

afgantsy the russians in afghanistan 1979 1989 rodric braithwaite

Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-1989 by Rodric Braithwaite is a comprehensive account of the Soviet Union's tumultuous decade-long involvement in Afghanistan. This conflict, often referred to as the Soviet-Afghan War, was not only a pivotal moment in the Cold War but also a significant chapter in the history of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union itself. Braithwaite, a former British diplomat and historian, delves deeply into the political, social, and military aspects of this conflict, offering insights that resonate well beyond the battlefield.

Historical Context

The Soviet Union's Strategic Interests

In the late 1970s, Afghanistan was strategically important to the Soviet Union for several reasons:

1. Geopolitical Position: Afghanistan shared borders with several key countries, including Iran, Pakistan, and China. Control over Afghanistan would give the USSR a foothold in South Asia.
2. Ideological Expansion: The Soviet leadership aimed to spread communism and viewed the Afghan government's leftist orientation as an opportunity to expand their influence.
3. Buffer Zone: A friendly regime in Kabul would serve as a buffer against Western influence in the region, particularly from the United States and its allies.

The Rise of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)

The PDPA, a communist party, came to power in Afghanistan through a coup in 1978, known as the Saur Revolution. The party's radical reforms, including land redistribution and women's rights, were met with fierce resistance from traditionalist segments of Afghan society. The unrest escalated, prompting the Soviet Union to intervene militarily in December 1979.

The Invasion and Initial Engagement

Operation Storm-333

The Soviet invasion commenced with Operation Storm-333, which aimed to secure Kabul and eliminate key Afghan leaders. This operation saw:

- The deployment of approximately 100,000 Soviet troops.
- A swift takeover of the capital, Kabul, but significant resistance from Afghan mujahideen fighters.

Military Strategy and Tactics

The Soviet military employed various strategies:

1. Conventional Warfare: Initially, the Soviets used conventional forces, tanks, and heavy artillery to suppress resistance.
2. Air Support: The use of helicopters and fighter jets was crucial in maintaining control over key regions.
3. Search and Destroy Missions: Ground forces engaged in operations to eradicate mujahideen strongholds,

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main focus of 'Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-1989' by Rodric Braithwaite?

The book provides a detailed account of the Soviet-Afghan War, exploring the political, military, and social aspects of the conflict from the perspective of the Soviet Union.

How does Braithwaite portray the Soviet military strategy in Afghanistan?

Braithwaite critiques the Soviet military strategy as flawed, highlighting issues such as underestimating the resistance and the challenges posed by the rugged terrain.

What sources did Rodric Braithwaite use to write 'Afgantsy'?

Braithwaite utilized a variety of sources, including Soviet military archives, interviews with veterans, and personal accounts to provide a comprehensive narrative.

What were some of the key consequences of the Soviet

invasion of Afghanistan discussed in the book?

The book discusses the long-term consequences, including the rise of extremist groups, the destabilization of the region, and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

How does Braithwaite address the experiences of Afghan civilians during the war?

Braithwaite highlights the suffering of Afghan civilians, detailing the impact of the conflict on their lives and the widespread displacement and destruction caused by the war.

What insights does 'Afgantsy' provide about the international response to the Soviet invasion?

The book examines the international response, including the support for Afghan mujahideen by the U.S. and other countries, and how this influenced the dynamics of the war.

What is the historical significance of the Soviet-Afghan War as discussed in Braithwaite's work?

The war is portrayed as a pivotal moment in Cold War history, impacting U.S.-Soviet relations and contributing to significant geopolitical changes in the region.

How does 'Afgantsy' compare the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to other military conflicts?

Braithwaite draws parallels between the Soviet experience in Afghanistan and other military conflicts, emphasizing themes of overreach, guerrilla warfare, and the challenges of counterinsurgency.

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