

**External Pressures on the USSR:
Afghanistan**

- Another reason for the decline and collapse of Soviet control over Eastern Europe is the war fought by the USSR in Afghanistan between 1979-1989.
- Read through the following 20 statements, highlighting key words as you do so.
- Then, organise the information under sensible headings which will help you to understand how the invasion of Afghanistan undermined the USSR. For example, you may wish to use thematic headings (Military / Political / Economic etc), geographical ones (Afghanistan, USA, USSR). Discuss your thoughts in groups, then as a class, before setting to work.
- Finally, add a picture to symbolise each category which will help for revision purposes.



Figure 1: Osama bin Laden

1. In 1978 control of Afghanistan was seized by the communist Babrak Karmal.	2. As soon as he took control of Afghanistan, Karmal "invited" the Red Army of the USSR to provide him with assistance against his opponents.	3. The USSR responded to Karmal's request by sending 100,000 conscripts into Afghanistan within 4 months.	4. The USSR was determined that Afghanistan should not turn into a fundamentalist Muslim state as had recently happened in Iran
5. It soon became clear to the USSR that this vast, inhospitable country would not be easily defeated.	6. The war lasted for 10 years, and ended with the USSR withdrawing in humiliation.	7. In the international community, there was a backlash against the USSR as a result of its actions.	8. Many countries boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics, including the USA.
9. President Carter of the USA described the invasion as "The greatest threat to world peace since World War Two".	10. The government of the USSR denied any casualties in Afghanistan for over a year after the invasion.	11. According to official statistics, 15,000 Soviet soldiers (mostly unwilling conscripts) lost their lives.	12. According to unofficial statistics, 45,000 Soviet soldiers lost their lives.
13. Most Soviet soldiers were unwilling conscripts taken from border regions and small villages.	14. The war cost the USSR \$8.2 billion a year for ten years.	15. Afghanistan was transformed into a weak state full of religious hatred: a breeding ground for terrorism.	16. A million Afghans were killed, and the survivors were a generation that had known only war, hatred, and fear.
17 Homes, animals, and precious irrigation systems in Afghanistan were destroyed, leaving the country barren and ruined.	18. The USA supplied Islamic "Freedom Fighters" with weapons to use against the USSR throughout the duration of the war.	19. Osama bin Laden fought the Soviets with weapons provided by the USA and by using highly effective guerrilla tactics.	20. Al-Q'aeda still uses American weapons it was given during the war to fight American and British troops today.



Recommended Film: The Kite Runner is a 2007 film directed by Marc Forster based on the novel of the same name by Khaled Hosseini. It tells the story of Amir, a well-to-do boy from the Wazir Akbar Khan district of Kabul, who is tormented by the guilt of abandoning his friend Hassan, the son of his father's Hazara servant. The story is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, from the fall of the monarchy in Afghanistan through the Soviet invasion, the mass exodus of refugees to Pakistan and the United States, and the Taliban regime.