

Not the Whole Truth: Soviet and Western Media Coverage of the Afghan Conflict¹

by
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INTRODUCTION

Decades of media-government research have shown that media are inextricably linked to the interests of the state.² It has been argued that the Western press is sensitive to government pressure and that a convergence emerges between press reporting and government policy.³ The relations and activities of media and government are especially important since, it has been suggested, no wars have been covered without bias and censorship.⁴ If truth is the first casualty of war reporting, then the Afghan conflict has been the best example of a fragmented and inconsistent presentation in the Soviet and mainstream Western news media. Reiterating certain limited themes, it avoided detail, complexity and ambiguity. It was especially subject to political, diplomatic, and ideological pressures, superpower rivalry, and the news agencies' limitations and preferences.

On no other foreign policy issue in recent years, has Washington had an easier relationship with the media than on the question of Afghanistan. Caught between the need for instant analysis and the mind-set of the time, there was no adversarial relationship with the government on the basis, context and the underlying assumptions of official policy. In line with Washington's unfounded optimism, mainstream American reporting on the Afghan conflict raised hopes that the Kabul regime would fall soon after the Soviet withdrawal. This is perhaps why the Kabul regime's survival since the completion of the Soviet force withdrawal has surprised both specialists and the general public. Has the media failed in its reporting on a regional conflict? What have been the major trends in Soviet and Western media reporting on Afghanistan?

This article aims to offer a comparative perspective on the coverage of the Afghan conflict in both the Soviet and Western media. The purpose of this study is to underline some of the similarities and dissimilarities between them, and is divided into three parts: The first part highlights some of the oddities of reporting from Afghanistan by offering a broad overview of the nature and scope of Western (primarily American), coverage of the Afghan conflict. The second part provides an analysis of Soviet coverage of the conflict during the pre-Gorbachev years, particularly, by elaborating the issues that the Soviet media dwelled upon in terms of the regional and international aspects of the Afghan conflict. The purpose of this section is to underline the intrinsically interrelated nature of official foreign policy pronouncements and the reporting limitations placed upon Soviet journalists during this period. Finally, we will bring forth the changes under Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) and *Novoye politicheskoe myshlenie* ("New Political Thinking"), in order to provide a perspective on the recent changes in Soviet reporting on the Afghan conflict.

WESTERN MEDIA REPORTING ON THE AFGHAN CONFLICT

Without necessarily detailing the intricate theoretical aspects of reporting on unconventional warfare, suffice it to say that in Afghanistan, the command, control and communications systems were simply absent. This lacuna profoundly affected reporting from inside Afghanistan. The means of communication with the outside world available to the Afghan resistance (popularly known as the *Mujahideen*) were primitive: travelling scores of miles on foot, mules, camels, or motor bikes, *Mujahideen* news-bearers were understandably tempted to add or extract information to suit their personal or organizational preferences. In the ten years of the Afghan conflict, only a handful of news centers in Peshawar — the Pakistani frontier city that acts as an arms transshipment point, intelligence listening post and guerrilla stronghold — could develop a reputation for providing news in a sustained and nonpartisan manner that enjoyed a degree of international recognition.⁵

This shortcoming often resulted in sharp distortions of the actual situation inside Afghanistan. The *Mujahideen*'s war claims were often inflated: soon after the Soviet intervention, they began to assert that they controlled over 90% of the countryside, and that defections and desertions had reduced the Afghan Army from over 90,000 to less than 40,000 troops. The Soviet casualty figures claimed by the *Mujahideen* for the first year of the war were more than the actual figures for the nine years of conflict. This poor reporting, however, was not only due to the guerrillas' primitive infrastructure. It was also motivated by their leaders' desire to keep the morale of their rank-and-file high and to please their domestic audience. Equally important was the perceived need to impress their regional and international supporters with their better performance as compared to, not only the Kabul regime, but also to their rival *Mujahideen* groups. After all, their determined relative strength in turn largely influenced their share of the military assistance provided by foreign countries supportive of their cause.

More importantly, however, by the time their news was reported in Peshawar, it was often dated and had lost its news-worthiness. From the vantage point of Western journalism, such information did not always qualify for print in international newspapers. Thus, a stream of Western journalists also reported on the Afghan conflict from Kabul, Moscow, Islamabad, Washington and other parts of the world. Yet, the *Mujahideen* sources in Pakistan were an extremely important source of coverage. For example, between July 1983 and March 1988 the Associated Press (AP), one of the largest news agencies in the world, wired 443 stories from Islamabad, compared with only 19 news stories from Kabul. During the same period, it filed 439 stories on Afghanistan from Moscow, and 1160 from Washington.⁶

Unlike the almost daily televised reports of the war in Vietnam and Lebanon, there were no live broadcasts from Afghanistan and few dramatic headlines in the newspapers. Reporters found that, unlike in Vietnam (where helicopters rode newsmen to battle scenes), or in Lebanon (where conflict could be filmed from hotel windows), getting close to action in Afghanistan was

extremely arduous and dangerous. After 1984, the risk further increased when Vitaly Smirnov, the Soviet ambassador to Pakistan warned that any journalist caught “illegally” inside Afghanistan would be “eliminated.” Most of the correspondents, therefore, partly or wholly relied on the *Mujahideen* and diplomatic sources in Peshawar and Islamabad for their information about what was happening inside Afghanistan.⁷

Because of the length of time it took to cover stories that often lacked both authenticity and newness, most editors were unwilling to assign their journalists to Afghanistan. Nor did major news agencies and newspapers set up permanent bureaus there. The BBC, for example, had only one man to cover both Pakistan and Afghanistan, in what was considered a “hardship posting.”⁸ In many respects, therefore, it was a freelancer’s war, and this is perhaps the reason why reporting on combat in the provinces near the Pakistani border was more frequent than that from the interior. Such journalists, called “stingers” in journalistic jargon, had the luxury of time and resources to undertake a (usually three-day) trip from Peshawar to cover the conflict in the neighboring provinces.

Dissatisfied with much media reporting, scores of journalists clandestinely travelled inside Afghanistan, particularly after the 1980 expulsion of all Western journalists from there and the subsequent Soviet/Afghan refusals to grant visas to those who wanted to report from Kabul. This practice cost at least eleven journalists their lives,⁹ and a number of journalists captured by the Soviet/Afghan forces were sentenced for espionage and given varying terms of imprisonment.¹⁰ Those who clandestinely slipped into Afghanistan often journeyed from Pakistan, or in some rare cases, Iran. No journalist is reported to have been inside Afghanistan without the assistance of a resistance group, and few were reported to have travelled with a resistance group outside the Peshawar-based coalition of the seven parties, the Islamic Unity of the Afghan *Mujahideen* (IUAM). The reporting from inside Afghanistan had its own limitations. The obvious virtues of reporting on the basis of first-hand knowledge from inside Afghanistan notwithstanding, foreign journalists travelling with the *Mujahideen* groups often reported with a kind of romanticization of the Afghan war. Most of them had no hesitation in accepting the lexicon used by the resistance and calling them the *Mujahideen*, and their struggle *Jihad* — terms which were loaded with religious connotations and would otherwise be frowned upon in the Lebanese or Iranian context.

