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Success Leads to Failure**

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Executive Summary

Title: Soviet-Afghan War (December 1979 to September 1989): Success Leads to Failure

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Thesis: Successfully invading and seizing control of Afghanistan in 1979 was the primary measurable success of the Soviet Union; it was the long term policy that failed to adequately recognize and adapt to a society who perceived a threat to their culture.

Discussion: Under the guise of political invitation, Soviet military forces invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 with the intention to change the regime and solidify the country as a communist neighbor. By all accounts, the initial execution was flawless. However, over the next nine years through September 1989, Soviet leadership failed to adapt to the ensuing insurgency against their presence which resulted in defeat.

Carl von Clausewitz believed that war has a dual nature; some adversaries fight to achieve total victory while others fight for limited goals intended to gain dominance for future negotiation. What was the true nature of Moscow's maneuvering in Afghanistan? In retrospect, the Soviet Union did not have the training or doctrine to support the war that evolved throughout the 1980s.

Looking back, the Soviet Union poorly assessed the conflict from all angles: culturally, tactically, strategically, and even politically, Moscow envisioned Afghanistan as a meager country which would easily fall. The Soviet army entered Afghanistan completely unprepared for an insurgency bordering on unlimited war. The reality of fighting a guerrilla war with conventional forces and doctrine eventually led to nearly half a million Russian casualties and their military withdrawal. The Soviet Union invaded with misguided policy and objectives and an unachievable endstate.

Conclusion: Hence, even though the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan occurred more than twenty years ago, numerous lessons are relevant in today's current operating environment. These include the lesson of cultural sensitivity and diplomatic forthrightness coupled with military strategy and tactics aimed to support legitimate policies. The overall campaign failure provides historical perspective from which future leaders can correctly apply elements of operational design and operational art.

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Preface

This paper addresses how and why the Soviet government invaded Afghanistan and the ways in which the Afghan insurgency succeeded. Counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare is of utmost importance to me as I have participated in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM ONE and TWO, and I expect to serve in Afghanistan and/or Iraq in the near future. I want to learn from the past and effectively apply insights to my future leadership challenges. The United States is at war on a global stage and the crux of our efforts rest in how we as a nation apply the elements of national power against insurgencies while maintaining the capability to wage conventional warfare. The Soviet-Afghan war serves as an excellent historical case study to draw lessons learned when viewed through modern military doctrine and professional military education.

This study focuses on one of the four elements of national power: the military as opposed to diplomatic, information, and economic. However, to some degree it also offers insight as to the influence of the diplomatic instrument. I leave the other instruments of national power for others to interpret and study. The Soviet-Afghan war deserves further analysis to adequately tackle the successes and failures in applying the remaining elements of national power.

For the purpose of this study, I designate the Afghanistan resistance as an insurgency. With massive amounts of military and economic external support from the U.S., Pakistan, and Great Britain, the Mujahideen fought courageously to oust a foreign army and to undermine the puppet government backed by the Soviet Union. The intended purpose is to pointedly discuss Russia's counterinsurgency efforts while not debating the type of conflict which evolved.

I want to thank my wife, Julia, for her enduring support in all that I do. Additionally, I must acknowledge Dr. Donald Bittner for his guidance and mentorship throughout the research and development process—it was an honor and a privilege.

The Soviet Army came prepared to fight the war they trained for—high tempo, high speed, mechanized warfare on the Northern European or Manchurian plateau. They had to re-arm, re-structure, and develop new tactics and new training while fighting the war. They attempted to win the war with their high-technology—and were totally frustrated.¹

-Theodore C. Mataxis Brigadier General (Ret), USA

INTRODUCTION

The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is currently in its fifth year and the character of the conflict is ever-changing. Political leaders and military commanders alike constantly brief statistics and measures of success (or lack thereof) to the American public in an effort to maintain popular support for the war. Coalition forces face a difficult task in both Iraq and Afghanistan, but under the Bush administration, even though popular support for the military commitment seems to ebb and flow, political and military resolve remains constant. Popular support for the conflict is fragile as the United States quickly approaches a presidential election year in 2008 and the international community watches to see if politicians have the stomach to remain engaged.

Whether or not a government is capable of starting and finishing a war is the crux of this study. Fighting an insurgency is an undertaking that history seems to record as extremely difficult and associated with great commitment in time and money, if not high in lives lost. Conventional warfare is traditionally viewed as large force on force engagements where loss of life and equipment is expected. Alternatively, irregular warfare as practiced by insurgents produces messy and brutal conflicts that civilized nations rarely tolerate. Insurgency is the common approach used by the weak against the strong.² It is imperative to study and formulate the best approach to defeating an insurgency and achieving strategic objectives through every means of national power. The importance of linking strategic guidance and the national strategic endstate with military operations is vital to counterinsurgency and conventional warfare alike.

The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 serves as an excellent case study to denote parallels and differences in order to draw lessons learned for future counterinsurgency endeavours. The Soviet Union was unprepared for the guerilla war it undertook in 1979. The invasion campaign was a well planned and executed operation. From an operational art perspective, Moscow succeeded in the short-term but failed miserably in the long-term. Successfully invading and seizing control of Afghanistan in 1979 was the primary measurable success of the Soviet Union; it was the long term policy that failed to adequately recognize and adapt to a society who perceived a threat to their culture.

By definition, an insurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.³ Implied, however is the seizure of power for political and possibly ideological goals. After careful research, it is clear that the resistance the Soviet military faced can be classified as an insurgency. The true insurgency began approximately in 1980 after the successful Soviet invasion. It aimed at both the foreign occupation and at the puppet government which posed a perceived threat to Afghan culture and society. The US military's latest doctrinal publication, FM 3-24 (MCWP 3-33.5) Counterinsurgency, provides specific definitions for insurgencies while generically and thoroughly illuminating successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency practices. As stated in the publication:

THE EVOLUTION OF INSURGENCY

1-15 Insurgency has taken many forms over time. Past insurgencies include struggles for independence against colonial powers, the rising up of ethnic or religious groups against rivals, and resistance to foreign invaders. Students and practitioners of COIN must begin by understanding the specific circumstances of their particular situation. The history of this form of warfare shows how varied and adaptive it can be, and why students must understand that they cannot focus on countering just one insurgent approach. This is particularly true when addressing a continually complex, changing situation like that of Iraq in 2006.⁴

Carl von Clausewitz, in his renowned treatise On War, lists five preconditions for which a general uprising (an insurgency) could be effective:

1. The war must be fought in the interior of the country.
2. It must not be decided by a single stroke.
3. The theater of operations must be fairly large.
4. The national character must be suited to that type of war.
5. The country must be rough and inaccessible, because of mountains, or forests, marshes, or the local methods of cultivation.⁵

What the Soviet Union faced in Afghanistan follows Clausewitz's theory almost verbatim. Soviet leadership did play directly into Clausewitz's theory, but to their credit, they understood that political stability inside Afghanistan was on the verge of disaster. Optimistically, Leonid Brezhnev sought to apply military power to fix a socio-political divide. Soviet military planners expected to fight a few short and conventional actions if necessary.⁶ Following years of military and economic assistance, based on Marxist ideology, Russia invaded Afghanistan with little warning and with no operational preparation.

