

Reframing Afghanistan: Is Operational Planning Linked to History and Culture?

**A Monograph
by
MAJ Damon T. Schwan
U.S. Army**



**School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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MAJ Damon T. Schwan

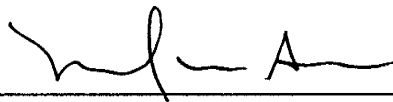
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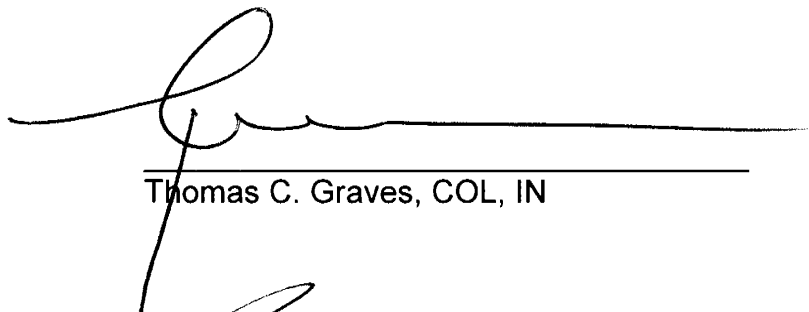
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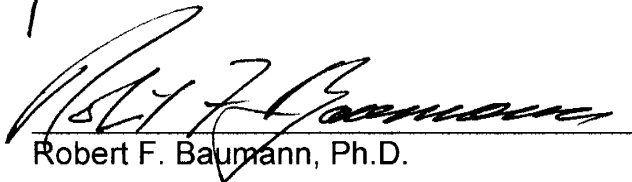
Michael W. Snow, COL, LG

Second Reader



Thomas C. Graves, COL, IN

Director,
School of Advanced
Military Studies



Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

Director,
Graduate Degree
Programs

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Abstract

Reframing Afghanistan: Is Operational Planning Linked to History and Culture? by MAJ Damon T. Schwan, U.S. Army, 58 pages.

This monograph describes the interaction and impact of the Afghan culture with the numerous instances of foreign intervention in the country. Prior to the American intervention in 2001, most recall of foreign intervention in Afghanistan focused on the Soviet Union's long endeavor from 1979-1989. Both the Soviet intervention and the subsequent rise of the Taliban sought to establish control of the tradition-bound and insular society, something that the British also encountered in their multiple occupations of the country.

As the American and now the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) experience in Afghanistan now extends in duration longer than that of the Soviets, a reexamination of the British precedent reveals sober lessons available from the three Anglo-Afghan Wars and the Waziristan Campaign. A simple lesson begins with realizing the complex interaction of geography, history, and religion and how they intertwine to shape the way Afghans view each other and foreigners. Compound this complexity with the impact of the last thirty years of conflict that includes the mediocre rise and remarkable crash of one foreign power and the rise and resilient staying power of a largely internal organization, the Taliban.

By examining the British and Soviet methods and results, along with those used in the rise of the Taliban, a common thread emerges that presents challenges for both NATO and for that of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The population will have the ultimate say in the success or failure of any attempt at control. The evidence of this lies in both the foreign powers that have withdrawn their forces after long, bloody campaigns and by the Afghan governments whose rules ended after either the population rejected the reliance upon foreign assistance or after the government tried to reform a traditional society resistant to such reforms.

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Introduction: Afghanistan's Complex History

...the United States has focused the overwhelming majority of collection efforts and analytical brainpower on insurgent groups, our intelligence apparatus still finds itself unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment in which we operate and the people we are trying to protect and persuade.¹

In January 2010, Major General Michael Flynn released a telling analysis of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) shortcomings in intelligence gathering in Afghanistan.² The report explicated that intelligence efforts largely focused on what the insurgent groups were doing and not enough on the environment in which they were operating – within the ecology of the people of Afghanistan. He described ignorance on the part of the intelligence community and their inability to answer fundamental questions about the environment. These concerns included local economics, powerbrokers, even asserting a lack of interest in a basic counterinsurgency practice of understanding the relationships inherent between villages and the success or failure of local development projects. Published just over eight years into the American involvement in Afghanistan, Flynn's report implied that the intelligence community has become marginally relevant. Relevance came only after adopting a reactionary mindset that ultimately evolved into tracking Improvised Explosive Device (IED) makers, diagramming insurgent networks, and tracking other actions at the periphery of the problem instead of investing time to find ways to strike at the heart of the insurgency. Flynn's conclusion arguably projects beyond the intelligence community and indicts the international effort to understand the historical

¹ Michael T. Flynn, et al., *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2010), <http://www.cnas.org/node/3924> (accessed March 17th, 2010), 7.

² Ibid., 4, 8.

examples of outside actors intervening in the country and the Afghan population's reaction to those interventions.

The Afghanistan peoples' exposure to foreign intervention in their country did not begin in the fall of 2001 when American forces entered the country focused on finding elements of the al Qaeda terrorist organization. A multitude of historic excursions into Afghanistan provide examples of the challenges of operating in a country that has endured a history of conflict, particularly over the last several generations. The similarities between the outcomes of these battles and campaigns provide a profile of a country and population that continues to survive despite sporadic, yet significant, foreign intervention at the national level, persistent feuding at local levels, social divergence, and challenging geographic obstacles. The numerous failures of foreign intervention exists as a testament to the resilience of the population and the seemingly impossible task of designing an approach to overcome the complex array and interrelation of obstacles facing intervening forces.

In studying its history, a pattern emerges that suggests likely outcomes of foreign intervention in Afghanistan. The interventions of the British in three Anglo-Afghan Wars and that of the Soviet Union in the 1980s suggest a persistent difficulty in establishing a relationship with Afghans that recognizes the roots of their stubborn societal resistance to foreign intervention and provides adequate incentives to overcome it before Afghan tribal leaders put forth the perception that the interveners are attacking Islam and rally the tribes before the enemy has a chance to adapt tactics to defeat the intervening forces. The significance of the Afghan narrative, formed through these many conflicts, created the idea of Afghanistan as the 'land of the rebellious.'³ This narrative formed long before both the British and Soviets set foot in the country, but their

³ Sarah Chayes, *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2006), 68.

experiences and that of the United States (US) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the 2000s reflect the deep embedding of this mindset in the society.

Many components comprise the narrative of the Afghan people, but the importance of that narrative lies in viewing those elements that either evolved or remained in stasis over time. While the US and NATO experiences of the past decade add to the larger narrative, for the thirty years before September 11, 2001, this narrative encapsulated not only a turbulent ride through the Soviet experience and the rise of the Taliban. Furthermore, this period revealed opportunity. In the history of Afghan warfare, the Afghan population's support of America's initial intervention against al Qaeda and the Taliban challenged the notion that the country would always unify and collectively seek to repel external forces. Initially, the Afghan society demonstrated a high degree of public support for the intervention, though this did not last and now the society experiences a pull between support for the government and support or passive acceptance for the Taliban.⁴ This shifting support raises questions about the nature of Afghan discourse over time and the course it takes in relation to the power and actors involved in Afghan conflict. From the US perspective, the question arises concerning whether US actions throughout the conflict exhibit a fundamental insight into the Afghan narrative? The study of Afghan history and culture demonstrates the concept of complexity, in that it simultaneously exhibits a society that appears as a rural population with 'cold-blooded and treacherous' tendencies and with a history as the 'graveyard of empires'.⁵ By taking a scholarly approach to the history and culture, the society proves resilient,

⁴ Norah Niland, *The Great Deception: Only Democratic Delusions for Afghans*, <http://costsofwar.org/sites/default/files/articles/45/attachments/Niland%20and%20Balaghi.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2012).

⁵ Robert Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War, How and Why They Fight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 298.

eager to maintain their way of life, and prone to fighting internally but willing to unite and fight against outsiders to protect that way of life.

This paper enjoys the benefit of looking at the Afghanistan operating environment in hindsight after more than ten years of American presence and participation in conflict. Richards Heuer, a prominent theorist in intelligence analysis, describes those individuals that benefit from the perspective of hindsight as taking “their current state of knowledge and compar[ing] it with what they or others did or could or should have known before the current knowledge was received.”⁶ Instead of systematically emphasizing mistakes made during Operation Enduring Freedom, this paper seeks to reveal aspects of the operational environment that the Americans might have used in Afghanistan as the foundation of the initial operational approach and modified when accordingly. Thus, the benefit of hindsight illustrates the need for operational artists to employ the necessary effort to see the particular Afghanistan terrain as viewed through the eyes of the people that live and have fought there – and not through a linear Western perspective.

Is the Current International Approach in Afghanistan Sustainable?

The notion of a linear Western perspective towards Afghanistan implies that international efforts in Afghanistan do not fully or accurately appreciate the impact of the history and culture of the country and therefore will not achieve meaningful or lasting success there. Instead, this paper seeks to portray Afghanistan as it was before the 2001 international intervention and to reframe, through the lens of history and culture, the tendencies and potentials of any interactions between the Afghan system of 2001 and that of international community intervention. This will

⁶ Richards J. Heuer Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1999), 162.

answer the research question - Has the international community designed a relevant and sustainable operational approach in support of political conflict termination in Afghanistan?