Travelling with the combatants often placed inescapable limitations on the visiting journalists’ freedom of movement. This restriction included the journalist’s personal dependence on the hosts for, among other things, their own personal safety. More importantly however, it entailed the projection of a favorable image of the fighting group with which they travelled, particularly in comparison to the rival guerrilla groups in the area. It is worth mentioning that after adopting such a partisan position, no matter how inadvertently, very few journalists later could travel with other *Mujahideen* groups,¹¹ having already alienated them by their prior reporting. Perhaps equally significant, a journalist who was critical of his/her hosts was often unable to travel with that same group again. In other words, in order to maintain a liaison, or an option to travel again,

the visiting journalists were expected to show a degree of partisanship. It was in this context that some journalists were even killed by their host parties.¹²

For the understandable purposes of personal security from the Afghan-Soviet forces, and sometimes from Pakistan's Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) or from rival *Mujahideen* groups, the journalists visiting via Pakistan were kept uninformed about their travel plans, a practice that inevitably resulted in the journalists' complete dependence on the host groups' plans and schedule. Quite often, the travel plans were hastened or delayed, not just for the purposes of secrecy and safety but also to demonstrate to the visiting journalist the "strength" of the host group. There have been many reports of orchestrated ambushes and mock operations by guerrilla groups for their guest journalists' cameras.

A by-product of travelling with the Peshawar-based groups has been the reporters' inescapable dependence on the IUAM that has received political and military support from Islamabad and Washington. More often, the journalists in Peshawar tended to gravitate to the fundamentalist groups which received by far the lion's share of American military supplies. In other words, the smaller groups that were not represented in the IUAM had little chance of getting attention in the international media. The most adversely affected groups in this respect have been smaller secularist and nationalist groups on the one hand, and some 200 independent military field commanders on the other. Finally, a journalist's decision to travel with a particular group was often based not on a personal preference, but on considerations for safety and security, past experiences of fellow-journalists, and a need to cover specific areas in different regions of Afghanistan. Different *Mujahideen* groups, on the other hand, often perceived such decisions as expressions of favor for a particular group. They were, therefore, reluctant to entertain the requests of those journalists inside Afghanistan who had earlier made such visits with the rival *Mujahideen* groups. Later realizing the public relational value of such visits, many component parties of the IUAM opened offices in Europe and the United States to encourage reporters to travel with them.

Rarely did the visiting journalists come up from their clandestine visits inside Afghanistan with what is called a "scoop". Their best achievement was to keep international public opinion informed as their reporting provided information about the status of military supplies and humanitarian assistance to various groups in various parts of the Afghan countryside. On balance, however, accounts based on such visits provided little *accurate* information on the relative strength of these groups in those areas. Such information often came from non-journalistic sources.

The reporting from Pakistan did not always originate from the *Mujahideen* sources, however. Because of the journalists' difficulties in getting first-hand information about the war in Afghanistan, media briefings by Western embassies in Islamabad (and to a lesser extent, New Delhi) became a major channel for reporting on the conflict. The briefings were based on reports by Western diplomatic sources stationed in Kabul. Since the Soviet intervention, all Western countries had recalled their ambassadors from Kabul, reduced their staff and

lowered their missions to chargé d'affaires levels. The envoys remaining in Kabul were seriously restricted in their own information gathering and acknowledged that there was no way to confirm much of what they passed on. For example, the American embassy kept one man on duty by day, counting planes flying overhead, and another on duty at night, counting explosions.¹³

As in Saigon, the American embassy in Islamabad held weekly background briefing sessions. Basing information on telegraphic traffic, called "sitrep" or the situation reports from Kabul, a middle-ranking official briefed the participants about the military developments inside Afghanistan. Sometime called "Tuesday Follies", the briefings became a weekly news event in themselves and were often reported in the Wednesday papers. The official briefer listed armed clashes, disturbances in Kabul and other major cities and changes in government that came to the attention of the personnel in Kabul. The British followed an identical system except that they actually gave out a handout on *Mujahideen* successes. Thus, in a sense, these briefings offered a pool report for the news agencies and correspondents who otherwise were barred from covering the events in person.

The invited reporters from different news agencies and newspapers used the information as they deemed fit. Sometimes, in order to make their reports different from one another, they reportedly "engineered" the figures of Soviet/Afghan casualties, material losses, or the *Mujahideen's* performance. Frequently basing their stories on "informed diplomatic sources", or the "news reaching us from Afghanistan", these reporters often had little or no access to the Soviet/Afghan diplomats in the region, particularly in the pre-Gorbachev years. The journalistic scoops, therefore, rarely originated in Islamabad, Peshawar, Kabul or Moscow. These often came from a more distant source: Washington.

In Washington, media fascination with unveiling Afghan covert operations was the single most important source of media leaks. To these should be added deliberate leaks by conservative adherents of the Reagan Doctrine, who, believing that the Reagan Administration's support for the *Mujahideen* was inadequate, wished to embarrass it into doing as much, if not more, than it was claiming in its rhetoric.¹⁴ Moreover, leaks by members of congressional committees and autobiographical accounts by the former decisionmakers who wrote for their own respective considerations, added more to the exposure in the United States of the CIA's Afghan covert operation.

The themes often reiterated were confined to Soviet expansionism and brutalities in Afghanistan, coupled with the *Mujahideen's* bravery, deep conviction for freedom, love for Islam and their tribal values and the corresponding hatred for Soviet communism. Sensationalism and romanticization of the *Mujahideen's* valor was sustained by the popular themes of anti-communism in the context of East-West rivalry. This is how superficial Western reporting has contributed to the absence of more searching questions about the wisdom of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan. In all, however, the sources of Western media coverage, unlike the Soviet coverage of the Afghan conflict, have been many and diverse, even if the quality was uneven and lacking in depth.

SOVIET MEDIA COVERAGE IN THE BREZHNEV YEARS

Without ever going into details, Soviet media coverage during the Brezhnev years projected the official policy and covered the conflict in broad ideological formulations. Thus, there was no credible reporting on other aspects of the conflict. Consequently, Soviet media publicists provided neither estimates of the number of Soviet forces and their casualties, nor of defections or problems which resulted from their stay in a hostile environment. As a matter of fact, throughout the Brezhnev years, Soviet media and official pronouncements referred to the Afghan conflict as the “problem around Afghanistan”, never acknowledging that there was in fact a large-scale conflict in Afghanistan, let alone the actual participation of Soviet forces. As some Soviet publicists have recently conceded, the use of the word “war” was not allowed by the censorship authorities. The official control on the media was so firm that when a radio commentator used the word “invasion” for the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, he was dismissed.