Historical Background

Under the guise of political invitation, Soviet military forces invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 with the intention to change the regime and solidify the country as a Communist neighbor. The initial execution was flawless, but over the next nine years, through September 1989, Soviet leadership failed to adapt to the ensuing insurgency which resulted in defeat (see Appendix H, Soviet war losses). The Soviet invasion occurred on Christmas Eve 1979 with precision and ease. With Afghanistan in turmoil, the Soviet military occupied airports, government centers, and transportation hubs. Conventional Soviet troops maintained a tight grip on infrastructure sites while brutally imposing military judgment on urban targets (tribal areas) during daylight hours. The *Mujahideen* quickly countered the traditional military threat with guerrilla tactics. Significant to the situation, the Soviets maintained superior numbers and

equipment, but they lacked territorial knowledge. Soviet objectives were to replace Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin's government, control cities and road networks, suppress any local military resistance, and occupy key population centers.⁷ The political objective was a new government supported by the armed might of the Soviet Armed Forces.⁸

Tactical long-term objectives did not properly link with strategic objectives; faulty assumptions created a dichotomy between strategy and tactics. The first and most substantially flawed assumption was that the PDPA would succeed in governing Afghanistan following the invasion. Secondly, Soviet planners assumed that controlling infrastructure would prevent and/or radically influence external support to resistance fighters.⁹ Inadequate assumptions led to failure. In September 1989, the Soviet military withdrew from Afghanistan under a treaty signed by the United States, Britain, and Pakistan. History recorded yet another failed imperialistic conquest of Afghanistan (See Chronology, Appendix A).

Historical Context

Where the Indian subcontinent collides with Eurasia, the conflict of geologic plates has given birth to the highest mountain chain in the world, the Himalayas.¹⁰ Just off the Western end lies Afghanistan where unimpeded movement North and South through the mountain barrier is afforded.¹¹ (Map, Appendix B) Afghanistan is a vital economic and political link between China, India, Pakistan, and the West. For centuries the Afghan people have seen both prosperity and destruction at the hands of invading armies. Although it is a poor country, Afghanistan's location is strategic—at the gateway to Middle East oil reserves, close to warm water ports, and on the flanks of China and Pakistan.¹²

Roots of Afghan Insurgency

Afghanistan has long been the object of many imperial conquests. Great Britain wanted

control of the country throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Soviet Union viewed Afghanistan as a potential communist neighbor who could support its foreign policy interest and socialist ideals. In 1965, the pro-Soviet *People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan* (PDPA) was founded. The Afghan government at the time was loosely organized as an apparent democracy and modeled many legislative functions after the West. In 1973, Mohammed Daoud came to power in a virtually unopposed coup. Daoud was not a member of the PDPA, but Soviet leadership viewed him as a figure head with favorable ambitions. Daoud allowed Soviet advisors inside his government who in turn exerted political and economic influence. His government, however, in 1978 began to part from the Soviet influence. In his book, Afghanistan, Stephen Tanner gave the situation great perspective by writing, "in 1977 Daoud was called on the carpet by Leonid Brezhnev, who complained about Afghan leader's seeking ties with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. Daoud raged back that Afghans made their own decisions, and at one point banged his fists on the table for emphasis."¹³ Ultimately Daoud was assassinated in a coup staged by the PDPA in May 1978.

A small leftist group of Soviet-trained Afghan officers seized control of the government and founded the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). This move was directly supported by the Soviet Union.¹⁴ President Nur M. Taraki, a Marxist who proclaimed his desire to redistribute land and create sweeping changes throughout society, assumed control of the government. The PDPA and the DRA maintained their differences. The PDPA sought a complete revolution in society. Taraki faced a dilemma of establishing a party line on Islam in order to appease Afghan society while at the same time marginalizing the PDPA and their ideological ideals and goals.¹⁵ Taraki was once quoted as stating, "we want to clean Islam in Afghanistan of the ballast and dirt of bad traditions, superstitions and erroneous belief.

Therefore we will have progressive, modern, pure Islam.”¹⁶ Armed resistance grew as a response to the new government as traditional Afghan Muslim life was threatened by communism. The *Mujahideen* ranks grew and the Afghan regular army shrank in contrast as political support swayed.

In September 1979, a military coup occurred in which the Prime Minister, Hafizullah Amin, seized power and murdered Taraki. The Communist regime under Amin’s control was no more effective than Taraki’s. The Soviet Union watched as Afghanistan began to spin out of control and villages rose in revolt while influence and control slipped away from Moscow.¹⁷ In the minds of Soviet leaders, military force was the only way to stop further loss of influence. On Christmas Eve, 1979, a massive force crossed into Afghanistan territory by land and air. Thousands of Soviet soldiers landed at Kabul airport and other forces drove across the border in massive division-size columns of armor and transport vehicles. Amin was killed in the process of replacing his regime with the Soviet’s own man, Babrak Karmal.

Soviet conventional and heavy forces began to stall after successfully capturing key infrastructure. After only two months, the occupation was not turning out quite as the Soviets expected. The vast mountainous countryside was swelling with opposition, most convoys met ambushes, and base camps regularly received indirect fire from unseen assailants.¹⁸ It only took two months for the character of the war to change. Soon the Soviets encountered another enemy in Afghanistan, one that they had not fully anticipated.¹⁹

Nature and Character of War

Carl von Clausewitz provides enduring perspectives and theories applicable to this study. Clausewitz theorizes that war is an art and not a science.²⁰ He argues that no set of principles is sufficient to guide military action alone. Much of his theory is based on the “coup d’oeil” or the

military genius provided by the military commander.²¹ In making his case to support the military theories, Clausewitz postulates that no two wars are the same, and the character of conflict is critical to understanding it. Clausewitz further contends,

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.²²

Thus, the nature of war is constant while the character of a war is fluid and ever-changing. Relating this theory to Afghanistan is unique when considering how the Soviets invaded and the military tactics they chose in pursuit of their objectives. Clausewitz believed that war has a dual nature; some adversaries fight to achieve total victory while others fight for limited goals intended to gain dominance for future negotiation.²³ What was the true nature of Moscow's maneuvering in Afghanistan?

The balance between the government, people, and the military is critical in determining the true nature of a conflict. It is evident that Moscow wanted a quick ending to the invasion. The Soviets believed that the Afghanistan government would fall easily within six months and that the people would support a new government. Hence, they occupied the country with full force and corresponding military tactics. The Soviet invasion seemed to achieve a rarity in Afghan history: a unifying sense of political purpose that cut across tribal, ethnic, geographic, and economic lines. The invasion defined the character of the conflict between the people, government, and military while unmasking a different type of conflict by instilling a grim determination in the age-old warrior culture of the countryside.²⁴

Culture

It is an understatement to say that Soviet soldiers did not understand or appreciate Afghan culture prior to or during the war. Afghanistan is a diverse and complex society with more of a tribal and religious base than nationalistic bond. Ethnicity proved to be a tremendous hurdle for the Soviets to overcome. Given the multiethnic character of the Soviet Union, it was notwithstanding that the military force invading Afghanistan was ethnically diverse as well; nearly all high technology positions were manned by Slavs while non-Slavic groups concentrated in the ground forces.²⁵ To further understand the Afghan national character, author Anthony Arnold in the book The Fateful Pebble, suggests four dimensions to Afghan individualism that influence their perspective and resistance: an intense family orientation, a specific code of personal behavior, an immense patience, and a fervent dedication to religion.²⁶

Arnold explains that traditionally, all four characteristics overshadow outward organized governmental authority and presents the greatest cultural difference between Afghanistan citizens and Russian soldiers. The Afghan family serves as the cement of society. Family provides protection and requires strict obligation in return. Personal behavior for the majority of Afghan citizens is regulated by the *Pashtunwali*, a legal and moral code that determines social order and responsibilities. "The *Pashtunwali* contains sets of values pertaining to honor (*namuz*), solidarity (*nang*), hospitality, mutual support, shame and revenge. All of these determine social order and individual responsibility."²⁷ Patience is another tenant of

Afghan Ethnic Group	Percentage
Pashtun	40%
Tajiks	25.3%
Hazaras	18%
Uzbeks	6.3%
Turkmen	2.5%
Qizilbash	1.0%
Other	6.9%

Afghan individualism which Arnold deems important for understanding. The Afghan people maintain a completely different sense of time. The country has been invaded many times and the people seem able to patiently wait for opportunities to exploit. "Their capacity for patience probably comes from having lived in a stable social environment for centuries."²⁸ Finally, religion is a cornerstone of the societal individualism. The Sunni branch of Islam, known for its absence of hierarchy, its egalitarianism, and its belief in individual responsibility, suited native Afghan values.²⁹

Ultimately, Soviet tactics and the lack of effort to properly control the countryside proved to be a significant mistake. Soviet military leaders either did not fully comprehend their task or ignorantly conducted military operations with tactical objectives which garnered little strategically. Afghanistan is a tribal society with tribal-based politics cemented around rural traditions. As stated in Operational Culture for the Warfighter: A Principles and Application Text used in U.S. Marine Corps schools, "operational culture comprises those aspects of culture that influence the outcome of a military operations; conversely, the military actions that influence the culture of an area of operations."³⁰ Every action (even perceived action) the Soviet military took influenced the level of resentment on behalf of the indigenous people. Culture played an enormous role in the outcome of the Soviet-Afghan war.