Following ten years of varied levels of American military and political attention focused on the Afghanistan operation, assessments indicate uneven and debatable progress towards achieving the original strategic end state for the commitment of forces. To develop an improved and holistic perspective in designing an operational approach that links operations to Afghanistan policy, four key inputs require examination. First, the culture and geography of Afghanistan play a potentially decisive role, certainly in efforts to defeat the Taliban and develop security forces, but also in attempting to achieve sustainable success in non-traditional roles such as increasing government capacity and creating or improving socio-economic programs. Second, a screening of pertinent historical case studies may reveal opportunities and risks that apply to Afghanistan planning. Third, a contributing factor to the current operational approach concerns the challenges inherent in conducting a whole-of-government counterinsurgency effort in a dynamic joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environment in which all organizations come into the environment with conflicting agendas, desired outcomes, and doctrine. Finally, President Barack Obama's vision for conflict termination in Afghanistan and the impact of the number of forces committed shape the nature and scale of the approach.

This paper cannot possibly cover the entirety of the history and culture of Afghanistan, nor can it address the role of outside influencers such as Pakistan, Iran, Russia, or India. For this reason, those latter pertinent aspects of any discussion of Afghanistan's political context fall out of the bounds of this paper. The former aspects do exist in this paper, in focused passages that illuminate the paper's argument.

President George W. Bush described, in his memoir, an appreciation for the history and culture of Afghanistan when he addressed centuries old tribal, ethnic, and religious rivalries as

well as examples of Afghans banding together against foreigners. His three objectives for US intervention in Afghanistan included removing the Taliban from power, denying sanctuary to al Qaeda, and helping a democratic government emerge.⁷ These criteria formed the basis of initial American and international efforts. In 2010, Bob Woodward summarized President Barack Obama's concept for Afghanistan as denying safe haven to al Qaeda and denying the Taliban the ability to overthrow the Afghan government.⁸ Together, these criteria provide the end state essential for military and civilian planners to design the operational approach necessary for achieving success.

However, before 21st century American leaders turned their attention to Afghanistan, they should have reviewed examples of foreign interventions that ended unsuccessfully. The British and Soviet experiences culminated, not because Afghan fighters destroyed the intervening military force, but because the interveners decided to withdraw from the country. These withdrawals were precipitated as a result of difficulty in achieving enduring effects in governance, economics, and military institutional capacity directly related to stubborn resistance of tribal fighters and their effect on the population. These examples lend themselves directly to the introduction of a discourse that describes how the Afghan population would potentially react to American intervention following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Just as it is necessary to the need to understand historical examples in Afghanistan, is the need to recognize current foundational US and international doctrine that provides a method to understand the link between political ends, ways and means used to achieve those ends. These doctrinal publications include current and emerging doctrine to understand how an operational

⁷ George Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: George W. Crown Publishers, 2010), 193.

⁸ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 385.

planner views the linkages between the operational approach and the end state. To understand the sustainability of the current operational approach in Afghanistan, key ISAF documents reveal the objectives and prioritization of efforts by US and international organizations.

To formulate an approach to solving the current problems in Afghanistan, a researcher need only consult the voluminous amount of material written about Afghanistan in the last ten years. However, this monograph instead relies on several texts to focus research efforts on the cultural response to foreign intervention, instead of mirroring those recent writings that claim to have the singular approach that leads to success in Afghanistan. These texts largely fall into two categories. The first group focuses on perceived facts involved with conflicts that ranged from 200 years ago to only two decades ago. The second group addresses the cultural aspects that have driven Afghan behavior for centuries.

Through focusing attention on history, culture, and doctrine, this monograph argues and seeks to demonstrate the need to examine the lessons available to the US prior to the commitment of forces in Afghanistan in terms of aligning ends, ways, and means to demonstrate that joint doctrine does not adequately consider the interests of the host nation population or government in formulating an operational approach. Owing to this assertion, ISAF's current approach does not seem likely to achieve all stated political conflict termination criteria in Afghanistan considering Afghan history and culture, and available joint and Army doctrine.

Prologue: An American Failure to Understand France's Vietnam Experience

Following the French departure from Vietnam in 1954, American involvement there grew dramatically and both nations experienced similar successes and failures as those in the contemporary American experience in Afghanistan. Today, those experiences provide an opportunity for insight into the American perspective of designing an operational approach that aligned ways and means to achieve political ends in a difficult operating environment. Although

every conflict is unique and emerges from a distinct context, the American experience in Vietnam provides lessons relevant to our current experience in Afghanistan in understanding the relationship between an operational approach and the battlefield effects that emerge from history and culture. In Vietnam, these effects included a need to gauge the experience levels of the opposing combatants, a combatants' use of terrain as part of their way of waging war, the population's view of a centralized government, the injection of third party national support into the conflict, understanding of the long term enemy objectives, and the translation of tactical and operational success to strategic achievement.

The US Army began the Vietnam War with a political objective of containing the expansion of communist power.⁹ This translated into a strategic objective of assisting South Vietnam to become a viable nation-state.¹⁰ The Army carried forward an approach of organizational structure and an image of war proven successful in two world wars and the Korean War. Andrew Krepinevich called this the *Army Concept* and argued that this theory drove the Army to fail to envision the nature of war in Vietnam and prevented the adaptation of an organizational structure and strategy better engineered for success despite many indicators to do so.¹¹ This analysis proved even more illuminating when considering that the French experience provided deep insight into the Vietnamese operating environment and provided available lessons for the Americans to use before they committed forces to Vietnam.

Following the successful campaign by the Viet Minh against the Japanese from 1941-1945, the French battled Communist insurgents in French Indochina from 1945 to 1954. During

⁹ Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1982), 122.

¹⁰ Ibid., 86.

¹¹ Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 6.

this period, as the French attempted to re-establish control of the territory, they encountered a seasoned force prepared to fight on friendly terrain and possessing momentum from a fresh victory over external occupiers. From the beginning, the French attempted to seize control over areas of Vietnamese territory through what can be termed conventional means. In 1946, the French used bombardment attacks that forced the lesser-armed Vietnamese to abandon the population centers and withdraw to the rural areas. Thus, Ho Chi Minh and his forces quickly found themselves unable to fight the French in direct engagements. This echoes what occurred in Afghanistan in the last two centuries in Afghanistan when native forces faced both British and the Soviets in different conflicts and withdrew to rural areas and avoided direct engagement. Facing the French, their former allies against the Japanese, the Vietnamese again turned to using familiar guerilla warfare tactics they successfully used against the Japanese. Thus, prior to the planning for Afghanistan and a fight with the Taliban, American leaders and planners had available this model of American planning in Vietnam not fully taking into account the difficulties faced when encountering an enemy with a long and successful experience fighting on native terrain.

The French linked their counterinsurgency campaign with a concerted French effort in the political arena to fight Mihn's insurgency. In 1949, the State of Vietnam, an independent state within the French Union, came into being and the US quickly recognized its existence, but few other nations followed suit. At the same time, Communist forces within Vietnam began receiving support from a China now under the control of Chairman Mao Zedong, who believed there were no other foreign issues greater than the one on China's Southern border in French Indochina. Thus, while the French tried to recover from their World War II challenges, the French Army was on the other side of the globe engaged in a conflict for which their countrymen had little appetite.

French success in Vietnam was limited. Their forces experienced consistent tactical defeats through concentrated Communist attacks on French garrisons and supply lines. The

increasing volume of Communist successes soon drew the Soviet Union into the conflict as an ally to the Communist cause and a counter to the small-scale involvement of the US. French inability to achieve military success at an operational level seemed constant until late 1950 when General Jean Marie de Lattre Tassigny fortified a series of positions between Hanoi to the Gulf of Tonkin aimed at preventing Viet Minh penetration of the area. This operational level success continued through 1951 as Viet Minh forces, now able to operate in large conventional formations, unsuccessfully attacked major French garrisons. Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap drove his multi-divisional forces into the French defenses three times, experiencing more than 20,000 killed and thousands more wounded. For the Communists, these defeats brought forth discussions about revising their strategy. For the French, although sometimes victorious tactically and operationally, they failed to achieve the success necessary to link to military success to strategic goals. As a result, popular support in France for the military efforts in Vietnam dwindled owing to the fact that the Vietnamese advanced their own capacity and ability to fight the French in direct, large-scale battle, which demonstrated to the French public a failure of the French military to prevent the rise in enemy force capability.

The Vietnamese experience provides key lessons in understanding the history and culture of a society and about the failure of American planning to appreciate those aspects when designing an operational approach. By considering both the Vietnamese of the 1950s and the Afghans in 2001, it can be said that they shared a recent history of success against foreign powers on familiar terrain. Further, the American failure to appreciate the components of this success before Vietnam provides insight into the need to apply context in designing an approach in Afghanistan. The Soviet experience in Afghanistan further portrays the need to understand history and culture as they had four relevant British experiences available for study and still repeated many of their mistakes.

Prologue: The Soviet's Afghan Experience Shaped Today's Conditions

The early American involvement in Vietnam portrayed the US difficulty in understanding the people and history of a nation before a conflict escalated. The Soviet experience shifts this lesson to the Middle East in its application to the complex, yet historically thematic, context of Afghanistan. The notable Soviet episode of their decade long conflict in the country had its roots in the context that led up to the invasion.