Since 1979, Soviet media coverage of the conflict has undergone many phases. At first the Soviet media virtually ignored the war and acted fundamentally as agents of foreign and military policy rather than as agents of domestic information.¹⁵ Later, Soviet forces were portrayed as performing non-combat, humanitarian tasks at the request of the Afghan revolutionaries. It was only from mid-1984 that the media admitted that Soviet soldiers were being killed in Afghanistan. Before the Autumn of 1986, reports on combat activities focused almost exclusively on praising the courage and valor of selfless “internationalist” soldiers, who were heroically carrying out their military tasks. Details of actual combat, whenever reported, were sketchy at best. Further, articles continued to appear telling of soldiers sacrificing themselves to save the lives of their fellow comrades,¹⁶ and the media reports that often glorified Soviet soldiers frequently projected a Russian, as opposed to a Soviet, kind of patriotism. In all, the Soviet media coverage during the period can be viewed from two distinct angles.

1. On the ideological level, the Soviet media’s emphasis focused on the reforms undertaken by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), particularly the agrarian reforms, and the historical value of the Soviet-Afghan good neighborly relations. It made no reference to the factional fighting within the PDPA, and offered a scanty reference to the *Mujahideen*’s military activities, claiming that the *Saur* (April) revolution of 1978 was steadily consolidating. Soviet media reports sometimes drew parallels, in order to promote a view of Afghanistan as the USSR’s strategic frontier, complete with the *Basmachi* guerrillas. These reports stated explicitly that they were looking into the past to draw lessons for the future.¹⁷ The articles that appeared during the period invariably depicted the Soviet army in the historical, Russian terms and the Soviet troops as pursuing their duties selflessly.¹⁸ Occasional photographs showed them planting trees, restoring mosques, and building hospitals, schools, residential complexes and roads.¹⁹

2. In the political context, virtually all emphasis was on the regional aspect of the conflict, most markedly Pakistani support and the American and

Chinese military supplies being provided to the guerrillas. The Soviet media sought to minimize the scale of both the Afghan resistance and the Soviet military role. In February 1980, for example, *Pravda* reported Boris Ponomarev (then head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party) as claiming that the "Afghan authorities and the Afghan population display a friendly attitude towards the Soviet servicemen" and that "no clashes are taking place between Afghans and our soldiers, as all kinds of 'voices' unscrupulously and long-windedly claim."²⁰ Media reports exacerbated hatred of the enemy, particularly the Pakistani military, US imperialism and the *Mujahideen*.

Moscow, as reflected in the Soviet media, had a multifaceted approach intended to make Islamabad desist from its policy on Afghanistan on the one hand, and to obstruct its emerging special relationship with the United States on the other. On one level, the Soviet media warned Islamabad that it was "still not too late for Pakistan to stop meddling in Afghanistan's affairs" and that Pakistan "should not become a party to Washington's plans because these were fraught with many dangers, above all for Pakistan."²¹ On another level, portraying Islamabad as somewhat innocent, the Soviet media critically projected the Sino-American "common strategy" of "drawing Pakistan into the anti-Afghan plot" and, thereby, turning Pakistan into "a sort of powder keg."²² Thus it said that Pakistan was "caught in the ugly game."²³ The Soviet purpose, it seems, was both to discourage Islamabad from becoming a "front-line" state and to dissuade the United States and China from aiding Islamabad.

As early as May-June 1978, the Soviet media had moved to exacerbate possible differences between the various actors involved. This policy was designed to operate on many levels simultaneously. Soviet media pronouncements repeatedly elevated New Delhi's threat perceptions and highlighted the frictions existing between India and Pakistan on the one hand, and the differences among China, the United States, and Pakistan on the other. The Soviets consistently attacked the Pakistan-United States relationship on the grounds that it encouraged Islamabad's "aggressive" military capabilities and clandestine nuclear program. The Soviet media further charged that the United States was acquiring in Pakistan the military bases that would jeopardize Indian security.²⁴ The Soviet media repeatedly said that the CIA was plotting against India from Pakistan and that American military supplies to Pakistan would be used against India.²⁵ It was also often added that China was pushing Pakistan into conflict with India.²⁶

In an apparent bid to raise alarm in Washington and New Delhi, the Soviet media repeatedly showed concern about Islamabad's nuclear program. It periodically played upon Pakistani-Chinese collaboration in the nuclear field which was, it said, contrary to US nonproliferation objectives. Soviet publicists often urged that the United States should not aid a country that was embarking upon a nuclear program which was also a threat to regional security.²⁷

In yet another demonstration of its policy of exploiting cleavages among the various actors involved, the Soviet media played up friction within the Afghan rebel groups and between the Afghan and Pakistani population.²⁸ Soviet

writings often charged that conditions in the refugee camps were deplorable, and that the refugees wanted to return to Afghanistan but the *Mujahideen* and Pakistani officials were not allowing them to leave. Yet, thousands of refugees were said to be returning to Afghanistan. Soviet media pronouncements charged that resistance groups were running prison cells in the refugee camps.²⁹ Ironically, it also charged Islamabad with preferential treatment of the Afghan refugees compared to the *Biharis* and *Muhajirs*, the refugees who had come to Pakistan earlier from Bangladesh and India respectively.³⁰

Soviet publicists often highlighted the factional fighting within the *Mujahideen* groups, implicating them, together with Pakistani civilian and military officials, in selling weapons, diverting aid meant for refugees, smuggling, and drug trafficking. Moscow routinely discredited them for fighting with one another over the distribution of Western and Chinese supplies, for the bomb blasts in various parts of Pakistan, and for collaboration with the CIA.³¹ The Soviet media constantly stressed the frictions existing between the Afghans and Pakistan's local population, particularly between the Afghan rebels and the leaders of tribal areas on the one hand, and the leaders of tribal areas and the Pakistani government on the other.³² Meanwhile, it showed a particular interest in projecting the views held by the Pakistani opposition parties on the Afghan crisis. As these views were mostly opposed to Islamabad's policy, Moscow's purpose was to highlight the unpopular nature of Islamabad's policy in Afghanistan.³³

In the Soviet Central Asian press, however, more effort than in the central Soviet press was directed at discrediting the Afghan *Mujahideen*. There were more specific references to their atrocities, crimes and backwardness. There was also a visible concerted effort to prove that the support for the rebels was narrow and constantly shrinking. Numerous reports in the regional press highlighted the *Mujahideen*'s ruthlessness, which included crop-burning, cutting trees down, laying mines disguised as toys, destroying schools, hospitals and mosques, and attacking the civilian population. The latter activity included the assault, torturing and killing of women and children, as well as burning people alive.³⁴

Until 1983-84, the Soviet press played down any mention of Soviet military activity in Afghanistan. The low volume of reporting prompted a Soviet soldier in Afghanistan to write "To be honest, I am surprised at how little is written about Afghanistan and about the Soviet people who are honorably doing their duty, often risking their life."³⁵ After 1983-84, however, when the Soviet press began to occasionally report the existence of Soviet casualties, reports by journalists attached to the Soviet troops exalted their material values, camaraderie and the excitement of military life. Soviet soldiers were glorified and depicted as heroes and saviors, particularly after 1985 when medals were lavished on Soviet servicemen in Afghanistan.