Insurgency Ensues

To Moscow's credit, upon successfully invading Afghanistan, they did initially attempt to follow a strategy of winning the hearts and minds of the people by limiting military aggression; however, it did not last long. Soviet forces and *Mujahideen* fighters met initially in conventional engagements. Soviet troops easily outnumbered and technologically overwhelmed the inferior resistance. *Mujahideen* forces sustained heavy losses and quickly turned to irregular fighting.

The expansion of the rural revolt came about quickly in 1980. *Mujahideen* leaders changed operational structure and began to operate in small teams and squads in order to decentralize and wage a war of attrition. In 1980, operationally speaking, Soviet leaders witnessed a shift in the wars character, thus military operations focussed on routing out and eroding the insurgent forces.

The follow-on military strategy was to secure communications centers and the land links between them; hold casualties to a minimum; exploit the Soviet advantage in high technology, firepower, and mobility; limit by terror tactics the infiltration of resistance groups; and adapt a scorched-earth policy wherever resistance appeared.³¹

Paradoxically, the “puppet” Afghan government vowed to help the oppressed ethnic minorities and the insurgency festered exactly where those individuals lived.³² One reason for the strengthening dissent in the North was the deeply hostile image of their Soviet neighbors. Afghans despised Soviets as Communist *kafirs* (non-believers).³³ To further fan the flames of insurgency, President Karmal made pledges of freedom, release of prisoners, and new trade unions, but Afghan society at large viewed the Karmal government as completely dependent on the army of a foreign power—a power that was perceived as godless and anti-Islamic.³⁴

Center of Gravity

Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operations, emphasis the operational importance of identifying the center of gravity (COG) before undertaking an operation. Most importantly in an irregular conflict, identifying the correct COG ensures all military objectives supports the strategic endstate. A close look at the *Mujahideen* center of gravity (COG) (See Appendix G, Center of Gravity Analysis) outlines with certainty why the Soviet Union failed in Afghanistan. As U.S. doctrine declares, “A COG is a source of moral or physical strength, power, and resistance—what Clausewitz called ‘the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends...the point at which all our energies should be directed.’”³⁵ An important take away

from a COG analysis is that the COG is always linked to the objective.

The Soviets failed this miserably in Afghanistan. Soviet leaders were unable to produce the proper combination of effects in time, space, and purpose relative to a COG to neutralize, weaken, defeat, or destroy it.³⁶ Centers of gravity exist at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. As depicted in Appendix D, the *Mujahideen* strategic COG was the *Mujahideen* itself and the operational COG was the sanctuary (countryside). Soviet leadership misidentified the strategic COG from the outset and failed to identify and shift the COG throughout the war. Evidenced by Moscow's devotion to Babrak Karmal's success, the Afghan government never shifted Strategic COG focus to the *Mujahideen*. The majority of tribal and ethnically diverse population in Afghanistan did not depend on nor support the government. What the people wanted was a government which respected its culture and maintained traditional Islamic and Afghan ways of life.

The mountainous terrain and multitudes of tribal areas providing logistical support to fighters served as the source of strength. Without freedom to maneuver in the urban terrain, the insurgency could not threaten Soviet military superiority. The use of air power to suppress fighters in the mountains was ineffective. Soviet forces operated in and around major population centers and logistics hubs, but invariably lost confrontations in the surrounding terrain. Fighters were able to conceal their positions among the rocks and crevasses indigenous to Afghanistan's mountains. Applying learned tactics of luring helicopters into awaiting ambushes from high on the mountain tops as well as channelizing close air support between mountains, the *Mujahideen* tactically defeated their enemy. The insurgent COG was never properly analyzed or considered within the Soviet operational framework. The link between Moscow's strategic objectives/endstate and the insurgent COG never surfaced. To make matters worse for the

Soviet shortcomings, popular support for the resistance started to gain momentum in the countryside as external support was received from Pakistan, Britain, and the United States.

As described in Appendix D, if the Soviet forces had correctly identified and attacked critical vulnerabilities, the *Mujahideen* might have eventually fallen apart. Soviet forces attempted to burn many of the villages in an effort to stem local support, but the effort was not effective. Simply burning the living areas and crops incensed the locals and emboldened local support. Another Soviet critical vulnerability that worked effectively for insurgent forces was the weapon and monetary assistance from the United States. After 1986, stinger missiles tipped the tactical balance back into the *Mujahideen* favour.³⁷ Logistical lines of communications and movements along resupply routes were always vulnerable, but never fully exploited throughout the conflict. Soviet tactics and doctrine did not account for fighting small unit actions and interdicting supplies.

External Support

“Insurgencies usually cannot sustain themselves without substantially external support.”³⁸ External support takes many forms and can pose a serious threat to counterinsurgent efforts if appropriate countermeasures are not taken to stem the flow of equipment, money, and training. The United States, Pakistan, and Great Britain provided Afghan fighters with formidable military and economic aid throughout the 1980s.³⁹ Not only did weaponry such as the stinger missile greatly enhance *Mujahideen* military capability, but Pakistan secretly trained and advised resistance fighters. From the CIA equivalent in Pakistan, Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf, head of the Afghan Bureau of Pakistan’s Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) from 1983-1987 stated, “No one in authority would admit that weapons, ammunition, and equipment were being channelled through Pakistan, by Pakistanis, to the guerrillas. Even more taboo was the fact that the ISI was

training the *Mujahideen*, planning their combat operations, and often accompanying them inside Afghanistan as advisers.”⁴⁰ From a popular support perspective, the occupation of Afghanistan presented Cold War adversaries with an opportunity to thwart Moscow’s ambition. Global adversaries sought to present Russia with its own “Vietnam” as the United States faced a decade prior.

FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency classifies external support under the category of popular support:

3-84. Popular support comes in many forms. It can originate internally or externally, and it is either active or passive. There are four forms of popular support: Active external, Passive external, Active internal, and Passive internal. Passive external support occurs when a foreign government supports an insurgency through inaction. Forms of passive support include the following:

- Not curtailing the activities of insurgent living or operating within the state’s borders
- Recognizing the legitimacy of an insurgent group
- Denying the legitimacy of the HN government.

Active external support includes finance, logistic, training, fighters, and safe heavens.⁴¹

Pakistan and the United States, as well as other cold war allies, provided extensive “active” external support to the Afghan insurgency. During the period of 1983-1987 alone, more than 80,000 *Mujahideen* trained in Pakistan, hundreds of tons of arms and ammunition were distributed, and billions of dollars went to logistics support.⁴²

The Afghan resistance forces gained momentum throughout the decade long conflict of mishandled military objectives and tactics. Popular support for the *Mujahideen* grew and political contempt for Moscow began to rise on the world stage. From the beginning of the Soviet invasion, external support proved to be the difference between a short military action and a long drawn out war. According to FM 3-24, “Popular support or tolerance early in an insurgency is often critical to an insurgent organization’s survival and growth. Such support

often has a great effect on the insurgency's long-term effectiveness."⁴³

Soviet Union's Failure to Adapt

Learning and adapting while confronting an insurgency is vital to success. Referring back to the U.S doctrinal guide for counterinsurgency, FM 3-24 lends insight as to why Soviet momentum balked early in the conflict:

LEARN AND ADAPT

1-144. An effective counterinsurgency force is a learning organization. Insurgents constantly shift between military and political phases and tactics. In addition, networked insurgents constantly exchange information about their enemy's vulnerabilities—even with insurgents in distant theatres. However, skilful counterinsurgents can adapt at least as fast as insurgents....Insurgents shift their areas of operation looking for weak links, so widespread competence is required throughout the counterinsurgent force.⁴⁴

After Moscow pulled their forces from Afghanistan, the Russian general staff compiled lessons learned in a book called, The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost (2002). In this book, translated by Lester Grau, the general staff makes startling revelations of why they failed to adapt. One possible explanation worth studying is the idea that Russian leadership faced an ideological gap between the type of war they faced and the ability of Marxists-Leninist political leaders to legitimately label the conflict as an insurgency. As Lester Grau contends, the Soviets maintained an "ideological blind spot" in the Marxists-Leninist tenets.⁴⁵ Colonel Runov, an officer of the Russian Army and no longer constrained by Marxists-Leninist dogma once said, "Despite the Soviet Union's penetration and lengthy experience in Afghanistan, their intelligence was poor and hampered by the need to explain events within the Marxist-Leninist framework."⁴⁶ Grau concludes that they failed to fully understand the *Mujahideen* through their perspective lens: "The Russians state ideology defined several categories of just wars. The categories of just wars ranged from revolutions against capitalist states and wars fought by socialist states against capitalist states. Since there was no provision for a popular uprising against a socialist state, the

Mujahideen uprising (deemed an insurgency by this study) did not fit within the Marxists-Leninist definition of a just war.”⁴⁷

Anthony Arnold in his book, The Fateful Pebble, addresses a key point: “The basic political unit has always been the village, some twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand of which held about 85 percent of the Afghan population before the Soviet invasion.”⁴⁸ With this said, the Soviet Union failed to operationally consider the true center of gravity for the Afghan insurgency. The strategy of holding infrastructure and cities did nothing for their military and strategic cause. A simple comparison to emphasize Moscow’s blatant lack of preparation, but one which merits inclusion, is the total number of forces dedicated to accomplishing the mission in Afghanistan verses the number of forces used by the United States in Vietnam (see Appendix I, Soviet Order of Battle). In Vietnam, the American military strength rose to over 500,000 troops. By comparison, in Afghanistan, a region five times the size of Vietnam, Soviet strength was less than 120,000 troops to cover 29 provincial centers and a few industrial locations.⁴⁹

In addition to not overcoming internal ideology as well as the lack of preparation for counterinsurgency operations, the Soviet military failed to quickly adapt new doctrine and tactics, techniques and procedures. Vital to all counterinsurgency operations is the ability to isolate insurgents from their cause and support. The people of Afghanistan did not view the central government in Kabul as a source of power or influence. In fact, the government that was established did not maintain any semblance of popular support or extend its authority. Moscow was unable to politically change the perception of the puppet government in Afghanistan throughout the entire war. As evident in the years following Russia’s withdrawal, political fighting continued in order to try and establish a viable government.⁵⁰ If only the Russians were able to increase the Afghan central government’s legitimacy, the populace might have started to

assist it more actively. Moscow failed to understand this critical aspect of the conflict in Afghanistan.

Weaknesses in Soviet Training and Doctrine

All things considered, the Soviet command cannot be much encouraged by the performance of its units in Afghanistan...The performance of its motorized rifle units, the foundation of the Soviet force structure, remained consistently low, and the poor performance was matched by the unit's leadership. The conclusion is inescapable...the Soviet army is ill-suited for employment in counterinsurgency warfare—and will remain so.⁵¹

The inescapable truth is that Russia's military faced major hurdles during the conduct of the war. Elite troops remained on the Western edge of Russia's borders in anticipation of a NATO incursion while the reservists and less than outstanding soldiers found themselves in Afghanistan. According to Scott McMichael in his article "The Soviet Army, Counterinsurgency, and the Afghan War," aside from the airborne and elite striking forces employed by the Soviets, the Soviet armed forces were structured and trained for large-scale conventional warfare. Soviet doctrine envisioned their employment on flat, rolling terrain like that of Europe.⁵²

Failing to break the larger formations and move about the theater in small, decentralized squads further divided the soldiers from the Afghan people. To make the point that Soviet leaders were extremely slow to make adaptive doctrinal changes, the Soviets invaded without any formal counterinsurgency doctrine.⁵³ It was not until 1980-81 that the Soviet army introduced some effective modifications to tactics and doctrine. Characteristic of the war is how the *Mujahideen* controlled the night time. In effect the Soviet military would secure various locations by day and retreat to their camps at night, thus allowing the enemy to infiltrate and carry caches into Afghanistan.

Why Success Led To Failure

In retrospect, the Soviet Union did not have the proper ideology, training, or doctrine to support the war that evolved throughout the 1980s. In his book, Hidden War, a Russian journalist by the name of Artyom Borovik interviewed Sayed Ahmad Gailani, the leader of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, and Mr. Gailani stated,

You (Russia) wanted to spare your troops, and you evaded direct confrontations on the battlefield, but later you killed off peasants in the kishlaks... Today I'm not ashamed to thank the Americans for their military and monetary assistance. We were forced to accept it so that we could defend ourselves against a modern army. But everybody should remember that if anyone attempts to establish control over Afghanistan, we will fight him the same way we fought you.⁵⁴

Soviet doctrine was fully equipped to face large scale conventional war. The doctrine pertaining to counterinsurgency was impoverished in large part by the classical Marxism ideology forming the theoretical foundation to Russian society. The basis for Marxism found it difficult to come to terms with identities other than those grounded in class exploitation and warfare.⁵⁵ Simply put, the Soviet military experience was largely conventional and the overwhelming opinion amongst military planners and political leaders was that the Soviet Union was too powerful a state to be threatened by any insurgency. Thus, counterinsurgency warfare received little to no attention within military education and doctrine.

Importance for the Future

Al Qaeda and other global terrorist networks threaten the future of both sovereign Muslim and Non-Muslim countries. Engaging the threat today is the best possible solution to defending legitimate freedoms and borders tomorrow. Looking back, the Soviet Union poorly assessed the conflict from all angles: culturally, tactically, strategically, and even politically, Moscow envisioned Afghanistan as a meager country which would easily fall. Even though the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan occurred more than twenty years ago, numerous lessons must

be shared forward to today's current operating environment. Lessons of cultural sensitivity and diplomatic forthrightness coupled with military strategy and tactics aimed to support legitimate policies are the only way to succeed against an insurgency as well as defeat totalitarian extremism.

Too many historical events go unrecognized for their intrinsic value. As recent as the Vietnam War, the United States consciously decided to forego lessons learned fighting an insurgency in order to train and equip to face conventional threats. This was done with the understanding that the conventional fight was all-encompassing and counterinsurgency warfare could be accomplished if troops were trained for a larger scale conflict. The Soviet Union made the same mistake. The Soviet invasion force was a mix of infantry, airborne, and mechanized armor. The 40th Army was not specifically trained nor equipped for its mission in Afghanistan. Moscow wanted to control the major political centers and key infrastructure, hence it sent a large conventional force to do just that. The Soviet strategy unmistakably was built around short term objectives instead of long term meaningful strategic objectives (such as the people).

Conclusion

On 27 December 1979, Moscow ordered the Soviet Army into Afghanistan. Organized, equipped, and trained for the execution of combined arms operations, that force embodied the concept of blitzkrieg. Nine years later it withdrew in defeat....Absolute supremacy of firepower did not guarantee victory. Native knowledge of terrain and detailed study of a known adversary offset that advantage.⁵⁶

“The Soviet army entered Afghanistan completely unprepared for this kind of war.”⁵⁷

The reality of fighting a guerrilla war with conventional forces and doctrine eventually led to nearly half a million Russian casualties and their military defeated. The Soviet Union invaded with misguided policy and objectives and an unachievable endstate. During 1980-81, the Soviets conducted conventional operations in pursuit of limited military objectives. Specifically, the

Soviets focused on defending key towns, bases, and the road networks connecting them.⁵⁸ The overall campaign failure provides historical perspective from which future leaders can correctly apply elements of operational design and operational art. As a counterinsurgency force, the Soviets learned too late the importance of small action vice division-size operations, the need for decentralized and flexible control of support assets, increased responsibility for junior officers and non-commissioned officers, and the importance of helicopters.⁵⁹ Many of these lessons had been learned the hard way by the United States in Vietnam prior to this conflict.