Afghanistan's long relationship with the Soviet Union originated in 1919 when both newly formed countries mutually recognized each other and the Soviets began to provide funding towards a broad spectrum of projects, including a fledgling Afghan air force in the 1920s and infrastructure improvements, such as wells, schools, and like projects.¹² The US also poured money into the country, but the Soviets did the one thing that the US did not, they provided military aid. Ironically, US leaders felt that Afghanistan lacked strategic importance against the Soviet threat.¹³ Initially, Soviet military presence largely existed in an advisory role to the Afghan Army, but later the Afghan military came to rely on the Soviets for logistical support, so much that the Afghans lacked the capacity to undertake unilateral action against another foreign country.¹⁴

In early 1978, Mohammed Daoud, the Afghan President, began to reduce the reliance on Soviet assistance following years of rising tension with Pakistan and internal Islamists and a

¹² Matt M. Matthews, *Occasional Paper 36, We Have Not Learned How to Wage War There: The Soviet Approach in Afghanistan 1979–1989* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2011), 7.

¹³ Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War against the Taliban* (Philadelphia: De Capo Press, 2009), 3.

¹⁴ J. Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1986), 22.

desire to expand Afghanistan's presence on the international stage, free from Soviet backing.¹⁵ The Soviet Union, incensed that they were losing influence in the region, particularly after assisting Daoud with his rise to power in a 1973 coup, demanded that Daoud cease his attempts at increasing his international stature through relations with other countries in the region. Daoud replied, "We will never allow you to dictate to us how to run our country."¹⁶ Afghan officers loyal to the Soviets killed Daoud and 18 members of his family.¹⁷ Afghan support for the five-year Daoud regime and the manner in which it ended, combined with the growing resistance to Soviet presence, led to a strong cultural backlash against the replacement government, a pro-Communist regime. A redesigned national flag, education for girls, rights for women, and a revision of land distribution measures quickly angered the most radical Islamists.¹⁸ These Islamists had support of those in the Afghan military not sympathetic to the Soviet cause and on two occasions, they joined forces with military elements to kill 100 Soviet advisors and 5,000 of their loyal Afghan forces.¹⁹ At this point, the Soviets faced the prospect of losing a supportive regime to a mix of Pakistani trained mujahideen, literally, "warriors in the cause of Allah", and a small number of Soviet-trained military personnel. Should a full-scale Soviet invasion occur, warned Soviet officer Alexander Lyakhovsky, the resistance would grow to include the Afghanistan people, "who never tolerated foreigners on their soil."²⁰

¹⁵ Matthews, 6.

¹⁶ David Loyn, *In Afghanistan: Two Hundred Years of British, Russian, and American Occupation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 1176, 3261.

¹⁷ Matthews, 6.

¹⁸ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2350.

¹⁹ Tanner, 14.

²⁰ Mathews, 9.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan occurred, in part, to prevent the collapse of a regime friendly to Soviet aspirations along a portion of its southern border. Without the Babrak Karmal regime in power, Soviets faced the potential of losing the investments they made in Afghanistan, lacking the potential to expand power in the region, and incurring a security risk with a potential hostile Islamic regime to its south.²¹ According to Lester Grau, an expert on the Soviet military, the military operational approach included:

...stabilizing the country by garrisoning the main routes, major cities, airbases and logistics sites; relieving the Afghan government forces of garrison duties and pushing them into the countryside to battle the resistance; providing logistic, air, artillery, and intelligence support to the Afghan forces; providing minimum interface between the Soviet occupation forces and the local populace; accepting minimal Soviet casualties; and, strengthening the Afghan forces, so that once the resistance was defeated, the Soviet Army could be withdrawn.²²

Although initially successful, the invasion soon turned into a difficult occupation. To adjust, Politburo members recommended that pre-existing Afghan entities such as tribes and national minorities provided representation to the transitional government, thus bridging the gap between the tribal society and the Soviet-friendly institutions. To address the hardliners, the Soviets sought to find common ground for negotiations. The Soviets focused on these efforts, along with those aimed at gaining traction with moderate Muslim leaders in an attempt to buy time for the Soviet-backed government to re-establish a legitimate security force.²³

The resistance to Soviet Army and the pro-Communist Afghan government and security forces requires assessment through two unique perspectives, the Islamist Mujahedeen and the general Afghan population. Looked at separately, they provide evidence of a fracture that existed

²¹ Joseph J. Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2011), 30.

²² Lester W. Grau, ed., *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1998), xviii–xix.

²³ Matthews, 13-14.

between the moderates and the hardliners. Together, they demonstrate the influence of the armed Mujahedeen to suppress general population support for the Soviet actions now considered typical of counterinsurgency operations.

First, the Mujahedeen attempted to fight the Soviets in large conventional battles. After numerous defeats, resistance forces began fighting in smaller formations using unconventional or guerilla type tactics.²⁴ Once again, the geography of Afghanistan favored native fighters, as they possessed the ability to use the terrain to conduct attacks that forced the deployment of Soviet forces away from their main tactical formation, only to find that the enemy had melted into the population or disappeared into the countryside.²⁵ Olivier Roy, a French professor who made numerous expeditions with the Mujahedeen in the 1980s, described the success of the Mujahedeen guerilla efforts resulted from two rules.²⁶ He wrote that, first, the Mujahedeen maximized external support to facilitate a logistical capacity to wage resistance and provided a physical sanctuary from which to launch attacks. Second, they never established a goal to develop a credible political organization to replace a Kabul regime. This second rule presents a theory that the Mujahedeen ultimately focused internally within their own territory and proven by a lack of effort to create a new government save for the lone effort of Ahmad Shah Massoud, a minority Tajik, who failed after the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate refused to provide assistance.²⁷

The second perspective of the Soviet defeat lies in understanding the actions of the general Afghan population. The population exhibited a dissonance in that while supportive of

²⁴ Matthews, 15.

²⁵ Olivier Roy, *Adelphi Paper 259, The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991), 52.

²⁶ Ibid., 54.

²⁷ Roy, 55.

certain Soviet reforms like the education of Afghan females, it largely united to fight an external occupier under the banner of protecting Islam and freeing the population from undue imposition of un-Islamic governance. Several aspects of the Afghanistan society support this assessment. First, the formerly pro-Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) fell apart due to tribal infighting for power. A political failure, this led to the shifting allegiances within the military, which certainly failed to provide the legitimacy sought after in a re-established Afghan military.²⁸ Roy claims that the Soviet Army seemed oblivious to the needs of the Afghan people, particularly as the Soviets emphasized conventional operations over understanding the tenants of Islam and their role in Afghan society.²⁹ The Soviet leadership realized that military means alone would not achieve victory and hoped that economic aid and improved governance would provide the Afghan government with legitimacy, despite the fact that this exact scenario drove anti-Soviet sentiment from the beginning.³⁰

Understanding the Afghan People and Geography

The Role of Islam and Sharia Law in Afghanistan

Having a basic knowledge of Islam and Sharia Law, in particular how the Taliban interpreted and implemented both in Afghanistan, allows for a more informed view of the challenges faced by coalition forces operating in the country. While not practical or possible to fully explore Islam and Sharia Law, this overview pinpoints and illuminates certain critical aspects that effect the operational environment. The key to understanding international interventions in Afghanistan lies in the context that Islam and the Qur'an provide to the people of

²⁸ Stephen J. Blank, *Operational and Strategic Lesson of the War in Afghansitan 1979-1990* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 1991), 36-37.

²⁹ Roy, 45.

³⁰ Matthews, 14.

Afghanistan and how these elements have been used by Afghan rulers and tribes over the centuries to rally opposition to other tribes and to foreign militaries.

While not practical to present the entirety of the history and components of the Islamic religion, addressing key components provides an understanding of the foundation of the religion and its role in Afghan life. The basic background of Islam includes the religion's beginning 1,400 years ago when the message of Islam was revealed through the angel Gabriel to the Holy Prophet Mohammed and preserved through the Qur'an.³¹ Instructive to understanding Islam are the definitions and translations of key terms and concepts, including Islam itself, Muslim, and for Afghanistan, jihad and Taliban. Islam literally translates in Arabic as 'to surrender.'³² By having multiple potential definitions and interpretations, most academics view the term and concept of Islam as ranging from believing that Islam derives from "salaam" or peace to surrendering one's pleasure for the pleasure of God in the surrender translation. The term Muslim refers to "one who has submitted to God's will" and in common usage, a person that follows the religion of Islam.³³

The term jihad comes from the verb jahada, which means exerted.³⁴ According to Islamic scholar Majid Khadduri, jihad provides the direct way to paradise. However, contrary to popular understanding, jihad does not necessarily require hostility to achieve the exertion that Allah desires. Another way to achieve it may be through peaceful means, although contemporary

³¹ N. J. Dawood, *The Koran: With a Parallel Arabic Text* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), ix.

³² Hunt Janin and Andre Kahlmeyer, *Islamic Law: The Sharia from Muhammad's Time to the Present* (London: McFarland and Company, 2007), 14.

³³ Ibid., 14.