Only under Yuri Andropov, when there was believed to be some moment toward a political settlement, did the Soviet media briefly give some coverage to the problems and difficulties faced by Soviet troops in combat

operations.³⁶ Upon Andropov's hospitalization, however, this trend was reversed again.

Overall, reporting on Afghanistan was anecdotal and the primary focus of Soviet media coverage continued to be on its regional and international dimension. The Soviet media did not report in any detail on the political and military situation in the country, the factional fighting within the ruling PDPA or, for that matter, even the existence of widespread conflict in the country.

CHANGES IN MEDIA COVERAGE UNDER GORBACHEV

The Soviet media's coverage of foreign affairs, particularly that of the Afghan war, expanded within the scope of *glasnost*. Given the communist party's continued 'leading role' in Soviet society and given the fact that until very recently Gorbachev's own pronouncements have not been open to direct public challenge, it is important to emphasize that the Soviet media did not provide the lead for the new leadership to change its policy on Afghanistan. On the contrary, Gorbachev's policies outlined how the Soviet media could cover the Afghan war, generally, within the vaguely defined boundaries of *glasnost*. Consequently, the coverage of the Afghan war evolved out of heroic anecdotes of selfless internationalism to self-criticism and cynicism.³⁷ It was only during 1986 and afterwards that the major characteristics of the new political thinking in Soviet policy on Afghanistan began to appear as a debate in Soviet literature as the "New Political Thinking" began.

The campaign for openness on domestic issues in the Soviet press began gradually to unfold in 1985. The trend towards greater candidness in the Soviet media's handling of sensitive topics became increasingly marked after the 27th Party Conference. Such topics as drug abuse, excessive censorship, and the moral crisis in Soviet society were accorded frank and serious treatment in the mass media. The central press from Moscow provided the lead in *glasnost*, and sometimes even criticized the local press in the Republics for being slow in adapting to the new policies. *Pravda*, for example, complained: "Sometimes it is hard to notice any change in the local press."³⁸ It was acknowledged in sections of the media that the reports in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* were more open and informative, but the local press in the Republics remained unresponsive to the idea of *glasnost*.³⁹

Many topics remained taboo, however, and especially little change was evident in Soviet reporting on international affairs. *Glasnost* regarding international issues began to emerge gradually as a result of the aftermath of the accident at Chernobyl nuclear power plant. However, changes in coverage of foreign affairs was really the result of debates on "blank spots" in Soviet history, such as Stalin's atrocities, the Second World War, and the nationalities problem, a debate which predated the Chernobyl incident, but which was accentuated by it.

In January 1986, *Izvestiya* commentator Aleksandr Bovin called for changes in Soviet media reporting on events in foreign countries.⁴⁰ A year later, Fedor Burlatsky complained that the shifts in Soviet foreign policy had failed

significantly to improve Soviet media coverage of foreign affairs: "The country's leaders have stated the necessity of humanizing international relations, of renouncing primitive stereotypes, and of abandoning the concept of the enemy. At times, however, journalists reporting on foreign affairs stir up the same old waters and set the course of confrontation."⁴¹

Izvestiya opened a new column entitled "Echo," wherein it published the results of opinion polls conducted among readers on various "burning" issues. In line with the campaign for openness, the Soviet press started to pay more attention to public opinion polls and the newspapers began to publish readers' letters expressing a wider selection of views. In February 1987 *Pravda* introduced a regular column that published commentaries and speeches by Western political figures. It published several letters from readers who called on the newspaper to give more coverage of foreign affairs and to drop "sloganeering" in its coverage of the West.⁴² During 1987, a number of commentators discussed the need for *glasnost* with regard to foreign policy issues, and articles continued to appear, discussing ways in which the coverage of foreign affairs might be improved;⁴³ some authors also accused the "official propaganda" of trying to resolve international problems by "blackening the West" and encouraging "a Cold War mentality".⁴⁴

Soviet television took up *glasnost* later than the print media, but endorsed the policy more resoundingly than the press had. In 1987, Soviet television telecast uncensored interviews with many Western leaders, increased the quantity of live air time, aired many new programs that combined entertainment with current affairs and began a frequent practice of satellite hook-ups with their counterpart television stations in Europe, Australia and the United States.

It was against this background that Gorbachev made a series of proposals concerning overall foreign policy formation. At the 19th Conference of the CPSU, he made the following points: foreign policy issues should be the subject of constant scientific and public discussion; the quality of information on international issues should be substantially improved; in reforming its political system, the USSR must create a mechanism with full constitutional powers for the discussion of international political issues; commissions of the central committee should be established to address foreign policy issues; and *glasnost* means pluralism of opinion on any question of domestic and foreign policy.⁴⁵ Soon after, Foreign Minister Sheverdnadze added that when key issues of foreign and domestic policy are under discussion, "the appearance of different, perhaps diametrically opposite, views is a natural phenomenon."⁴⁶

Izvestiya's political commentator Aleksandr Bovin has been in the forefront of the movement to extend *glasnost* to foreign policy. Contending in an interview that "Foreign policy was affected by the ulcers of Stalinism," Bovin gave examples of the difficulties facing Soviet journalists who wanted to write about foreign affairs: "what is one to do? Journalists are denied the opportunity to carry out objective [reports].... Our political and moral duty is to tell the people the truth about Afghanistan. The Soviet people did not accept this war, and the country's political leadership did the only thing it could do."⁴⁷ The new style of

reporting on Afghanistan, however, was pioneered by Artyem Borovik (the son of a well-known political commentator and Chairman of the Soviet peace committee, Genrikh Borovik).

Ogonyok, *Moscow News*, and *Sobesednik*, the weekly supplement to *Komsomolskaya pravda*, led the way by acknowledging that there was a considerable antipathy among youth towards what was happening in Afghanistan. Reflecting the beginning of a new candor in the Soviet press insofar as discussing popular attitudes towards the war in Afghanistan were concerned, a Ukrainian youth newspaper published an outspoken protest from the mother of two draftees in which she objected to the way the media dealt with the war in Afghanistan.⁴⁸ She complained that it was only the sons of ordinary workers who were sent into battle. A public opinion poll carried out by the Sociological Research Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the French polling organization IPSOS revealed that 53% of the 1,000 Muscovites who took part favored the total withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.⁴⁹ *Glasnost* on Afghanistan became even more pronounced in the Soviet media as the efforts aimed at political settlement entered their final phase. The size of the Soviet "contingent" in Afghanistan was made public, and their casualties were disclosed. According to General Lizichev more than 35,000 suffered some permanent disability.⁵⁰ Money was collected for the construction of a hospital in Alma-Ata for them.⁵¹ Their performance and difficulties were discussed with an unprecedented frankness. Many private associations of Afghan veterans were encouraged to emerge, some even to share their experiences with their American counterparts from the Vietnam War. Some 8,000 "Blue Beret" paratroop veterans were allowed to congregate from all over the country for a reunion. The cornerstone for an Afghan war veterans' monument was laid and the Soviet government made some effort to meet the veterans' demands for recognition. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, started an unusual crusade to honor the POWs and to reexamine the cases of soldiers charged with collaborating while captive.