“Big Nations do indeed lose Small Wars”⁶⁰ In the minds of many Afghan scholars, Russia was unable to deliver the political outcome it desired. The objective of the invasion was to replace the government to ensure the social reform (“Marxist” government) survived without intervention from its neighbours—effectively expanding Russia’s southern boundary and influence. As author William Maley succinctly stated in his book, The Afghanistan Wars, “Thousands of young soldiers had perished in a harsh land for little gain, leaving grieving relatives to ponder how and why such a disastrous commitment had come to be undertaken.”⁶¹ The war affected the two states profoundly different. On one hand, Afghanistan splintered into many layers of political power divisions as well as its economy and society effectively falling apart. The effects on Afghanistan are visible more today, in 2008, than ever before—a central government struggling to maintain legitimacy and a vast and diverse population incapable of building wealth and permanent social cooperation. On the other hand, the Soviet Union suffered a severe blow to its ruling Communist party while revealing to the international community multiple layers of systemic vulnerabilities.

The Soviets ignored significant “lessons” from the U.S. experience in Vietnam. Two major points emphasised by William Maley point to empirical lessons learned from the war.

First, wars cannot be fought to conclusion with unrealistic objectives.⁶² As previously mentioned in this study, the Soviet Union faced a paradoxical situation. The more it supported the PDPA regime, the more Moscow compromised the legitimacy of the government they instituted. As Clausewitz described the 'nature of war', Afghan society and the nature of the Soviet political and military structure created a situation where the true character of the war proved too strong for the super power. The sanctuary areas of Afghanistan served as the true center of gravity for the insurgency; the Russian ideological blind spot had its consequences. As Maley also writes, "At the time the Soviets invaded Afghanistan; the bulk of Afghan society was not in crisis."⁶³ In fact, the tribal people felt as though they maintained a good life and it was worth defending. This important fact was misunderstood by Russian leaders and eventually led to their demise—the true center of gravity which was not operationally considered. The second point which Maley contends is, "moral conviction and external support can act as significant force multipliers which even the military capabilities of a superpower cannot match."⁶⁴ The tactics used by Soviet forces combined with their perceived Marxist ideology emboldened Afghan resistance and provided enduring momentum for the insurgency. Combining the moral conviction of the Afghan people with the external support provided by the United States, Pakistan, and Britain, made the insurgency not only legitimate to many, but very capable militarily. From an operational art perspective, Moscow succeeded in the short-term, but failed miserably in the long-term. Successfully invading and seizing control of Afghanistan in 1979 was the primary measurable success of the Soviet Union; it was the long term policy that failed to adequately recognize and adapt to a society who perceived a threat to their culture.

Endnotes

¹ Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress, The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), xv.

² Department of the Army, Field manual 3-24: COUNTERINSURGENCY, (Washington DC: Paladin Press, 2006), 1-2.

³ Field manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, 1-1.

⁴ Field manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, 1-3.

⁵ von Clausewitz, Carl. On War, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 480. These are discussed in the current cited source.

⁶ Scott R. McMichael "The Soviet Army, Counterinsurgency, and the Afghan War." *Parameters*, December 1989, 21.

⁷ Mark Urban, War in Afghanistan, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 42.

⁸ Lester Grau, Bear Went over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan, (New York: Diane Pub Co, 1996), 200.

⁹ Matthew C. Culbertson. A Study of the Soviet Conflict In Afghanistan And Its Implication. Masters of military studies, Command and Staff College, 2005, 13.

¹⁰ Anthony Arnold, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective (Hoover International Studies), (Palo Alto: Hoover Institution Press, 1981), 1.

¹¹ Arnold, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion, 1.

¹² Arnold, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion, X.

¹³ Stephen Tanner, Afghanistan History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban, (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 230.

¹⁴ Ali Ahmad Jalali, The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War, (Quantico: U.S. Marine Corps, Studies and Analysis Division, 1999), xvi.

¹⁵ Urban, War in Afghanistan, 17.

¹⁶ Urban, War in Afghanistan, 18.

¹⁷ Jalali, The Other Side of the Mountain, xvii.

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- ¹⁸ Tanner, Afghanistan History, 241.
- ¹⁹ Tanner, Afghanistan History, 241
- ²⁰ Clausewitz, On War, 75.
- ²¹ Clausewitz, On War, 100.
- ²² Clausewitz, On War, 88.
- ²³ Clausewitz, On War, 75.
- ²⁴ Tanner, Afghanistan History, 243.
- ²⁵ William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 40.
- ²⁶ Anthony Arnold, The Fateful Pebble: Afghanistan's Role in the Fall of the Soviet Empire, (Novato: Presidio Press, 1993), 3.
- ²⁷ Peter R. Blood, ed. Afghanistan: A Country Study. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 2001, 1.
- ²⁸ Arnold, The Fateful Pebble, 5.
- ²⁹ Arnold, The Fateful Pebble, 5.
- ³⁰ Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Holmes-Eber. Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications. (Quantico: Marine Corps University, 2007), 14.
- ³¹ Arnold, The Fateful Pebble, 126.
- ³² Urban, War in Afghanistan, 27.
- ³³ Urban, War in Afghanistan, 27.
- ³⁴ Urban, War in Afghanistan, 53.
- ³⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 5-0. Joint Operations, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2006), IV-8.
- ³⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 5-0. Joint Operations, IV-9.
- ³⁷ Mark Adkin and Yousaf Mohammed, The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story, (Lahore: Jang, 1992), 184.

³⁸ Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, 1-18.

³⁹ Department of Defense. Irregular Warfare (IW): Joint Operating Concept (JOC). Washington D.C.: GPO, 2008, G-6. Not all offensive IW efforts need involve the US working with indigenous forces directly, as was the case with US support to Afghan *Mujahideen* forces during the Soviet-Afghan War. Initially, the United States funnelled financial support for the Afghan fighters from OGAs through the intelligence service of Pakistan. The Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence maintained direct links with a number of *Mujahideen* leaders and dispensed the funds to favored groups so that they could buy arms and other supplies.

⁴⁰ Adkin, The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Untold Story, 3.

⁴¹ Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, 3-15.

⁴² Adkin, The Bear Trap, 4.

⁴³ Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, 3-15.

⁴⁴ Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, 1-26.

⁴⁵ Grau and Gress, The Soviet-Afghan War, xix.

⁴⁶ Grau and Gress, The Soviet-Afghan War, xix. The most likely explanation is that there was an ideological blind spot in the Marxist-Leninist tenets. Marxism-Leninism defined several categories of just wars—most dealing with revolutions against capitalist states or wars fought by socialist states against capitalist states. There was no provision for a popular uprising against a socialist state. Therefore, since the *Mujahideen* uprising did not fit within the Marxist-Leninist definition of just war, the General Staff was constrained in dealing completely with it—and so tried to ignore it.

⁴⁷ Grau and Gress, The Soviet-Afghan War, xix.

⁴⁸ Arnold, The Fateful Pebble, 6.

⁴⁹ Grau and Gress, The Soviet-Afghan War, xix.

⁵⁰ Grau and Gress, The Soviet-Afghan War, 54-55. Other than their anti-Soviet feelings and irreconcilable enmity to the government, these organizations and their leadership lacked a common platform. They all viewed the future of Afghanistan differently.

⁵¹ Scott R. McMichael, "The Soviet Army, Counterinsurgency, and the Afghan War." *Parameters*, December 1989, 33.

⁵² McMichael, "The Soviet Army", 21.

