the image on page 1.)

A part of the Afghan people was dissatisfied and angered by the invasion. Moreover, the Islamic revolution in Iran has had a major effect on the people in Afghanistan. This has led to many of them joining the Mujahideen who were fighting against the Soviet forces as a group of fighters in the name of Islam whose goal was to protect their land from the invaders.

Since the Soviets were considered an atheist foreign enemy, for the Mujahideen it has been a holy war. This has convinced a lot of Muslims from Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, and many other Muslim countries to join the war and fight for the Mujahideen.

Timeline

27, April 1978: The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) leads the Saur revolution, facing their ruler Daoud Khan. After the coup, Afghanistan is renamed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) with Nur Muhammad Taraki as president.

5, December 1978: The DRA and the USSR sign a friendship treaty.

March 1979: The American ambassador is murdered and the US loses its influence and presence in Afghanistan. Afghanistan starts receiving significant military aid from the USSR.

September 1979: Nur Mohammed Taraki is assassinated and Hafizullah Amin becomes the new president of the DRA. In order to fight the revolution, Hafizullah Amin asks the USSR for immense forces to help him fight the rebellion.

12, December 1979: A secret meeting between the DRA leadership and US diplomats and the fear of an Islamic revolution leads the Politburo's inner circle to authorize an incursion in Afghanistan.

24, December 1979: Soviet forces are sent to take over Afghanistan and seize the capital Kabul.

29, December 1979: The Soviets assassinate Amin and announce Babrak Kamal as DRA leader whom the USSR backs and supports.
10, January 1980: The United Nations issues a resolution addressing the situation in Afghanistan after a great deal of civilians gets harmed and villages destroyed during the war.

Important Tips

- Research your character (position, achievements, opinion, powers, jurisdiction, etc.)
- Research your country/organization at the time (military, economy, alliances, strengths, weaknesses, etc.)
- Research the alliances different countries/organizations were/are part of.
- Research how the rest of the countries/organizations affect the war.

Useful Resources

Timeline: Soviet War in Afghanistan.
Afghanistan and the United Nations.
The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower's Inability to Deny Insurgent Sanctuary.

Bibliography