Although Soviet reporting from Afghanistan began to give a more realistic picture of the combat and the strength of the *Mujahideen*, the uninformative style of the past continued in most press reports, causing some Soviet readers to register their protest. In June 1987, in the *Moscow News*, a Soviet officer gave readers hard figures on the scale of opposition in Afghanistan: "At present the armed gangs number over 100,000 [and are] subdivided into 3,000 groups and units."⁵² The same month a report stated that the *Mujahideen* had staged over 2,000 attacks since January, while in July a Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman admitted that Soviet/Afghan forces were suffering from the effects of improved *Mujahideen* anti-aircraft capability.⁵³ Many reports portrayed the heroism of gunship and aircraft pilots.⁵⁴ An Afghan official was reported as having said that the resistance attacks on the Soviet-Afghan garrisons had increased four- to five-fold since the cease-fire was declared.⁵⁵

More importantly however, depictions of the horrors of the war as seen by the soldiers also began to surface.⁵⁶ While the authors of this spate of reports looked more frankly at the war, they by no means opposed it. Many articles in the Soviet armed forces daily continued to balance the grim realities of the war

with optimism. Increasingly, articles appeared that carried letters to the editor criticizing the melodramatic and uninformative media coverage of the war.⁵⁸ *Pravda* admitted that past coverage had dealt only with such things as Soviet soldiers planting friendship trees and Soviet doctors delivering the children of Afghan women. Citing a letter from an angry father whose son had died in Afghanistan, it wrote: "Our mass media... reflects events occurring in Afghanistan very superficially, in a fragmented way, and even at times unrealistically...."⁵⁹ *Pravda* discussed readers' letters about earlier articles on Afghanistan and the plight of the returning veterans. These letters suggested that popular discontent with the war was growing, in part because the sons of the party elite reportedly managed to get out of serving in Afghanistan.⁶⁰

A *Literaturnaya gazeta* report asserted that the sons and grandsons of "writers, cultural figures, and high ranking administrators" were under-represented among the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.⁶¹ In a letter quoted in *Pravda*, a Moscow worker asserted that "the war in Afghanistan would have ended long ago if, along with the sons of workers, collective farmers, and the intelligentsia, the children of the leaders were sent there as well."⁶² This was perhaps the first time that the central press had broached the issue directly.⁶³ Further, many stories appeared exposing the shabby treatment accorded returning *Afghansky* (Afghan veterans), by local bureaucrats and ordinary citizens.⁶⁴ Such themes as the poor treatment of veterans had appeared earlier in 1984 during the time of Konstantin Chernenko.⁶⁵

Many reports indicated that the Afghan war had become unpopular among the Soviet rank-and-file deployed in Afghanistan. According to Vladimir Nadein, the letters editor of *Izvestiya*, at first the letters about Afghanistan were guarded, hinting in 1986 and 1987 at doubts, anger, frustration. But since then they have grown in volume and boldness.⁶⁶ According to Borovik, only five % of the letters received by the magazine *Ogonyok* — mainly from the veterans of the Second World War — demanded that the war be continued to a "victorious end"; the overwhelming majority had demanded an immediate end to the war and Soviet involvement.⁶⁷

Concurrently, this self-criticism was accompanied by a critical look at the PDPA, its program, leadership and government in Kabul. In an editorial, *Pravda* conceded that "far from all people in Afghanistan," even "the working sections of the population," had not accepted the April Revolution.⁶⁸ Nodari Simoniya, one of the most influential scholars on third world revolutions referred to the PDPA reforms as "absolutely foolish" and "really adventurist."⁶⁹ Simoniya also reversed the previously granted revolutionary status of the PDPA and added that it had a "very narrow base" and that it "was a revolutionary democratic party which needed consolidation and required the presence of a Communist Party...but the country was not ready for such radical reforms."⁷⁰

In July 1987, a Soviet daily gave its readers a glimpse of how vulnerable even Kabul was to the *Mujahideen*.⁷¹ *Ogonyok* provided a trooper's eye-view of Najibullah's policy of national reconciliation, which Gorbachev praised in his February 1988 offer to withdraw from Afghanistan. A Soviet soldier sarcastically remarked to Artyem Borovik, "If I did not read [Soviet] papers, I would

never know that we are in full flush of 'reconciliation.'"72 Borovik himself commented in an article, "From what I read in the Soviet press, I expected to see the basis of a socialist economy in Afghanistan. I discovered that socialism had not taken roots there."⁷³

In the most pessimistic assessment published in the USSR, Major General Kim M. Tsagolov, a military advisor in Afghanistan from 1981 to 1984 and again in 1987, and a specialist from the Frunze Military Academy, described in *Ogonyok* that the PDPA, preoccupied with factional fighting, had lost by antagonizing believers, and mismanaging the land reforms. He acknowledged that the events that brought the PDPA to power were, in fact, "a military coup" which had "the potential to turn into a national democratic revolution.... Unfortunately, that did not happen." Saying that "a significant part of the people moved away from the party and stopped believing in it as a leading force that is capable of carrying out its reform plans," General Tsagolov criticized the Najib government for trying to negotiate a coalition government with guerrilla leaders based in Pakistan, a tactic which, he said, was unrealistic; instead it should concentrate on coopting the regional guerrilla leaders.⁷⁴ Although some analysts had previously criticized the decision to send forces into Afghanistan, it was the first time that the PDPA was directly criticized and that the prospects were so grimly portrayed.

Concurrently, the media coverage of many Afghan field commanders became extremely positive and Artyem Borovik, even described Ahmed Shah Massud, a field commander in the northern provinces, as "bright and diplomatic."⁷⁵ Such efforts were coupled with changes in the Soviet lexicon: instead of referring to the resistance as bandits and mercenaries, they were now referred to as the "misguided" Afghans. Gorbachev himself, in his speech at Vladivostock, labelled them as "patriots living on the other side of the border." Artyem Borovik later highlighted the irony: "Now, even in our press, we do not call the Mujahideen enemies. Simply, 'the armed opposition'. What kind of war is it where there is no enemy?"⁷⁶

This opened a Pandora's box on the intervention itself, and on the nature of decision-making during Brezhnev's period. Vyacheslav Dashichev of the Institute for Socialist World Economics asserted that the Soviet national interest did not lie in "chasing petty and essentially formal gains associated with leadership coups in developing countries." The elitist nature of foreign policy decision-making, the distorted picture of the outside world and the Soviet Union's isolation from the international community doomed it to stagnation.⁷⁷ Commenting on the decisionmaking process during the Brezhnev years, Yevgeni Primakov, director of the Soviet Institute of the World Economy and International Relations, stated that Soviet foreign policy generally was formulated with only one or two options open to the leadership, and alternative policies were never examined.⁷⁸ Genrikh Borovik, a journalist and head of the Soviet Peace Committee, said that further error in the way Soviet foreign policy was formulated was due to the virtual exclusion of most citizens, even Communist Party members, from the process: "We often ignored public opinion, or failed to take it into consideration, and we acted on the assumption that we had a

monopoly on the truth.”⁷⁹ That the Brezhnev team used activism in the Third World in order to divert attention from domestic problems, was conceded by Oleg Bogomolov, director of the Institute of the Economy of the World Socialist System: the government had erred for many years in believing that there were foreign policy solutions to problems, particularly economic development, that actually required domestic policy changes.⁸⁰ Aleksandr Bovin stated bluntly that the introduction of troops into Afghanistan reflected an excessive tendency to use military force in Soviet foreign policy.⁸¹