³⁴ Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Richmond VA: William Bird Press, 1955), 59.

examples seem to number less than those of armed jihad.³⁵ Khadduri goes on to describe jihad as a sanction against non-Muslims or unbelievers. This creates *bellum justum* against one's non-Muslim enemies. Further, he states that unlike the Five Pillars of Islam, which are individual mandates, jihad is a duty fulfilled by the entire Muslim community. However, since not all believers can fight in an armed jihad, the duties of supporting those that do fight indirectly contribute to the jihad. At this level, local, tribal, or regional, the responsibility to call for the jihad falls upon the head of the community as his authority serves the community's interest.³⁶

The Qur'an's role in Islam lies in defining the ideals of the faith, but also in explicating the most important beliefs within the Islamic faith. The Five Pillars of Islam include Shahadatayn (two testimonies), Salah (prayer), zakah (charity), sawm (fasting), and hajj (pilgrimage). Shahadatayn's two testimonies include affirming one's belief in Islamic monotheism and the second states that Prophet Mohammad Ibn Abdullah is Allah's messenger. The second pillar, Salah, or prayer, dictates the five obligatory prayers performed daily with sincerity and focus and intended to bring humility, satisfaction, and serenity. Zakah purifies one's wealth by sharing 2.5 percent of one's wealth annually with those less fortunate and mitigates envy between classes within society. Sawm occurs during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and requires abstaining from eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse from dawn until sundown. The last pillar, hajj, requires a pilgrimage to the Kaaba at least once in a Muslim's lifetime. These pillars stand as the fundamental expectations for Muslim behavior in adherence to the Islamic faith and demonstrate the penetration that Islam has in those societies where Islam not only serves as the

³⁵ Danielle Demetriou, "Ahmadi Muslims call for 'Peaceful Jihad'," The Independent, July 31, 2004, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/ahmadi-muslims-call-for-peaceful-jihad-555092.html> (accessed April 7, 2012).

³⁶ Khadduri, 61.

central religion, but as a way of living one's life.³⁷ However, the manner in which the Qur'an was written and published creates opportunities for subjective interpretation. According to Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*, the obligatory institution of jihad against non-Muslims creates a sixth pillar of Islam. This understanding continues to be used by numerous groups, including the Taliban, to provoke the Muslim population to resist foreign beliefs – and occupations.³⁸

In the introduction to his book on Shari'ah law, Frank Griffel addresses the Western understanding of the legality of certain issues of marriage, divorce, inheritance, taxation, and war. However, he does not discuss matters of women's rights or moral issues such as self-sacrifice or the legitimacy of violence.³⁹ He describes Shari'ah law as an Arabic word describing the practical aspect of religion. The Qur'an uses this word and quotes God as saying, "We have set you on a Shari'ah of command, so follow it." However, this stands as the lone time the word Shari'ah is used in the Qur'an. The interpretation of the single passage exists today in concepts that describe the correct way to practice the religion, or the path, road, or highway. Regardless, this concept ultimately rules and regulates Muslim behavior. The addition of the word law to the phrase came about after the need to adjudicate disputes under the discourse of Shari'ah and not through the implementation of any centralized court or authority.⁴⁰ The critical aspects of the concept in application occur in the relationship between the two parts of the law, mu'amalat and ibadat. Because Shari'ah refers to the manner of living one's life, and it articulates that Allah controls what occurs after one's death, there exists a similar relationship in the two parts of Shari'ah law.

³⁷ Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1994), 8.

³⁸ Seyyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Ilm, publication date not available), 70.

³⁹ Frank Griffel, *Introduction to Shari'a: Islamic Law in the Contemporary Context* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 6.

⁴⁰ Griffel 78, 80, 90, 91, 121.

First, mu'amalat concerns one's relationship with Allah and how man follows the Islamic faith. Second, ibadat serves as the check and balance at the terrestrial level and concerns the enforcement of Shari'ah between men.⁴¹

Ahmed Rashid, a prominent authority on Afghan culture and history, states the importance of Islam to Afghanistan when he describes Islam as rooted and integral to Afghan values. Nearly all Afghans are Muslims and of that population, 80 percent are Sunnis of the Hanafi School, the most tolerant of four Sunni Islam schools. He describes Afghans as tolerant in the practice of Islam, despite perceptions, particularly with Shari'ah law and the Taliban. The concept of Afghan's religious belonging begins with how an individual views Islam both upward and outward to the community of believers. The mullah binds religion and community by being chosen by the village as one of their own. This ties the village to the mullah in many respects and to the larger ulema, or religious scholars.⁴² The ulema meet in shuras as part of a 'civic society' to put to discourse those topics that rise past the mullahs. In Afghanistan, these mullahs and shuras serve as the accepted and welcomed method to administer Shari'ah law. Not until the Taliban rose in stature during the 1990s did that change and more conservative interpretations of Shari'ah law became common practice.⁴³

Together, the role of the Qur'an in Islam, and all that it requires from a follower leads to a prescriptive way of living. Combined with the influence of mullahs and the violent history in Afghanistan, the actual practice of surviving and caring for one's family requires an additional layer of subordination. Thus, the typical Afghan family that seeks to live a Muslim existence must not only follow the pillars and Shari'ah law, but face an elevated threat from the Taliban if

⁴¹ Janin, 29.

⁴² Rashid, 28-29.

⁴³ Collins, 39.

they fail at any of those aspects. Furthermore, they face additional risk to their family and are pressure to comply, in some cases, when the Taliban forces them to serve and fulfill the sixth pillar of jihad.

The Afghanistan Geography and Its Impact on History

From the interpretation of its critical location and resulting rivalries between the British and Russians, to its mountainous sanctuaries for al Qaeda, Afghanistan's rugged terrain had a remarkable impact on its history. The country's eastern border includes the Hindu Kush Mountains, the location of most of the historical conflict and that still serves to provide a natural barrier to keep enemies out and the natives in. The rest of the Texas-sized country includes a mix of desert plains and agriculture-friendly landscape. The contested border region, shared with Pakistan, also contains the largest cities in the country, the capital of Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad. Thirty-four provinces contain nearly 400 districts linked with a largely unimproved transportation network. The challenges of this terrain lend to a lack of economic development and world engagement. It also aids the native fighters as it is said, "Where the road ends, the Taliban begins."

The eastern border also divides the Pashtun population, twelve million people and forty percent of the country's population, the largest tribe in Afghanistan. On the Pakistan side, nearly twice as many Pashtuns reside in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Baluchistan, and around Karachi. Other Afghan ethnic groups include the Tajiks, which make up 27-30 percent of the population, the Hazaras at 15 percent, and the Uzbek-Turks, which make up ten percent. Notable among the ethnic groups, the Tajiks have traditionally represented

the central figures in economic, government, and educated clergy, and Western powers considered the best adversaries to the Soviets in the 1980s.⁴⁴

The Culture and Traditional Life of the Afghans Impact Operations

Since much has been made in Western media in the last eleven years of the need for US forces to understand the Afghan culture, tactical training for the deployment of US forces includes provisions for language and recognition of cultural differences. This training has focused largely on teaching coalition forces members to interact at a superficial level to conduct small unit operations in Afghanistan. MG Flynn called this knowledge “fingernail deep” and argued that training must address more than the tactical level requirements and focus on operational aspects of the environment.⁴⁵ This cultural awareness training at the tactical level includes such skills as learning simple phrases in Pashtu or Dari, not stepping on prayer rugs, and how to deal with Afghan women.⁴⁶ Understanding these cultural norms and teaching soldiers how to behave appropriately provide personnel in tactical units with a basic understanding of the human terrain in which to conduct operations. However, it does not demonstrate the necessary aspects of understanding how the enemy fights. In the early days after 9/11, few Americans possessed any knowledge of the manner that the Afghans fought, beyond the incomplete perception that Mujahedeen forces defeated the Soviets Army by using American provided Stinger missiles.⁴⁷ As a result, the few American experts on the region and their writings that demonstrated an

⁴⁴ Collins, 6-8.

⁴⁵ Flynn, 9.

⁴⁶ Scott Lamberson, “‘Dragon Brigade’ conducts Afghan cultural awareness training,” Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System, January 27, 2012, <http://www.dvidshub.net/news/83038/dragon-brigade-conducts-afghan-cultural-awareness-training#.T33H13ic00s> (accessed January 28, 2012).

⁴⁷ Alan J. Kuperman, “The Stinger Missile and U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan,” *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 114, No. 2 (Summer, 1999): 219.

understanding of Afghan tactics became hot commodities.⁴⁸ Leaders identified books like *The Bear That Went Over The Mountain* describing the 1980s era insurgent ambush tactics on dusty bookshelves and quickly passed around tactical units. Even if considered superficial, the practical application of these cultural skills and an increased understanding of historical tactics furthered success at the tactical level of war. This model of seeking environmental knowledge, while far more straightforward at the tactical level, appears to continue to plague NATO forces to this day. Many pundits have written about the failure of the US and other coalition nations to take into account Afghanistan's long history of conflict. This manifests itself as a problem at the operational perspective when trying to use elements of operational art to arrange tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.⁴⁹

From the constant conflict encountered by Afghanistan's population for thousands of years, several themes emerge that provide insight into the perceptions and behavior of the population that endure to the present day. Afghans view themselves through many lenses. They consider their first identity to be their place in their own immediate family. However, the notion that an Afghan man may have a strong fraternal bond with his brother serves as the first challenge to loyalty. When an elderly Afghan patriarch dies, tradition dictates that his land and property gets distributed among his male heirs. Thus, after a few generations, rivalries develop over shrinking grazing and crop producing land, sometimes escalating to blood feuds.⁵⁰ The same

⁴⁸ Jason Vest, "Some Things To Consider About Afghanistan - From Those Who've Been There," *The American Prospect*, March 26, 2002, <http://prospect.org/article/some-things-consider-about-afghanistan-those-who've-been-there> (accessed March 29, 2012).

