

Book Release (in Greek language): “The Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan The Geopolitical Analysis of the Causes” by Dr. Ioannis P. Sotiropoulos, Leimon publishing company, 2021, Athens, Greece.

Dr. Ioannis P. Sotiropoulos demonstrates scientific precision and methodological rigor, producing a work that can be ranked among the most important on the Afghanistan issue. The work of Sotiropoulos contributes decisively to the clarification of the causes of the soviet intervention in Afghanistan, since, among other things, he reconstructs with precision, patience and meticulous documentation the timeline of the decision-making by the official bodies of the Soviet Union, within the geopolitical framework of the Cold War.

The scientific supra-value of the work at the geopolitical, political, historical and diplomatic level is particularly important, since by making use of all new declassified, mainly soviet and american, primary sources, indicating a third, more valid, interpretation of an international political-military event, which for 35 consecutive years has been interpreted only with two ways by the international academic and research community. Along similar, this book is certainly a top analysis of the decision-making process in authoritarian regimes, as it certainly interprets the high risk of organizational and operational weaknesses in this process. Particularly in the case the author deals with (given the inadequacy of the soviet administrative and organizational system during the late Brezhnev period), he, *inter alia*, masterfully analyzes the penetration, influence and instrumentalization of the bureaucracy, on the one hand at the level of soviet state institutions and agencies, on the other hand, to the catalytic factor of the personal ambitions of the soviet leaders, a given, which decisively influenced the decision for the soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

More specifically, the current innovative work explores the motivations and causes of the soviet intervention in Afghanistan, by examining all available interpretations and goes a step further by proposing a new perspective for the soviet move. Contrary to the widespread academic views about the motivations and causes of the soviet intervention, the author argues that this was, on one hand, outcome of bureaucratic

policies and interests, and on the other, of the dysfunctional organizational structure and functioning in Kremlin, in late 1970s. In the same vein, the decision to intervene was made within the limits set by the soviet concept of Marxism-Leninism at the time as well as the Soviet Theory of International Relations, both affecting, *mutatis mutandis*, the options available in the decision making process of the soviet leadership. Consequently, the research concludes that none of the conventional views about the causes and motivations triggered the soviet move are confirmed. Indeed, the soviet move was neither aggressive in nature, as the Traditionalists believed, nor defensive in nature, as the Revisionists claimed, nor a combination of the two above. The evaluation and analysis of new primary material shows that these interpretations proved to be largely unrelated to what actually happened, as they were heavily influenced by the Cold War environment of the time. On the contrary, all of these fresh primary sources, along with the declassified official documents, converge that the soviet intervention was not based on a pre-empted strategic plan, in other words, it was not a strategic move. In fact, it was a reaction/response to the stimulus of the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, especially after the assumption of power by Hafizullah Amin and the inevitable collapse of the Marxist-Leninist regime, in order to preserve the socialist achievements of the Saur (April) Revolution of 1978 and the soviet interests in the country, as well as to serve the particular interests of a few prominent soviet leaders and of the state services they led. Admittedly, there is no doubt that Spykman's geopolitical model in the context of the actual US-Soviet competition, did not cease to produce results which contributed to similar decisions.

All in all, this book has a threefold character. It is an original and innovative international research study (research community), as well as it is governed by an academic syngrammatic completeness (academic community), but it is also governed, beyond the technical and scientific specifications, by writing ability and "craftsmanship" (student community), which makes it a valuable educational milestone, in its field of knowledge, for the new generation of young geopolitical analysts. Above all, however, the present work is a landmark of reference of the application of the method of Systemic Geopolitical Analysis in the, indiscernible for many, field of political/bureaucratic/internal competition, especially during the decision-making process in the laborious and arduous field of foreign policy and international relations.