Aleksandr Prokhanov, who for years had devoted his efforts to justifying the invasion of Afghanistan, acknowledged of the failure of that policy: “When we sent in the troops, we assumed... (that) the internal civil strife would eventually die down.... It did not happen.” Prokhanov noted the impact of the war at home:

“In society the questions grow. They cannot be avoided. They are asked in families and in private conversations, they are beginning to be heard at public meetings, tomorrow they will burst forth in the press, breaking the many years’ silence... Only God and the top politicians knew how they agonized over the decision.... An incorrect prediction was made,... experts were wrong in their assessments of the situation in the country, mistakes were made by specialists in Islam, diplomats, politicians, the military.”⁸²

In response, Academician Bogomolov, one of Gorbachev’s economic advisors, said that his Institute was opposed to the intervention.⁸³ This was the first time that the Soviet press had published material showing that the decision to send forces into Afghanistan was contested within the foreign policy establishment.

Thus, Soviet commentators and officials began to speak with increasing frankness about the blunders that led them into the Afghan conflict. Vladimir Snegirev, a journalist who spent a year in Afghanistan, noted a certain “enigma” about the way Soviet forces went there.⁸⁴ Many Soviet observers asserted that in 1979 the leadership did not anticipate a major, long-term crisis. Aleksandr Bovin, for example, asserted that “the whole structure of the Afghan operation — its supply lines, the infrastructure — presupposed a short operation of a year, perhaps even less.”⁸⁵ Aleksandr Prokhanov, likewise, said that the widespread assumption was that casualties in Afghanistan would not exceed those of a major military exercise. According to Prokhanov, by 1984 the casualties had become a problem. The losses generated internal political pressure, with letters to the leadership, editors, and complaints from intellectuals. This peaked at the end of 1986, according to Prokhanov, and Afghanistan thus became an “extremely acute internal problem.”⁸⁶ Snegirev contended that the “introduction of Soviet troops there did more harm than good - to our country, Afghanistan, the Afghan revolution, and the world in general.” The intervention was a “detonator” that seriously complicated the situation, and provided the *Mujahideen* with a “wonderful trump card.” Soviet advisors did not understand the situation on the

ground and "There was a very large amount of stupid advice."⁸⁷ As part of such frank discussions and admissions, Gennadi Gerasimov, head of Information for the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs said: "We will think twice, thrice, before we move in again... An intervention like this is not going to happen. I cannot foresee it."⁸⁸

Evidence of disenchantment on the home front was complemented by frank reporting on the war itself. Although Borovik explicitly rejected attempts to draw parallels between Afghanistan and Vietnam, his articles have drawn from *Dispatches* (1977) by the American journalist Michael Herr. Citing Herr he even wrote, "I went to cover the war, and the war covered me."⁸⁹ Saying that a soldier in Afghanistan sees more in three months than a civilian might see in seventy years, Borovik further predicted that "something called 'Afghanistan syndrome'" would emerge and that "it would be more serious than the war itself".⁹⁰

CONCLUSIONS

This discussion has underlined some similarities and dissimilarities between Western and Soviet media coverage of the Afghan conflict. Ironically, Soviet and Western media coverage have been, in some respects, mirror images of each other. Just as the Western media did not entertain any claims of consolidation by the Kabul regime, Soviet media publicists routinely dismissed everything that the *Mujahideen* claimed. The Western media perceived the Karmal regime as Moscow's puppet brought to power on Russian tanks. Moscow characterized the Zia regime as serving American interests in South-west Asia and kept in power by generous American aid. Islamabad and Washington refused to negotiate with Kabul about the future political settlement of the crisis. Likewise, Moscow refused to speak with Islamabad, saying that the crisis was a problem "around Afghanistan" to be resolved directly with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moscow also perceived the Zia government in Pakistan as transitory, hoping that it would come to an end soon. Likewise in the West, the Kabul regime from its inception was thought to be an aberration that would crumble once the Soviet troops were withdrawn.

In many respects, however, any comparison is unfair because the purpose, philosophy and the mechanisms of journalism in these two societies during the 1980s were aimed at fundamentally different objectives, and they performed profoundly different roles. The practice of competition between various western newsagencies and newspapers, as well as motives of profit that promised extensive coverage and shades of opinion on Afghanistan, was absent in the Soviet case. Soviet journalists, fundamentally subordinate to the official line, for the most part tried to keep the war secret from the Soviet public; whereas, the Western journalists sometimes even risked their lives to report the combat from a landlocked distant land. Having said this, mainstream Western media coverage - unlike that on other regional conflicts like Nicaragua and Angola - has been by and large in line with Administration perceptions and policy postures. It should be emphasized that the failures of Western reportage allowed a situation to develop where until recently there was little critique of

or pressure against some of the rationales advanced for an American policy that has led to a diplomatic, political and military impasse.

Even if western coverage of the Afghan conflict was far greater than the state controlled Soviet media's, it did not necessarily always entail quality and maturity. Objectivity in Western media reporting on Afghanistan has rarely been attainable. For the most part, therefore, dogmatism and dullness were not exclusive to the Soviet media.

Unlike a total war, where a nation's territorial integrity and national security are threatened and which demands total patriotism from the media, limited wars in distant lands demand limited patriotism and the limited sacrifice of truth, as has been the case in all regional conflicts in which the United States was involved since the Second World War. The more the wars are limited the greater is the degree of dissent. Afghanistan perhaps is the lone exception in which the mainstream Western media showed little, if any, dissension to Washington's handling of the largest covert operation since the Vietnam War. Even now, when the *Mujahideen* have not been able to over-run Kabul and Washington's earlier optimism is fast eroding, the media has been critical of the "handling" of the war, but not of the Administration's policy itself.

Under Gorbachev, the Soviet media coverage has moved from a spirit of self-congratulation, to utter frustration and cynicism to national soul-searching. Despite profound changes in Soviet media coverage under Gorbachev's rubric of *glasnost*, it would be inaccurate to conclude that media in Soviet Union was instrumental in bringing the "undeclared war" in Afghanistan to Soviet living rooms, as did the coverage of the Vietnam war to the American people. Nevertheless, under Gorbachev the Soviet media did use the Afghan war as a vehicle for political change by raising questions about how they entered the war, who was responsible, and what its lessons were — questions on which hinged the success of the unfolding programs of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. In all, it would appear that in recent years, the Soviet media has aspired to both disseminate information and manipulate public opinion. Thus, even if the Soviet media did not provide a lead for the policy changes on Afghanistan, it did, nevertheless, facilitate somewhat Gorbachev's decision to disengage and withdraw from Afghanistan.