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- ⁵³ McMichael, "The Soviet Army", 23.
- ⁵⁴ Artyom Borovik, The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan, (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 145.
- ⁵⁵ William Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 42.
- ⁵⁶ Lester W. Grau and A. Jalali. Afghan Guerrilla Warfare In the Words of the Mujahideen Fighters, (St. Paul: MBI, 2001), vii.
- ⁵⁷ Urban, War in Afghanistan, 211.
- ⁵⁸ Urban, War in Afghanistan, 211.
- ⁵⁹ Urban, War in Afghanistan, 211-212.
- ⁶⁰ Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 1.
- ⁶¹ Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 153.
- ⁶² Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 166.
- ⁶³ Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 167.
- ⁶⁴ Maley, The Afghanistan Wars, 167.

Appendix A
Basic Chronology of Events

A chronology of key events around the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the decade-long war it sparked:

1978

27 April: Afghanistan's communist People's Democratic Party seizes power in a coup but internal feuding immediately begins. The country is renamed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). An Islamic and conservative insurgency soon begins in the provinces.

5 December: A friendship treaty is signed with the USSR, building on Soviet economic and military support given to Afghanistan since the early 1950s.

1979

March: The USSR begins massive military aid to the DRA, including hundreds of advisers, as the US scales down its presence after the murder of its kidnapped ambassador. Afghan soldiers mutiny in Herat, massacring Soviet citizens before their rebellion is crushed.

September: Hafizullah Amin emerges as DRA leader from a bout of bloodletting in the government during which President Nur Mohammed Taraki is killed.

24 December: The Soviet defense ministry reveals orders to senior staff to send troops into Afghanistan, following a decision taken by the Politbureau's inner circle on 12 December. Soviet invasion commences with commandos seizing strategic installations in Kabul.

29 December: After a week of heavy fighting during which Soviet commandos kill Amin and ground forces pour across the border, Babrak Kamal is installed as the DRA's new Soviet-backed leader.

1980

Resistance intensifies with various mujahideen groups fighting Soviet forces and their DRA allies. The US, Pakistan, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms. The US leads a boycott of the Moscow Olympics.

1982

The United Nations General Assembly calls for Soviet withdrawal.

1985

Half of the Afghan population is now estimated to be displaced by the war, with many fleeing to neighboring Iran or Pakistan. New Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev says he will withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

1986

The US begins supplying the *Mujahideen* with Stinger missiles, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Karmal is replaced by Mohammed Najibullah.

1988

The DRA, USSR, US, and Pakistan sign peace accords and the Soviets begin withdrawing their troops.

1989

15 February: The USSR announces the departure of the last Soviet troops. Civil war continues as the *Mujahideen* push to overthrow Najibullah, who is eventually toppled in 1992.

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4083015.stm - 38k - [similar pages](#) [[More results from news.bbc.co.uk](#)]

Appendix B Key Personage

Hafizullah Amin: Amin was a prominent member of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, and eventually, after ousting Noor Mohammad Taraki, became the president of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in September 1979. Amin worked diligently to recruit numerous students to his party before becoming president. He was also responsible for the deaths of thousands of people. Many historians believe that Amin was really an independent nationalist, despite his Soviet connections. The Soviet Union, realizing this, assassinated him, and his followers, during the invasion of Afghanistan.

(Source: <http://www.afghan-web.com/bios/yest/amin.html>)

Leonid Brezhnev: (1906-1982) General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and President of the USSR. His term in office was hallmarked by Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1977), domestic economic stagnation and persecution of dissidents.

(Source: <http://users.rcn.com/lana.interport/link/brezhnev.html>)

Mohammed Daoud: Prime Minister of Afghanistan 1963-1973 (forced to resign after he paved the road for infiltration of the Communist thoughts in Afghanistan and when he became an undesirable person). After 10 years since he resigned and in the absence of the King Mohammad Zahir Shah, but with the support of the Soviet Union and the Communist elements from the Army Officers, Mohammad Daoud proclaimed democratic system for Afghanistan replacing the Royal one and proclaimed himself President and Prime Minister.

(Source: http://afghanobserver.com/ResourceCenter/Sirat_1982.htm)

Sayed Ahmad Gailani: The leader of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan

Boris Vsevolodovich Gromov: During the Soviet war in Afghanistan, Gromov did three tours of duty (1980-1982, 1985-1986, 1987-1989), and was best known for the two years as the last Commander of the 40th Army in Afghanistan.

Babrak Karmal: He was a Soviet puppet. He was President from 1979 to when the Soviets finally grew tired of him and replaced him with Dr. Najibullah in 1986. He was a founding member of the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan), and served as its secretary general. After differences with other important members, he led his own faction of the PDPA known as Parcham. When he was replaced by Dr. Najibullah, Karmal left to live in Moscow; he returned to Afghanistan in 1991, only to leave once more.

(Source: <http://www.afghan-web.com/bios/yest/karmal.html>)

Sergei Leonidovich Sokolov: In charge of Soviet ground forces during the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan.

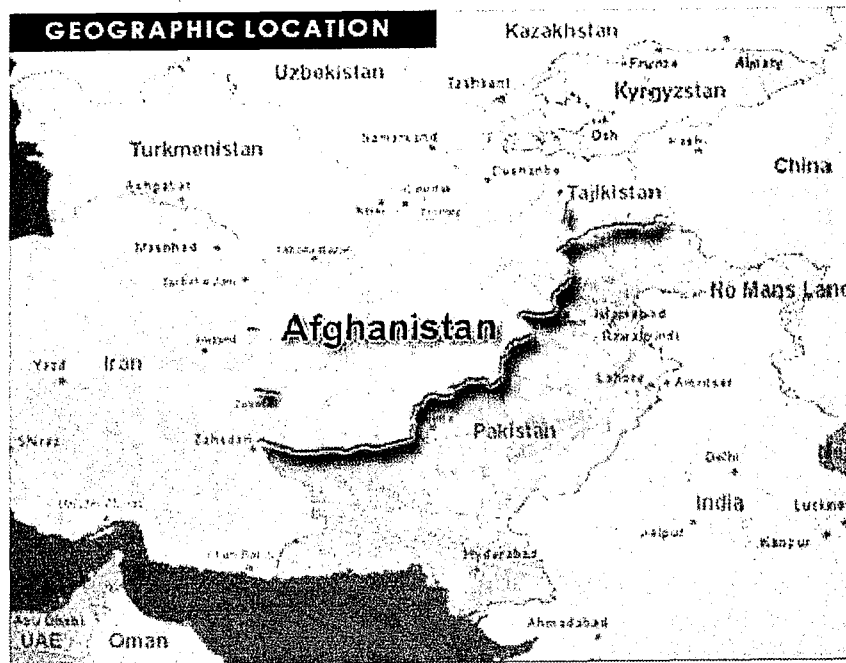
Nur M. Taraki: Taraki was an important member of the Khalq faction of the PDPA. After the Saur revolt, which left Mohammad Daoud Khan dead, Taraki became the president of the Revolutionary Council, prime minister of the country, and secretary general of the PDPA. During Taraki's hold on power, numerous anti-Communist revolts occurred throughout Afghanistan, and he failed to subdue them. Taraki and Hafizullah Amin worked together to greatly weaken the Parcham faction of the PDPA. Eventually, on September 14, 1979, Taraki himself was killed by Amin.