⁴⁹ Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0 (ADP 3-0), *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 10, 2011), 9.

⁵⁰ Country of Origin Information Centre, *Afghanistan: Blood Feuds, Traditional Law (Pashtunwali) and Traditional Conflict Resolution* (Oslo, Norway: Country of Origin Information Centre, 2012), 8.

friction at the fraternal level exists at each succeeding level of the group structure as the association grows vertically and horizontally. The successive associations in clans, tribes, and villages shape, and are shaped by experiences in the region that together feed the narrative of the respective association. These relationships add to the complexity of weaving the fundamentals of Islam against the notion of a secular government in a society that has faced one an extremely harsh existence.

The definition of culture by Geert Hofstede provides a solid foundation for observing the weaving of Islam, history, and geography into the culture of Afghanistan. He describes culture as the interactive aggregation of common characteristics that influence a human groups' response to its environment. By using terms like "interactive" and "response," Hofstede's definition implies a complexity and fluidity that when applied to the Afghan population seems appropriate. The evidence of Islam as the salient common characteristic of the population appears in the name of the country itself, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The interactive and responsive portions of the definition certainly apply to the population's long history of tribal relations and with those of external powers. These aspects manifest in the population's enduring ability to adapt and respond to challenges imposed upon them and their desire to retain their way of life. Finally, when looking at the aspect of environment in simple geographic terms, the ability of the population to survive repeated conflicts relates directly to their proven mastery of the terrain.

Pashtunwali Dictates the Pashtun Way of Life

The nature of tribal affairs in Afghanistan stood out to Mountstuart Elphinstone, the author of the first English book about Afghanistan, in 1812, at a macro and micro level and can best be described through his views on Pashtunwali, where lone travelers had no provision for security and it was reasonable to rob them: "To sum up the character of the Afghans in a few

words; their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy; on the other hand, they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependents, hospitable, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious, and prudent.”⁵¹ Pashtunwali serves as the code of behavior for Pashtun tribes and synthesizes many tribal codes to emphasize kinship, tradition, and localism.⁵² Two Afghan scholars describe thus:

Group survival is its primary imperative. It demands vengeance against injury or insult to one’s kin, chivalry and hospitality toward the helpless and unarmed strangers, bravery in battle, and openness and integrity in individual behaviour. Much honour is given to Pashtuns who can successfully arbitrate the feuds that are endemic among them. Fines and blood money are devices frequently used to limit violence among rival families. *Pashtunwali* is a code that limits anarchy among a fractious but vital people.⁵³

The key values of Pashtunwali include love and defense of the Pashtun people, honor, manhood, hospitality for guests, asylum for enemies if requested, defense of the honor of women, action taken to avenge a death or honor of a woman, and the use of jirgas to settle feuds and other matters.⁵⁴ Pashtunwali dictates the conduct of life and following it is considered a personal responsibility of every Pashtun.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul* (London: Richard Bentley), Quoted in Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans 550 B.C. – A.D.*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1958), 278.

⁵² Donald P. Wright, *A Different Kind of War: The United States in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), October 2001 – September 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 10.

⁵³ Nancy P. Newell and Richard S. Newell, *The Struggle for Afghanistan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 23.

⁵⁴ Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), 16.

⁵⁵ John C. Griffiths, *Afghanistan: Land of Conflict and Beauty* (London: Carlton Publishing Group, 2011), 109.

The Taliban's Rise and Shaping of Present-day Afghanistan

The rise of the Taliban in the mid-1990s evolved because of a power vacuum and civil war following the defeat of the Soviets in 1989. Critical to the Taliban's ascent was their ability to meet the interests of the Afghan population's desire for stability, in terms of both economics and security. However, the reason for the dominance of the Taliban over smaller, more fractured organizations focused on their use of military power and by how they invoked every the common thread of every Afghan, Islam. Although they began in southern Afghanistan, the Taliban spread north into Kabul and Herat, overwhelming opposition leaders and groups along the way. In assessing their actions, a dynamic operational approach emerges that both built momentum for the Taliban and took away opportunities to resist for their enemies.

The Taliban's approach included strategic thought in using Islam as a banner for action and legitimacy, effectively attacking opposition, taking control of economic resources, and expanding territory at opportune moments.⁵⁶ After the Soviets withdrew, the population's confidence in the centralized government diminished as lawlessness expanded. As a result, when the Taliban provided an alternative model of governance that used Islamic rule of law, the population welcomed the Taliban's effort to fill the void. To take power from the criminal bands and other tribal powers, the Taliban set up shadow governments in key locations to gain support among those following the opposition party. Then, they attacked the weapons depots as well as the armed supporters. In order to finance their growing endeavors, the Taliban seized key smuggling routes, taking over the toll system. Once powerful enough, they also seized then controlled key agricultural locations. Finally, when they chose not to take military action against

⁵⁶ Abdulkader Sinno, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009), 73.

an opponent, they simply paid off the leader or supporters to induce a change of sides. In sum, the Taliban's approach used Islam to portray legitimacy to a weary population while expertly using traditional coercive methods to gain, retain and expand power.

Largely unopposed, they promptly issued edicts covering Shari'ah law which included property ownership and those aspects of society that invoked a sense of law and order. However, their decrees excluding women from employment and girls from education triggered the first notice of the international community. As aid agencies worked through the post-Soviet years battling poverty, displaced persons, and water supply, they grew outraged with Taliban policies that limited their success and hindered widespread hopes for future development and growth. The Taliban did not yield to aid agency pressure; in fact, they acted in an opposite manner – standing firm in their edicts in the hope that the foreigners would leave.

Other governments similarly opposed the Taliban's methods, but they did not share in the condemnation of the aid agencies. US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel stated, "The Taliban control two-thirds of the country, they are Afghan, they are indigenous, and they have demonstrated staying power."⁵⁷ On two occasions during 1997, the US State Department met with the Taliban, in many ways seeking the same things the British and Soviets did in previous years – attempting to gain influence with leaders of a country in a contested region. The transport of natural resources proved to be another reason for such cooperation, as Afghanistan's location makes it a natural land bridge to move energy resources from the north and east to the Caspian Sea. However, the Taliban did not support this endeavor and the infighting amongst the tribes drove insecurity and a lack of will in dealing with the Taliban. The combination of tribal infighting, imposition of harsh Shari'ah law, and the inability to work with the Taliban resulted in

⁵⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 65-67, 87.

US Secretary of State Madeline Albright condemning the Taliban in 1997. The fact that the Taliban provided sanctuary for Osama bin Laden in the late 1990s, after his execution of terrorist attacks against US embassies, firmly fixed the Afghan regime on US national security radars.⁵⁸

The hallmarks of the Taliban state evolved to remove the role of non-Taliban aligned tribes and tribal mullahs from the governmental structure and even resulted in loss of support from their own ethnicity, the Pashtun. Their strict moral codes were seen as a betrayal of Pashtun hopes for a better government. The Tajiks stood as the salient opponent of the Taliban and were led by Soviet era hero Ahmed Shah Massoud. He led the fight against the Taliban from 1996-2001 and had the growing favor of Afghans opposed to the Taliban's misuse of jihad against fellow Muslims.⁵⁹ Despite the growing opposition, their loss of faith with the common Afghan, and their demonstrated resistance to international pressure, the Taliban continued to consolidate power throughout the summer of 2001.

The rise of the Taliban after the Soviet withdrawal stands as a demonstration of the Afghan tendency for a group or groups within the population to use Islam as a vehicle in which to incite the population and elicit influence and support. The Taliban had the luxury of reviewing not only the then recent methods used to defeat the Soviets, but also those used against the British. These British experiences not only acted as precedents to inform mujahedeen actions against the Soviets, but came to solidify the difficulty in overcoming the Afghan advantage in religious uniformity, cultural understanding, and geographical manipulation.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 88-90.

⁵⁹ Wright, 21.