Endnotes

1. This is a revised and updated version of the paper delivered at the Conference on "The Media and Modern Warfare," organized by the Centre for Conflict Studies, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B. Canada, held on 29 September to 1 October 1988. The research for this study was assisted by an award from the Social Science Research Council by an International Fellowship for the Development of Soviet Studies.
2. Herb Altschull, *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs* (White Plains: Longman, 1983).

3. Walter C. Soderlund, "A Comparison of Press Coverage in Canada and the United States of the 1982 and 1984 Salvadoran Elections," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XXIII, no. 1 (March 1990); Richard V. Ericson, Patricia M. Baranek and Janet B.L. Chan, *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); W. Lance Bennett, Lynne A. Gressett and William Hatton, "Repairing the News: A Case Study of the News Paradigm," *Journal of Communication*, 35 (1985), pp. 50-68.
4. Philip Knightly, *The First Casualty* (New York: Harvest Books, 1975).
5. One of these was the Afghan Documentation Center (ADC). It was headed by Sayed Bahaudin Majrouh until he was assassinated in February 1988, after his publication of a controversial survey in the refugee camps, showing that most of them preferred the former King Zahir Shah to the Peshawar-based leaders. Since 1980 ADC published a monthly news bulletin that was widely read by Western correspondents. See, files of his *Monthly Bulletin*. The Afghan Information and Documentation Center (AIDC) and the Writer's Union for Free Afghanistan (WUFA) also try to avoid any direct affiliation with the *Mujahideen* parties. In recent years, however, the Afghan Media Resource Centre (AMRC), has emerged as the biggest source of print news, photographs and videotapes. Since 1985, the AMRC has trained the Afghan guerrillas in news reporting at Boston University and has also provided them with cameras.
6. The United Press International (UPI), during the same period, carried 555 news items on Afghanistan, of which 73 were wired from Kabul, 92 from Islamabad, 62 from Moscow, and 91 from Washington. These figures are compiled by the author on the basis of computerized data searches.
7. Most of the component parties of the Peshawar-based seven party alliance run their own news agencies. Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbadin Hikmatyar controls both the Islamabad-based Afghan News Agency (ANA) — which was initially set up to work as the official arm of the Afghan Interim Government — and the Peshawar-based Mujahid Press Agency (MPA). The Rawalpindi-based Agency Afghan Press (AAP) although not formally affiliated to any Afghan party also gives larger coverage to the Hikmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami. The Hezb-i-Islami of Maulvi Yunis Khalis runs the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP); Ittehad-i-Islami Of Professor Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf controls the Saudi and Egyptian funded Al-Bunyan; Jamiat-i-Islami of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani controls the Media Information Department of Islamic Afghanistan (MIDIA). The MIDIA was supposed to be the organ of the IUAM and all existing cultural and press organs of the component parties were to be merged in it. The Chitral-based Afghan Press International (API) reports on the military operations in northern Afghanistan and is believed to favor the Rabbani group. The two moderate parties — Maulvi Nabi Mohammedi's Harkat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami and Professor Sebghatulla Mojadeddi's Afghan National Liberation Front (ANLF) — do not have full-fledged news agencies and have suffered the most due to lack of proper coverage. See, Rahimullah Yusufzai, "The other Afghan war," *Newsline*, (Karachi), (September 1989), pp. 57-58.
8. Ironically, Arthur Bonner of the *New York Times*, was the single full-time correspondent assigned to cover only Afghanistan in 1985. See Julian Gearing, "Western media coverage of the war in Afghanistan", *Free Afghanistan* (London), no. 3 (Spring 1986), pp. 11-13.
9. "French journalist convicted of espionage," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 January 1988, p. 3. This does not include an American journalist Karin Wimberger, a freelance from Los Angeles, who died of hepatitis; "American dies in Afghanistan", *The New York Times* (hereafter, *NYT*), 18 November 1988, p. 4. During the period, only one Soviet journalist, a photo journalist from *Izvestiya*, was reported to have been killed in Afghanistan. See, "Soviet photographer killed," *NYT*, 6 May 1988, p. 6.
10. The most famous cases in this regard have been those of the French journalist Jacques Abouchar, who was imprisoned for 18 years in 1984, and Alain Guillo who was charged in 1987; both were later released under international pressures.

11. One major exception to this general rule has been Edward Girardet of the *Christian Science Monitor* (hereafter, *CSM*); See also Olivier Roy's *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), which is based on his several secret visits inside Afghanistan.
12. The best known example in this regard has been the death in 1987 of a British television journalist Andy Skrzypkowiak, and the murder of Thierry Niquet in 1986, who were reportedly killed by Hezb-i-Islami commanders. Some have also reported the detention of journalists and/or confiscation of their camera, including kidnapping of ten French doctors and relief workers. George Arney, "Another aspect of war in Afghanistan," *Frontier Post* (Peshawar), 11 January 1988; See also, Ahmed Rashid, "The press on Afghanistan," *The Nation* (monthly), 20 February 1988.
13. Michael Browning, "Soviet exit starts amid bloodbath," *The Miami Herald*, 5 May 1988, p. 1; See also, Bernard Weinraub, "In Kabul, rumors and rockets fly," *NYT*, 3 September 1988, p. 3.
14. Michael Pillsbury (Assistant Undersecretary for Policy Planning in the Department of Defence), for example, was fired from office by Admiral Poindexter, National Security Advisor in the Reagan Administration, for leaking information to press to bring pressure to bear on the White House to improve the quality of weaponry for the Afghan rebels. See, Elie Abel, *Leaking: Who Does It? Who Benefits? At What Cost?* (New York: Priority Publications, 1987).
15. John D.H. Downing, "Trouble in the backyard: Soviet media reporting on the Afghanistan conflict," *Journal of Communications*, 8 (Spring 1988), pp. 5-32.
16. *Sovetskaya kirgiziya*, 23 June 1987.
17. R. Masov, "Basmachestvo — Uroki istorii," *Kommunist tadzhikistana*, 13 January 1982.
18. See, for example, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 19 March 1980, and, *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, 28 February 1980.
19. The Soviet media, however, had its own subtle ways of expressing occasional dissent from the official positions. In a rare photograph showing the Afghans demonstrating in support of the PDPA government published in the Defence Ministry's daily newspaper, *Krasnaya zvezda* (15 April 1979), the banners were photographed from the back so that the print on them could not be read. It was perhaps a backhanded suggestion that support for the Kabul government was narrow and limited.
20. *Pravda*, 5 February 1980.
21. *Pravda*, 6, 7 January 1980; see also, *NYT*, 8 January 1980.
22. *New Times*, 7 (1981).
23. *Pravda*, 17 October 1980; V. Shurgin, "Base for aggression," *Pravda*, 10 April 1985, cited in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (hereafter, *CDS*), no. 37, p. 15.
24. A. Vlasov, "Lackeys of American Imperialism," *Izvestiya*, 29 March 1981, cited in *CDS*, no. 31, p. 13; I. Garbuzov, "Pakistan in U.S. aggressive strategy," *Soviet Military Review* (February 1984), pp. 51-53.
25. See for example, *Pravda*, 8 January 1980.
26. V. Volodin, "Peking manoeuvres in South Asia," *International Affairs* (November 1978), pp. 19-27.
27. Oleg Kitsenko, "On a dangerous road," *Pravda*, 29 June 1979, cited in *CDS*, no. 31, p. 26.
28. *Pravda*, 7 July 1980.
29. See, for example, *Pravda*, 22 December 1980; *Krasnaya zvezda*, 27 February 1983.
30. *Pravda*, 31 December 1984.
31. *Pravda*, 7 December 1982.