(Source: <http://www.afghan-web.com/bios/yest/taraki.html>)

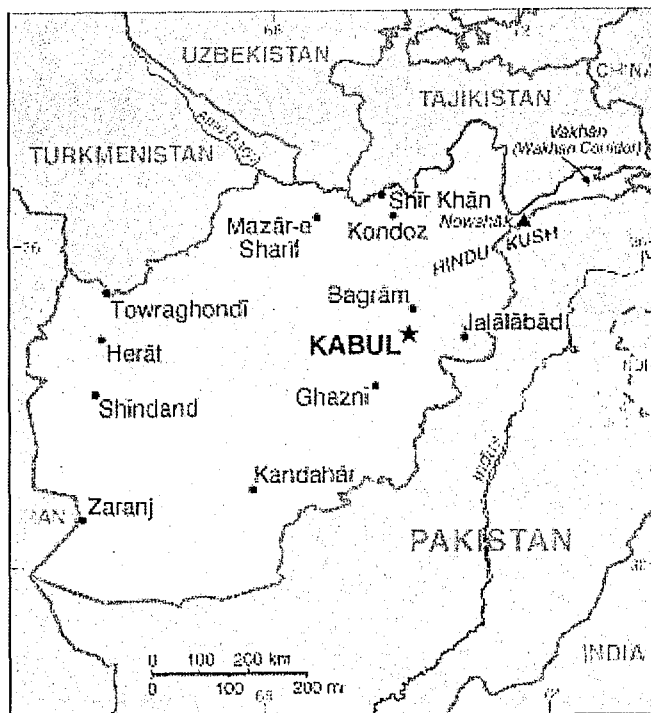
Valentin Ivanovich Varennikov: During the last few years of the Soviet war in Afghanistan, Varennikov was the personal representative in Kabul of the Soviet Defense Minister, and held negotiations with the United Nations Mission members who oversaw the pullout from the country of Soviet troops between 1988 and 1989. In 1989 General Varennikov was named commander-in-chief of land forces and deputy minister of defense.

Mohammad Yousaf: Head of the Afghan Bureau of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) from 1983-1987

Appendix C
Afghanistan Country Map

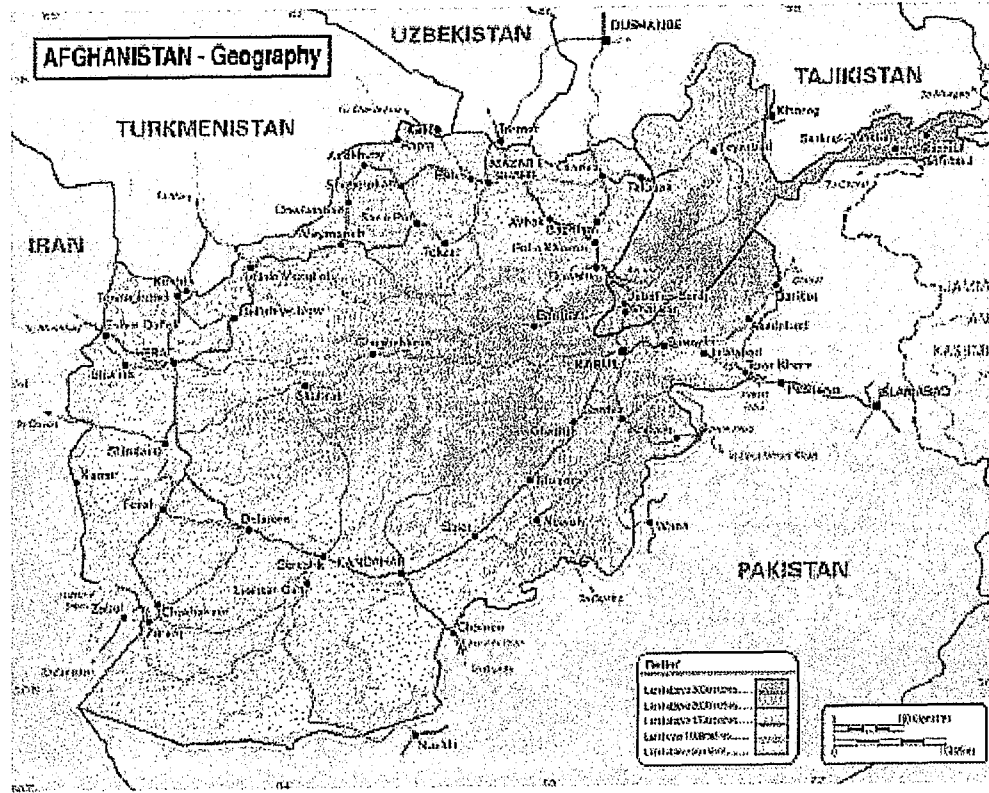


Source: http://www.idi.or.jp/tech/afgan_transport.pdf



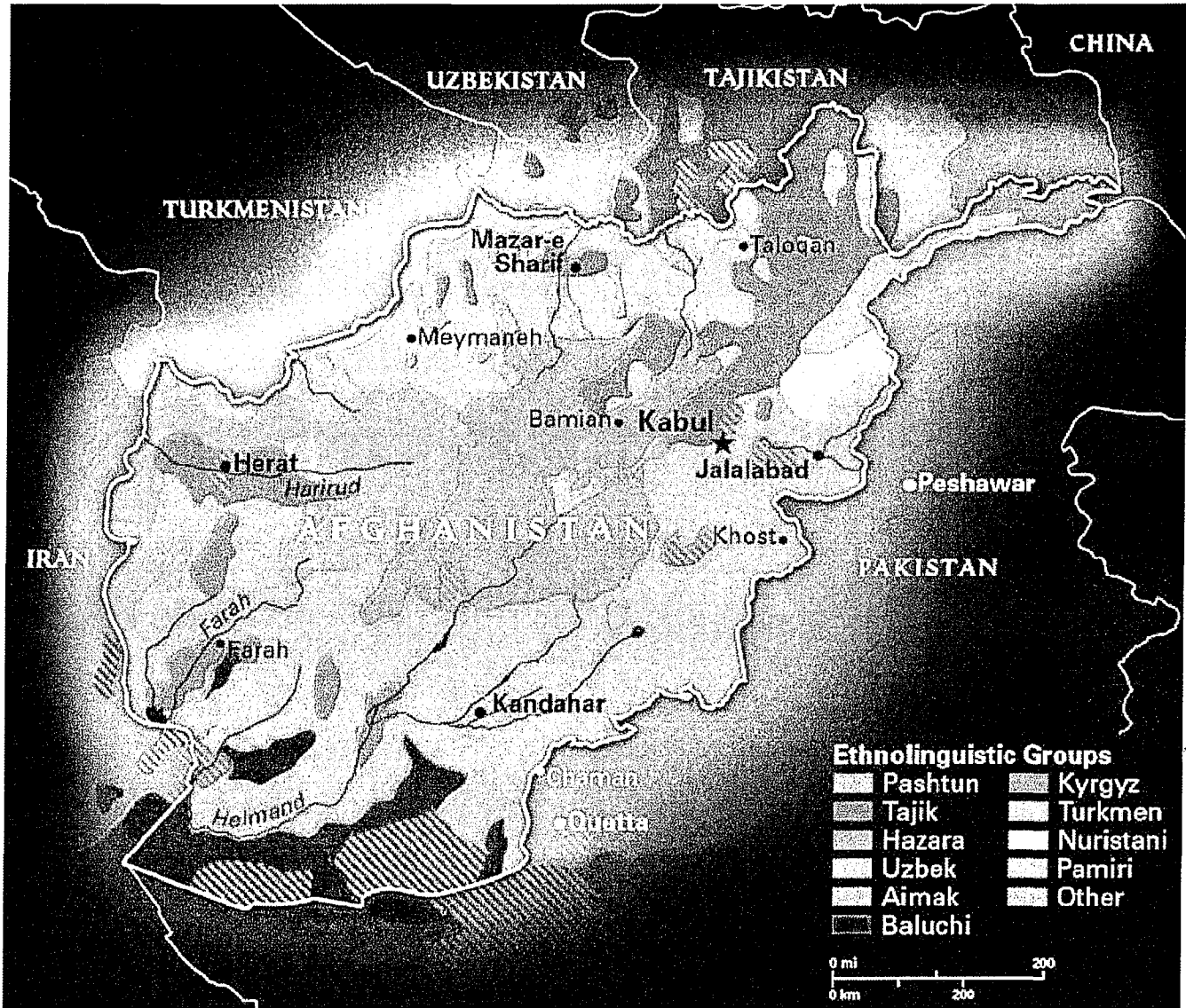
Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

Appendix D Afghanistan Terrain Relief



Source: http://www.idi.or.jp/tech/afgan_transport.pdf

Appendix E
 Afghanistan Ethnicity



Source: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/landin crisis/ethnic.html>

Appendix F Glossary

Center of Gravity: The set of characteristics, capabilities, and source of power from which a system derives its moral or physical strength, freedom of action, and will to act.