British Experiences in Afghanistan Resonate Today

Afghanistan's long experience with foreign intervention began before Alexander the Great, in the Fourth century B.C., when he led his army onto the ground that eventually became Afghanistan. However, his efforts became what most consider the first Westerner to attempt to exert control over the land and its people. Since then, like Alexander, other notable rulers found themselves unable to find long-term success in the area, including Genghis Khan and Babur.⁶⁰ Since then, Afghanistan found itself geographically and strategically at the crossroads between rival world powers. In recent history, the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s contributed to the eventual collapse of Soviet Union, loss of peripheral territory to the northeast of Afghanistan, and rebirth as the Russian Federation.⁶¹ However, before the Soviets crossed into Afghanistan in December 1979, they had access to their own lessons and previous experiences as well as historical lessons from three British campaigns in Afghanistan, collectively known as the three Anglo-Afghan Wars. This British experience demonstrated similar characteristics to those currently facing ISAF forces. These include the difficulty of external powers to impose what is perceived as foreign order upon the Afghan population, the tendency to subsidize the Afghan economy the corresponding dependence of the population on the British contribution to the economy, and the ability of the Afghan fighter to observe the British's weaknesses over time and then to adapt at the tactical level to force British operational and strategic decisions to withdraw.

⁶⁰ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2007), xi.

⁶¹ The Cold War Museum, "The Fall of the Soviet Union." http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/fall_of_the_soviet_union.asp (accessed January 12, 2012).

British involvement in Afghanistan, while currently part of ISAF, officially began in 1808 with movement of Mountstuart Elphinstone and his forces into Afghanistan.⁶² Elphinstone believed that, with India coming under British rule and France and Russia allying, a conflict over Afghanistan would serve as a prelude to war over India. Furthermore, since Britain controlled India, which encompassed present day Pakistan and directly neighbored the Afghan territory, it remained concerned about the intentions of those in power in Afghanistan, given their historical hostility towards the East India Company. Guided by the 2,000-year-old military accounts and maps of Alexander, Elphinstone cautiously began the journey from Delhi, seat of Ahmed Shah's rule, mindful of the journeys experienced by British citizens in the preceding years. In 1783, one such citizen, George Forster, traveled through the Kyber Pass and experienced an attack by tribesmen demanding a toll as protection money. The attack on Forster, inflicted by those he viewed as "keepers of the pass," echoes today as ISAF logistics convoys and ordinary citizens face the same obstacle in navigating the border with Pakistan.

During his more than three-month journey to Kabul and over subsequent years, Elphinstone generated opportunities to add comparable stories to the Afghan narrative, most notably related to his death. As he travelled through the region, he grew familiar with the nature of frontier suspicion and potential for violence through his encounters around the villages he traveled through and with the many tribes he encountered, each with its own leader and unique set of rules. In one camp, he wrote that a local asked him why he was there and not "contented" with the other British possessions. Upon finally meeting Shah Shuja, descendant of Ahmed Shaw, Elphinstone's men attempted to hand over gifts to the Amir's men. However, he instead had them

⁶² Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 574.

forcefully taken, along with an attempt to kidnap some of the British servants.⁶³ Elphinstone believed that the ruler had little power after seeing people openly speak against him. Notable author for the period David Loyne makes an assertion regarding the Afghan milieu at the time of Elphinstone's period in Afghanistan. He described the actions of the two noble Pashtun clans, Sadozai and Barakzais, in what many experts would loosely interpret, as civil war. "It would have taken an a statesman of extraordinary quality to have stabilized Afghanistan in the early nineteenth century, a period of intrigue and royal bloodletting uniquely awful even in a country with such a murderous history."

For thirty years, small-scale tribal conflict continued, with rivalries altering the balance of native power and the British ultimately establishing a garrison in Kabul. Mountstuart Elphinstone left the country soon after his initial arrival, but he did not leave before offering words of caution to the remaining British forces. He believed that initially supporting Shah Shuja would be in the interest of British forces. However, he realized the challenges he faced when he stated that his continued power "in a poor, cold, strong and remote country, among a turbulent people like the Afghans, I own it seems to me to be hopeless. I never knew a close alliance between a civilized and an uncivilized state that did not end in mutual hatred."⁶⁴ Indeed, within a year, Mahmud Shah and Fateh Khan took control of Afghanistan at the expense of Shuja. Together, they ruled the kingdom until 1818, when Mahmud and his son blinded, tortured, and dismembered Fateh.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 647-704.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 704-1172.

⁶⁵ Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 43-44.

Dost Mohammed, the strongest member of the Barakzai clan, battled Mahmud for eight years before achieving decisive victory in 1826.⁶⁶ He soon began to foment anti-British feelings among the frontier tribes. Dost believed the tribes needed to join together in jihad against the invaders of Afghanistan. To demonstrate this belief, the first time Afghans united against the foreign occupiers, he donned Prophet Mohammed's cloak and declared himself the spiritual leader of all Afghans and all Muslims. Dost also exhibited political talent, holding talks with both foreign powers, British and Russian. Dost remained in power in Afghanistan until 1938 with vacillating levels of Russian and British support. These dynamic relationships created animosity and led to a British decision to seek a decisive advantage over the Russians in Afghanistan in 1839.⁶⁷

Thus, leading into the First Anglo-Afghan War, the native population had for decades seen the way the British conducted security operations and what today is called civil-military operations. This insight, along with the knowledge by the population that the British endeavor in Afghanistan was undertaken not out of any British desire to help the Afghans, but to simply secure interests related to British territory in India foreshadowed the limited effectiveness of British actions.

First Anglo-Afghan War 1839-1842

The British desired to dominate Afghanistan in order to create a defensive buffer between holdings in India and the expanding power of Russia. They had two options for gaining this level of control. First, they could increase their support of Dost and risk that he would continue to use

⁶⁶ AfghanWiki.com. "Amir Dost Mohammad Khan." http://www.afghanwiki.com/en/index.php?title=Amir_Dost_Mohammad_Khan (accessed February 12, 2012).

⁶⁷ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 1011-1219.

other relationships to expand his limited regional Muslim power. Second, they could defeat and remove Dost from power, reinstate Shah Shuja, and work with a known and reliable ally to hold territorial and political gains.⁶⁸ With either course of action, the British Army intended to withdraw after establishing the independence and integrity of Afghanistan. Governor General George Eden, known as Lord Auckland, decided to support Shah Shuja and the British began its preparation for war.⁶⁹

The force assembled for the invasion included more than 15,000 British forces, Shah Shuja, and 40,000 camp followers with more than 5,000 camels, of which, only 500 ultimately made it to Kabul. Due to the need to take a circuitous route through Kandahar, the expedition experienced a trek filled with the challenges of moving through an austere environment. One of the two columns traversing the Bolan Pass ran out of beef due to the long and difficult passage, leaving the remains of men and their animal along the way to rot. Arriving in Quetta, natives attacked the invasion force, murdering personnel and stealing equipment. A local leader, the Khan of Khelat, said to them, “You have brought an Army into the country, but how do you take it back out again?” Shortly afterward, that same local proved his words true when he led the British into an unnecessary skirmish that resulted in the loss of 100 men.⁷⁰ This early experience mirrors the difficulty today’s international forces have in inserting forces and sustainment capacity due to the terrain and how exposed those elements are to the native population during transit.

⁶⁸ Thomas J. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 114.

⁶⁹ Ewans, 62.

⁷⁰ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 1176-1223.

Despite the challenges of travelling to the conflict, the British quickly took Kandahar in April 1839 facing minimal opposition. They then moved north and seized control of Ghazni in July and arrived nearly a month later outside Kabul. Dost attempted to rally Muslim sentiment against the infidel invaders, but he was losing popular support due to infighting within his own family and with other tribes. He lost Kabul in August. The British quickly installed Shuja as the leader of Afghanistan and Dost fled into the Uzbekistan territory to the north. Thomas Barfield described the curious lack of resistance and surrender by Dost as an unusual phenomenon for a leader that had survived other challenges to his power. He believed that Dost viewed the British as an omnipotent empire, capable of directing endless resources against him. Dost understood that his ability to rally only small minority tribes was not sufficient to defeat a modern British army that cagily paid off key clergy and political leaders during their movement to Kabul.⁷¹

With victory in hand, the British again faced a major decision. Should they depart to provide defense in India or stay to reinforce Shuja? When Shuja could not raise enough revenue to support his position, it forced the British to stay in Afghanistan to protect their investment in the original endeavor.⁷² To exacerbate matters, the British created two Afghan regiments and paid for these and other expenditures themselves, bypassing the Shuja's traditional patronage system and weakening his power. In the winter that followed, the British could no longer rely on the stores they brought with them when they invaded and were forced now to compete for provisions with the population. This created shortages within the population and resulted in resentment amongst the people of Afghanistan. Added to this resentment was the public's view of the British

⁷¹ Barfield, 115-116.

⁷² Ewans, 65.

soldiers' uninhibited interest in the local women.⁷³ These sentiments lingered for more than a year, and the tension increased when the British government reduced funding, which led to less spending and less payoffs to local leaders and tribes.

Friendly Afghan locals warned the British that anti-British sentiment would soon result in an uprising and in November 1841, the first attack occurred. A mob of Afghans killed the lead British political agent, Alexander Burnes and his brother.⁷⁴ This served as the first manifestation of the anger against the British occupation and Shuja's regime and ultimately validated the people's belief that Shuja's British backing betrayed Afghan Muslims.⁷⁵ Other clashes took place, leading to an attack on the main British fort in Kabul. By now, the British had lost any control over the population and sought to negotiate peace, which had initial Afghan support due to the desire to avoid wider British deployment into the country. However, Dost's son, Mohammed Akbar took control of the insurgents and killed the British negotiator. After reaching agreement for safe passage out of the country, the British began the return trip through the harrowing passes in the east, ultimately losing hundreds of soldiers due to bad weather. As they continued their withdrawal, Afghans betrayed the peace treaty, continuously attacking and massacring the retreating soldiers and their families.⁷⁶

The ending of the first Anglo-Afghan War included the British retreat and the resumption of power of Dost Mohammed; however, it also established the precedent setting display of unified Afghan ire against foreign backed governments. This demonstrates that achieving early success in an Afghan conflict does not translate into an enduring continuing advantage. The

⁷³ Barfield, 120.