32. *Pravda*, 13 April 1986, cited in *CDSP*, no. 38, p. 15.
33. *Pravda*, 8 and 9 August 1989, and 15 and 21 February 1980.
34. See, for example, *Turkmenkaya iskra*, 11 March 1980 and A. Nikonenko, "Mesto Sluzby — Afghanistan," *Pravda vostoka*, 17 June 1985, as cited in Marie Broxup, "Afghanistan according to Soviet sources, 1980-1985," *Central Asian Survey*, no. 7, 2/3 (1988).
35. *Komsomolskaya pravda*, 10 February 1984, cited in Taras Kuzio, "Opposition in the USSR to the occupation of Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey*, no. 6, 1 (1987), pp. 99-117.
36. *Krasnaya zvezda*, 26 February 1983.
37. Donald Mahoney, "Soviet press enters new stage in coverage of Afghan war," *RadioLiberty Research* (RL) 337/87, 18 August 1987, pp. 1-4.
38. *Pravda*, 12 December 1985.
39. *Sovetskaya rossiya*, 1 and 5 February 1986, cited in Vera Tolz, "Little 'Glasnost' in the local press," RL 72/86, 12 February 1986, pp. 1-2.
40. *Izvestiya*, 18 January 1986.
41. *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, 21 May 1987; for a similar criticism by Boris Tumanov, see *Zhurnalist*, (June 1986).
42. *Pravda*, 30 March 1987.
43. Vera Tolz, "Calls for change in Soviet reporting on foreign affairs," RL 328/87, 5 August 1987, pp. 1-5.
44. See, for example, *Vek XX i mir*, 1 (January 1988), pp. 42-47.
45. *Pravda*, 29 June 1988.
46. *Pravda*, 26 July 1988.
47. See for example, his interview, "Tretya Sproba," *Molod Ukrainy*, 23 June 1988, pp. 1-3, as cited in Bohdan Nahaylo, "Aleksandr Bovin gives candid interview to Ukrainian newspaper on Soviet foreign and nationalities policies," RL 297/88, 30 June 1988, pp. 1-4.
48. *Molod ukrainy*, 15 January 1987, cited in Bohdan Nahaylo, "Ukrainian mother protests Soviet media coverage of the war in Afghanistan," RL 34/87, 22 January 1987, pp. 1-5.
49. *Le Point*, 789, 2 November 1987, p. 47.
50. *Tass*, 25 May 1988, cited in Valerii Konovalov, "Reintegrating Afghan veterans into civilian life," RL 425/88, 19 September 1988, pp. 1-5.
51. *Pravda*, 4 April 1987.
52. *Moscow News*, no. 25, 21 June 1987.
53. Briefing by Boris Pyadyshchev, *Tass*, 16 July 1987.
54. See for example, *Aviatsiya i kosmonavtika*, 6 (June 1987), and, *Komsomolets Uzbekistana*, 23 July 1987.
55. *Ogonyok* 29, 1987.
56. *Ogonyok* 28 & 29, 1987.
57. *Krasnaya zvezda*, 26 July 1987.
58. See, for example, "Ukrainian mother protests . . ." RL 34/87; "Ukrainian mother's protest attracts numerous letters on the Afghan theme," RL 188/87, 27 May 1987.
59. *Pravda*, 5 August 1987.
60. Aaron Trehub, "Popular discontent with the war in Afghanistan," RL 483/87, 30 November 1987, pp. 1-4.

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61. *Literaturnaya gazeta* 42, 1987.
62. *Pravda*, 25 November 1987.
63. Previously, similar themes had appeared in the regional press. In July 1986, for example, the armed forces daily had hinted that the chief editor of the journal *Sovetsky uzbekistan* had used his influence to get his son's marching orders changed from Afghanistan, "A Chto za Otpiskoi?," *Krasnaya zvezda*, 11 July 1986.
64. See, for example, *Pravda*, 4 April, 5 August, 1987.
65. "What is in store for wounded veterans of the Afghanistan war," RL 282/84, 20 July 1984.
66. Philip Taubman, "More war for Afghan," *NYT*, 15 April 1988, p. 1.
67. Artyem Borovik, "What kind of war was this?," *U.S. News & World Report*, 30 May 1988, p. 32; see also, David Shipler, "For Soviet soldiers, dread and duty," *NYT* 28 April 1988, p. 6.
68. *Pravda*, 21 December 1985.
69. Interview with Lawrence Lifschultz, "Afghanistan: a voice from Moscow," *Monthly Review*, (September 1987), pp. 9-19.
70. Xan Smiley, "Soviet body count in Afghan war put at 12,000-15,000," *Washington Times*, 20 May 1988, p. 8.
71. *Trud*, 11 July 1987.
72. Paul Quinn-Judge, "Gorbachev offers date for Afghan pullout," *CSM*, 9 February 1988, p. 1.
73. A. Borovik, "What kind of war," see also his, "The hidden war," *Life*, (February 1988), pp. 100-106.
74. Bill Keller, "Soviet general declared Kabul could collapse," *NYT*, 23 July 1988, p. 1.
75. Paul Quinn-Judge, "Soviets to embrace foe" *CSM*, 19 October, p. 1.
76. A. Borovik, "What kind of war."
77. Richard Beeston, "Soviet journal blames USSR for late-70s confrontation," *WT*, 20 May 1988, p. 8.
78. "Soviets: we share fault in conflicts," *The Miami Herald*, 26 June 1988, p.1.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Izvestiya*, 15 June 1988.
82. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 17 February 1988.
83. *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 16 March 1988.
84. Paul Quinn-Judge, "Soviet look back on 'Short War' ... that wasn't," *CSM*, 13 April 1988, p. 1.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. *Ibid.*
88. Paul Quinn-Judge, "In Moscow, relief over Afghan pullout," *CSM*, 14 April 1988, p. 7.
89. A. Borovik, "What kind of war,"; see also, "Popular discontent."
90. A. Borovik, "The sounds of war and peace," *US News and World Report*, 18 April 1988, p. 49.