Critical Capability: A means that is considered a crucial enabler for a center of gravity to function as such, and is essential to the accomplishment of the specified or assumed objective(s).

Critical Requirement: Essential conditions, resources and means for a critical capability to be fully operative. Without critical requirements, a center of gravity cannot function successfully and will cease being a source of power that generates the critical capability.

Critical Vulnerability: An aspect of a critical requirement, which is deficient or vulnerable to direct or indirect attack that will create decisive or significant effects.

Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA): With Muhammad Daoud's death, the government of Afghanistan was run by a divided, dilettante Marxist clique that launched a train of events eventually leading to the disintegration of the state. They named their regime the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

(Source:http://www.photius.com/countries/afghanistan/government/afghanistan_government_the_april_1978_coup_~43.html)

Insurgency: An organized rebellion aimed at overthrowing a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict

Islamic Party: The Hezb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) was initially one of the most disciplined of the guerrilla groups that fought against Soviet occupation. Even though Hezb-i-Islami received millions of dollars worth of military and financial aid from the United States, they still failed to liberate Afghanistan from the Communists. The major Afghan political factions are largely based on the former resistance organizations.

(Source: <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/hizbi-islami.htm>)

Jihad: Holy war conducted for preservation of the faith.

Line of Communication (LOC): A route, either land, water, and/or air, that connects an operating military force with a base or operations and along which supplies and military forces move.

Madrasa: Arabic term for an Islamic religious school.

Mulla: Islamic religious leader or Imam.

Operational Art: The application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience—to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations

and organize and employ military forces. Operational art integrates ends, ways, and means across the levels of war.

Operational Design: The concept and construction of the framework that underpins a campaign or major operation plan and its subsequent execution.

Pashtunwali: A legal and moral code that determines social order and responsibilities.

PDPA: Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan—the Communist party of Afghanistan.

Pushtun: The dominant ethnic group (nearly 50%) of Afghanistan who speak Pashtu.

Qawm: The basic subnational Afghan identity based on kinship, residence and sometimes occupation.

Strategy: A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.

Appendix G
Afghanistan Insurgency Center of Gravity Analysis

CG-CC-CR-CV:

Center of Gravity (CG), Critical Capability (CC), Critical Requirement (CR), Critical Vulnerability (CV)

Moral Center of Gravity One: Islamic Faith

Moral Center of Gravity Two: Afghan Culture (Tribal)

Strategic Center of Gravity: *The Mujahideen*

Operational Center of Gravity: SANCTUARY (Countryside)

Critical Capabilities:

1. Sanctuary for Mujahideen
2. Ambush/Attack Soviets at will
3. Maneuver/Mobility
4. Logistics (move weapons, ammo, personnel)
5. Recruit fighters/train recruits
6. Ability to influence the population

Critical Requirements:

1. Maintain popular support
2. External support (money/weapons)
3. Secrecy and deception
4. Transportation (vehicles and animals)
5. Freedom of movement
6. Permissive environment

Critical Vulnerabilities:

1. Leaders
2. Caches
3. Communication devices
4. Support of the people
5. Base camps (Compounds)
6. Lines of communication

Definitions from JP 5-0, pg IV-11:

Center of Gravity—the set of characteristics, capabilities, and source of power from which a system derives its moral or physical strength, freedom of action, and will to act.

Critical Capability—a means that is considered a crucial enabler for a center of gravity to function as such, and is essential to the accomplishment of the specified or assumed objective(s).

Critical Requirement—an essential conditional, resource, and means for a critical capability to be fully operational.

Critical Vulnerability—an aspect of a critical requirement, which is deficient or vulnerable to direct or indirect attack that will create decisive or significant effects.

Sources:

Barile, J. D. Studying Warfare Utilizing a Center of Gravity, Critical Capability, Critical Requirement, Critical Vulnerability Construct. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, May 1999.

Grubbs, Lee K. and Forsyth, Michael J., USA, “Is There a Deep Fight in a Counterinsurgency?” *Military Review* (Jul-Aug 2005).

Appendix H
Soviet War Losses

Total Number of Soviet military personnel who served in Afghanistan: 620,000			
Force Breakdown		Killed and Wounded	
525,000	Regular Army	Killed in Action	13,833
90,000	KGB	Sick and Wounded	469,685
5,000	MVD	Permanently Disabled	10,751
Equipment Losses			
Jet Aircraft	118		
Helicopters	333		
Tanks	147		
Armored Personnel Carriers	1314		
Artillery Pieces and Mortars	433		
Radio Sets and Command Post Vehicles	1138		
Engineering Vehicles	510		
Trucks	11,369		

Source: <http://www.russianwarrior.com/STMMain.htm?1979afghanwarOOB.htm&1>

Appendix I
Soviet Order of Battle

Soviet 40th Army		Unit Location
	40th Army HQ	Kabul
	1074th Artillery Regiment	Kabul
	28th Separate MRL Regiment	Shindand
	1839th Separate Air Defense Regiment	Kabul
	45th Engineer Regiment	Charikar
	Engineer Road Construction Brigade	Kabul
	103rd Signal Regiment	Kabul
	247th Repair and Maintenance Bn.	Kabul
	258th Repair and Maintenance Bn.	Kabul
5th Motor Rifle Division		Shindand
	101st Motor Rifle Regiment	Herat
	371st Motor Rifle Regiment	Shindand
	24th Tank Regiment	Shindand
	1060th Artillery Regiment	Shindand
	1122nd Air Defense Regiment	Shindand
	5th Motor Rifle Division HQ Troops	Shindand & Delram
108th Motor Rifle Division		Bagram
	177th Motor Rifle Regiment	Jabul-Seraj and Hwy 76
	180th Motor Rifle Regiment	Kabul
	181st Motor Rifle Regiment (-)	Kabul
	285th Tank Regiment (-)	Bagram Airfield
	479th Artillery Regiment	Kabul
	1049th Air Defense Regiment	Kabul Airfield
	108th Motor Rifle Division HQ Troops	Bagram
201st Motor Rifle Division		Kunduz
	122nd Motor Rifle Regiment (-)	Kunduz
	149th Motor Rifle Regiment (-)	Kunduz
	395th Motor Rifle Regiment (-)	Doshi
	998th Artillery Regiment	Askalan
	990th Air Defense Regiment	Kunduz

		201st Motor Rifle Division HQ Troops		Kunduz & Askalan
	103rd Airborne Division			Kabul
		317th Parachute Regiment (-)		Kabul & Lashkargah
		350th Parachute Regiment (-)		Kabul
		357th Parachute Regiment (-)		Kabul & Miterlam
		66th Motor Rifle Brigade (-)		Jalalabad & Asadabad
		70th Motor Rifle Brigade*		Kandahar
		56th Air Assault Brigade (-)		Kunduz & Imam Shaib
		191st Motor Rifle Regiment (-)		Ghazni & Baraki Barak
		860th Motor Rifle Regiment*		Faizabad
		345th Parachute Regiment (-)		Bagram
	40th Army Air Forces			Unit Location
		115th Fighter Regiment		Bagram Airfield
		136th Fighter-Bomber Regiment		Shindand & Kandahar
		50th Composite Air Regiment		Kabul Airfield
		181st Helicopter Regiment (-)		Kunduz & Faizabad
		280th Helicopter Regiment		Kandahar Airfield
		292nd Helicopter Regiment		Jalalabad Airfield
		146th Helicopter Detachment		Kunduz Airfield
	Ministry of Defense Troops			Unit Location
		59th Brigade (possible Spetsnaz)		Pul-e-Khomri
		1003rd Battalion (possible Spetsnaz)		Bagram

Source: <http://www.russianwarrior.com/STMMain.htm?1979afghanwarOOB.htm&1>

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