⁷⁴ Ewans, 68.

⁷⁵ Barfield, 123.

⁷⁶ Ewans, 69-70.

notion of supporting an externally backed ruler did not meet Afghan requirements as suspicion of his motives in supporting Afghan interests grew. Additionally, the British patronage effort broke down and weakened British supplies imposed not only a military burden on the population, but an economic one as well. This conflict demonstrated the conviction that Afghans must rule Afghans to retain Afghan interests, as after initial British success, conditions grew to where non-state forces rose up and defeated a foreign professional force.

Second Anglo-Afghan War 1878-1881

Between 1842 and 1878, the British maintained loose diplomatic relationship with Afghanistan. This relationship manifested out of the Durrani Empire's century-long hold over Afghanistan and their belief that they could encounter the same fate as that of the British due to the ability of non-elite Afghans rising against them. Thus, the British agreed to provide aid to the Afghan government as a means for maintaining a limited level of control of the country and standing as a barrier to Russian expansion.⁷⁷ Following Dost's death in 1863, his sons put the country through a five-year period of infighting for power.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, tensions continued to rise between Russia and the British elsewhere in the world, coming back to Afghanistan in 1878. In July of that year, the Russians sent a diplomatic delegation to Kabul uninvited. When the Afghans refused to allow a similar British delegation, they invaded.⁷⁹

The invasion began with the same hardships the British experienced during the previous invasion forty years prior. Similarly, British assumptions for the conduct of the war followed suit and were equally wrong. This time, the British politicians felt that the majority of Afghan troops

⁷⁷ Barfield, 132-133.

⁷⁸ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2028.

⁷⁹ Barfield, 140.

would support British efforts, considering the current nature of the British support to the Afghan government. However, military leaders felt differently, recalling the hazards experienced during the last occupation.⁸⁰ The invading forces rapidly reached Kandahar and Kabul and in May 1879, the Treaty of Gandamak formally ceded prominent border crossings to the British in exchange for British payments to the new Amir, Yakub Khan.⁸¹ With a treaty in hand, the British decided to avoid a costly occupation and left only a small garrison force in the area.⁸² As in the first war, the occupation went smoothly at first, but rapidly unraveled when three regiments of Afghan soldiers demanded the British fulfill obligations for unpaid wages to those who had not utilized the Afghan government to conduct payments.⁸³ After an Afghan mob killed the British mission head, Sir Louis Cavagnari, British General Frederick Roberts occupied Kabul and took Yaqub prisoner.⁸⁴ In the time that it took Roberts to respond, Afghan tribal leaders met, formed an alliance, and developed plans to defeat the British forces.⁸⁵ Roberts decided that since Afghans traditionally respected strength, he held Kabul under martial law and plotted other ways to demonstrate military power, all of which grew anti-British sentiment.⁸⁶

After gathering numerous tribes in an effort to attack Roberts and his Kabul garrison, the leader of the Afghan forces, Mohammed Jan realized a frontal assault against the British held little chance of success.⁸⁷ Thus, the Afghans abandoned the attack. The British “emerged from

⁸⁰ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2090.

⁸¹ Barfield, 141.

⁸² Ewans, 88.

⁸³ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2152.

⁸⁴ Barfield, 141.

⁸⁵ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2193.

⁸⁶ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2220.

⁸⁷ Johnson, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2736.

behind the walls of Sherpur to find the mountains and the plains which had bristled with thousands of hostile tribesman now quiet and serene.”⁸⁸ Instead, Jan offered Roberts unmolested passage to India, seeking to avoid a difficult fight while returning Yaqub to power. Roberts refused and the British enjoyed a series of minor victories over the Afghans that led to an apparent victory in the Second Anglo-Afghan War.⁸⁹ In effect, the British tactical success occurred because of direct conventional battles, however, their corresponding territorial control did not span as far as they could see, but only slightly further from where they camped. However, the Afghans extended the fighting, employing the lessons inherent in their previous successes in this conflict and from the first Anglo-Afghan War. Thus, the Afghans began attacking isolated British detachments and severing logistical lines, all geared towards winning a battle of attrition. The British did not seem to recognize the shift in Afghan tactical actions, as well as a resulting change in the operational strategy. This oversight continued as Roberts left command and the leadership for the British forces passed to General Sir Donald Stewart.⁹⁰

At the Second Anglo-Afghan War’s conclusion, British military’s influence failed at a rate that ensured the need to withdraw. The resistance that marked the end of Roberts’ time in the region dragged on through the summer of 1880 and left the British wanting to leave the country. They attempted to incorporate lessons learned from this conflict and from earlier contested times by designing a plan that transitioned the country under Afghan leadership favorable to British interests, with Abdur Rahman taking rule.⁹¹ This echoes the First Anglo-Afghan War and the current situation in Afghanistan where external forces placed resources and positional power in

⁸⁸ Loyn, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2268.

⁸⁹ Ewans, 92.

⁹⁰ Johnson, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 2525.

⁹¹ Barfield, 142-143.

the hands of a native leader. However, for the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the Afghans did not favor Rahman and this action resulted in a series of battles pitting the combined Afghan and British forces against a force lead by Ayyub Khan.

News of Ayyub's raising of ten regiments of infantry and associated logistics resources "spread like wildfire all over the country," owing to the popular Afghan sentiment of ejecting the British from Afghanistan like had happened two generations previous. As the installation of the Rahman government demonstrated an attempt by the British to incorporate hard learned lessons, the Afghan rural forces demonstrated that their doctrine of avoiding direct confrontations was not shared by all. Ayyub's intentions of conventionally attacking British forces resulted in a succession of predictable defeats. Further, these defeats demoralized the common Afghan fighter and some fled to their villages, seeking to avoid British punitive action. Of this, it was said, "All Afghan "armies" have a power of dispersion, which is unrivaled. Organized pursuit against them is almost impossible."⁹² The British chose not to pursue the Afghan fighters, instead choosing to continue their efforts to withdraw from the country. They completed their departure in April 1881. Abdur Rahman's rule over the country survived against the now fatigued and maligned Ayyub, whose influence within his ranks and amongst the Afghan people waned after his prolonged defeat against the British. He eventually suffered a decisive defeat to Rahman, which was highlighted by Rahman paying a portion of Ayyub's army to fight against their leader, leading to his flight to Persia and then to India.⁹³

⁹² Johnson, Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 2877-3013.

⁹³ Ewans, 100-101.

Third Anglo-Afghan War 1919-1921

For forty years, Rahman ruled Afghanistan with subsidies from the British Empire geared at retaining stability in the international relationship. Rahman learned from his long history of dealing with the British that the most likely way to lose power was to incorporate external military and civilian advisors. Thus, he pacified the clans by placing their sons in key military positions. This placement served two purposes. First, Rahman viewed appointed officers as less competent than trained officers and as a result less capable of organizing an uprising against him. Second, by having immediate family of clan leaders in his possession, the clan leaders remained less inclined to risk their children in an uprising against the Amir. Rahman expanded that concept to build stability and loyalty in the Army by imposing conscription onto conquered tribes for the next twenty years, eventually developing a force that the British believed capable of repelling Russian encroachment. Furthermore, Rahman's force projected power internally – expanding his influence and maintaining internal security.⁹⁴

Rahman's cunning political moves went beyond those related to the military. He earned the moniker The Iron Amir with his suppressive actions geared at staying in power, including claiming his authority came not from consensus of the tribal Jirga, but from divine sanction. Taking this approach gave him a unique standing to undercut the power of the mullahs without inciting backlash from the population based on religious grounds. He exhibited control over the population in other ways, disallowing individual Afghans from moving within the country, while forcing tribes to migrate to dilute their influence. His system of appointed governors gradually replaced tribal authority and facilitated decreasing tension while collecting national taxes. His reliance on British assistance, along with the increasing strength of his rule and his army, came to

⁹⁴ Johnson, Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 3041-3081.

bear in 1893 when after tribal conflict between Indian and Afghan tribes the British designed the Durrand line to delineate a border and decrease conflict.⁹⁵ The Durrand line stood as a major mistake in Rahman's rule as it served as an example to the common Afghan of unwanted foreign influence and intervention into Afghan affairs. Subsequent Afghan rulers chose not to recognize it.

