

## **What was the impact of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979?**

In 1978 the Afghan communist party took power... leading to resistance across the country. To protect Afghanistan's government from the rebels, the USSR invaded in December, 1979.

This led to the end of detente and a new era of superpower tensions.

The Americans saw it as Soviet aggression...

... and in 1980 established the Carter Doctrine, which committed the US to defending the Middle East from Soviet invasion.

Both sides also increased defence spending and withdrew from each others' Olympic Games. Meanwhile, the USSR was struggling against Mujahideen rebels in Afghanistan.

The anti-Communist guerrilla fighters were adding yet another strain to the Soviet system...  
... with thousands of Soviet soldiers dying, citizens sceptical about official propaganda, and fewer goods on shelves at home due to resources being diverted to the war.

Soviet weakness contrasted with American strength.

By 1984 the U.S. economy was booming, and President Reagan spent heavily on defence, putting further pressure on the USSR to keep up.

This trend continued in the late 1980s, as Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduced reforms that weakened the USSR militarily and helped contribute to the end of the Cold War.

By 1989, and the Soviet's final withdrawal, Afghanistan itself was war-torn. Over a million civilians were estimated to have died, roads and buildings were destroyed, and, as Afghans fled the conflict, refugee crises developed in Iran and Pakistan.

The Soviet invasion of 1979 had a huge impact on Afghanistan, the US and the USSR, and was one of the factors that led to the end of the Cold War.