**Kissinger’s assessment of Angola:**
Angola represents the first time that the Soviets have moved militarily at long distance to impose a regime of their choice. It is also the first time that the United States has failed to respond to Soviet military moves outside the immediate Soviet orbit… The question is whether American still maintains the resolve to act responsibly as a great power—prepared to face a challenge when it arises… If the United States is seen to emasculate itself in the face of massive, unprecedented Soviet and Cuban intervention, what will be the perception of leaders around the world as they make decision concerning their future security? The failure of the United States to respond effectively will be regarded in many parts of the world as an indication of our future lack of determination to counter similar communist interventions.

**Andropov: March 17 Politburo Meeting:**
We must finalize the political statement, bearing in mind that we will be labeled as an aggressor but that in spite of that, under no circumstances can we lose Afghanistan.

**Kirilenko: March 19 Politburo Meeting:**
We gave it everything. And what has come of it? It has come to nothing of any value. After all, it was they who executed innocent people for no reason and even spoke to us of their own justification, as though we also excuted people during the time of Lenin. So you see what kind of Marxists we have found.

**Garthoff on Soviet intervention:**
The strongest argument for intervention was the absence of an acceptable alternative... The Soviet decision to intervene thus rested on a reluctant conclusion that failure to do so would imperil its many long-standing investments in Afghanistan—political, military, economic, and, since 1978, ideological, and their prestige as well. The risk of inaction must have seemed at least as great as the risks of action....

The fundamental consideration in the Soviet decision was the need to defend its security interests....

The Soviet leaders decided to intervene militarily in Afghanistan not because they were unwilling to keep it as a buffer, but precisely because they saw no other way to ensure that it would remain a buffer. Intervention was not the next in a series of moves to increase Soviet influence, as in Angola, Ethiopia, and South Yemen, nor the first in a new series involving escalation to direct use of Soviet military power in the Third World. It was seen as the only solution to a specific situation on their border that was threatening Soviet security. Clearly, under some circumstances the Soviet Union was prepared to use its armed forces if that was considered essential to ensure its security....

Even if the Soviet leaders had known at the time what they later learned about Western and world reactions, they would probably have made the same decision...

The Soviet leaders did not see their decision to intervene militarily as an opportune option but as a security imperative; not as an opportunity for expansion but as a reluctant necessity to hold on; not as something they were free to do but as something they were regretfully bound to do. It was a decision forced by events, not an opportunity created by them.

It would not be correct to draw a conclusion (as some in the West did) that the Soviet leaders gave priority to Afghanistan over détente.

**Carter on Soviet invasion of Afghanistan:**
It was direct aggression by the Soviet armed forces against a freedom-loving people, whose leaders had been struggling to retain a modicum of independence from their huge neighbor… It was the first time they had used their troops to expand their sphere of influence since they had overthrown the government of Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and established a Soviet government there.... Afghanistan was the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War.”

**Consequences of the Afghan war:**
Nearly 1 million dead; 535,000 disabled veterans; 700,000 widows and orphans; one-third of all villages destroyed; two-thirds of all paved roads unusable; 26 types of deadly mines strewn over the countryside, largely unmapped; and a refugee exodus of 5.9 million people to Pakistan, Iran, and the West—including 1 million children born and brought up in camps who have never known their homeland