Following Rahman's death in 1901, a succession of Afghan leaders assumed power and all of which experienced difficult rules that resulted in every head of state dying violently or driven out of the country. Rahman's son, Habibullah took the throne after his father's death and proceeded to continue his political scheming by inviting exiled tribes back into the country. These returning exiles brought with them a desire to modernize the state with Western cultural and economic innovations. This shift conflicted with a similar timed desire by religious leaders seeking to re-establish Islamic solidarity and project a strong Muslim image abroad. Consequently, Habibullah favored neither cause. As a result, he lost British support as well as allowing an increase in the influence of the Islamic movement.⁹⁶ Shortly after Habibullah's transition, World War I brought with it his desire to portray neutrality, despite his efforts to forge a deal with the Germans to support their war effort in return for gold and weapons.⁹⁷ His greatest desire during this period rested on avoiding a conflict with Britain, despite the anti-British sentiment. However, Habibullah's power plays ended at the close of the war. He was assassinated in early 1919.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Ewans, 101-108.

⁹⁶ Barfield, 154, 164, 175-177.

⁹⁷ Ewans, 178.

⁹⁸ Johnson, Kindle Electronic Edition: Location 8929.

The Third Anglo-Afghan War resulted from the power struggle between Habibullah's brother and son. After two months of a war of words and little physical confrontation, the son, Amanullah took power and immediately declared a war of independence against Britain. Accompanying this declaration, Amanullah issued a call for jihad for the border tribes against the British.⁹⁹ Seeking to capture terrain on the Indian side of the Durand line, Amanullah's positioned troops in the region with the intent of goading the British to respond, lest a large numbers of motivated Afghans attacked unchecked into British territory. In the spring of 1919, Amanullah's forces exhibited none of the competence of Rahman's Army and fell repeatedly to the British. Thus, Amanullah attempted to make peace with his foe by claiming misunderstandings with the British. His audacity did not end there as he asked the British for military support, territorial adjustment near the Durand line, and subsidies to repay the Afghans for their trouble. The British refused and forced a treaty in their own favor. However, the chief British negotiator included within the treaty a letter proclaiming Afghanistan as officially free and independent of all internal and external affairs.¹⁰⁰ The Afghans took this monumental action at face value, despite British sentiment to extend influence over the country. With this action, the Afghans saw the rise of their national status in the world and Amanullah experienced a high level of respect with his people.¹⁰¹ His reign lasted ten years, in which he pushed numerous reforms onto the population, including removing women's veils, increasing education, and enforcing Western style dress in Kabul. These reforms lead to a predictable groundswell of Muslim conservatism and ultimately a revolt in 1929.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Barfield, 181.

¹⁰⁰ Ewans, 120, 122-124.

¹⁰¹ Barfield, 182.

¹⁰² Collins, 18-19.

The lesson of the third conflict requires a deliberate effort to look past what appears as a simple blunder by the British negotiators. The true lesson is that a lack of a commonly understood strategy created an opportunity for strategic failure. The conditions exist for this to occur in current operations in Afghanistan where counterinsurgency practices require that low-level military leaders meet with local Afghan leaders to address security issues. This lesson is particularly poignant today as internationally led security operations transition to Afghan control.

Waziristan Campaign 1936-1937

In the shadows of the more famous examples of foreign intervention in Afghanistan exists a lesser-known conflict known as the Waziristan Campaign of 1936-1937. This campaign resonates with what occurs in present day Afghanistan between the Taliban and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and ISAF due to the protracted nature of the conflict and its opposing forces, the British and a lashkar led by Mirza Ali Khan, known as the Faqir of Ipi. The British enjoyed favorable conditions leading up to the campaign, with minimal unrest amongst the tribes and no immediate signs of coordinated tribal efforts against the British. In Waziristan, along the Northwest Border, these conditions changed when the verdict of highly visible legal case went against Muslim expectations and a court allowed the return of a young Muslim girl to her Hindu family after she converted to Islam and married a Muslim man.¹⁰³

The reaction to the verdict elicited a strong backlash by tribal leaders, particularly the Faqir of Ipi. After a jirga met to discuss the issue and declared a jihad against the British, a second lashkar formed with the Faqir of Ipi as its chief.¹⁰⁴ His selection united the tribes who

¹⁰³ Johnson, 195-196.

¹⁰⁴ Asad Munir, "The Faqir of Ipi of North Waziristan," *The Express Tribune*, November 15, 2010. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/77388/the-faqir-of-ipi-of-north-waziristan/> (accessed January 14, 2012).

desired to combine the need for a strong leader, which the Faqir's standing as a religious firebrand gave them, with the pre-existing strong anti-British sentiment following years of tribal frustration with the belief that the British's expanding influence into their region impaired tribal economic prospects.¹⁰⁵ For the next eleven years, he acted as the champion of Islam against the British and eluded capture or containment before Britain's departure from the region.¹⁰⁶

The Faqir of Ipi's reputation for having mystical powers served him well in the early days of the conflict that eventually erupted. After the British destroyed the homes of several leaders of the Jirga, including the Faqir's, the British began their withdrawal. The locals perceived this withdrawal as resulting from the Faqir's powers, even though it was pre-planned by the British.¹⁰⁷ This gave him credibility with the tribes who sent more men and supplies after his call for action against the British.¹⁰⁸ For the next year, Faqir and his forces used guerilla tactics and avoided being decisively engaged, while enjoying increased amounts of public support against the British. Despite this support, Faqir's gains were symbolic largely and the formal British campaign ended after his forces failed to overcome the British pressure on the tribal leaders to cease support for his cause.

Although the formal campaign ended in less than two years, it informally continued for nine more years. In total, British action against Faqir included numerous similarities to the current conflict in Afghanistan. These include the existence of a strong Pashtun enemy, the continuous

¹⁰⁵ Milan Hauner, "One Man against the Empire: The Faqir of Ipi and the British in Central Asia on the Eve of and during the Second World War," Kyber.org. <http://www.khyber.org/publications/021-025/faqiripi.shtml> (accessed January 14, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ Andrew M. Roe, *Waging War in Waziristan: the British Struggle in the land of Bin Laden, 1849-1947* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 101.

¹⁰⁷ Munir, "The Faqir of Ipi of North Waziristan"

¹⁰⁸ Kyber.org, "Faqir of Ipi." <http://www.khyber.org/people/a/FaqirofIpi.shtml> (accessed January 14, 2012).

crossing of the border for sanctuary, varying levels of support from the population, and the ever-present thread of the protection of Islam as the basis for fighting the perceived infidels.

Additionally, the most notable statistic of the conflict lies in the correlation of forces. More than 60,000 troops fought against a force that rarely numbered more than a thousand and in total might have encompassed less than five thousand.¹⁰⁹ This statistic, and the entirety of the Waziristan campaign, embodies the challenge of fighting today's insurgency and demonstrates the sheer difficulty in attempting to overcome an organization that heeds the call to protect Islam, uses terrain well, and avoids direct engagement.

Unsustainable: The Current Approach in Afghanistan

In the previous sections, passages described the nature of conflict in Afghanistan and the challenges faced by the British and Soviets as they attempted to reach their strategic end states in the region. Reflecting on strategy - the alignment of ends, ways, and means - theorist Everett Dolman describes several critical considerations of strategy. First, his simple definition of strategy as a plan for attaining continuing advantage elicits a comparison to the definition of culture in that they both share the notion of an evolving nature and resist belief in finite ends. His concept of understanding that war is but one aspect of political and social competition that has no finality, but exists as an ongoing interaction also describes the nature of the Anglo-Afghan Wars in that although the British succeeded in achieving initial military objectives, sustaining the gains proved more challenging. The British, Soviet, American, and ISAF militaries in Afghanistan

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, Kindle Electronic Edition: Locations 4248-4256.

reflect the difficulty in achieving what Dolman describes as operational strategy - where a military strategist tangibly links political intent to the military means.¹¹⁰

Doctrine Can Not Overcome the Disconnect Between Context and Ends

In this section, an examination of joint doctrine reveals the intended method of linking political intent to military means by examining the doctrinal approach to employing the operational level of war to achieve strategic termination criteria. This evaluation reveals a clear gap that exists between the intent behind the doctrine published by the US military since 2001 and what forces achieved using that doctrine while executing operations in Afghanistan.

Critical references for conflict termination exist within both Joint and US Army doctrine and both saw significant revisions since 2001. The Joint and Army Staffs published revisions of their respective operations doctrine in 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2011.¹¹¹ The volume and rapidity in the evolution of those documents certainly elicits questions about the impetus for the revisions. Many critics asked if the proponents revised this doctrine in response to trends in Afghanistan and Iraq. Were US military leaders reacting to an enemy that held the initiative or

¹¹⁰ Everett C. Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 5-6, 30.

¹¹¹ The Army published four distinct versions of Operations doctrine from 2001-2011. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 (FM 3-0), *Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 14, 2001).; Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0 (FM 3-0), *Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 27, 2008).; Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-0, C1 (FM 3-0), *Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 21, 2011).; Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0 (ADP 3-0), *Unified Land Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 10, 2011). The Joint Staff published five distinct versions of Operations doctrine from 2001-2011. Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 10, 2001).; Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 17, 2006).; Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, Change 1, *Joint Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 13, 2008).; Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, Change 2, *Joint Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 22, 2010).; Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 11, 2011).

did they rewrite these references to maintain relevance and alignment with a forecasted of the future operational environment? The latest revision to the Army's operations doctrine, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, follows the latter explanation and seems designed to align with the *Army's Operational Concept*.¹¹² Even with those revisions, changes to the operations manuals did not seem to represent the most notable doctrinal reference published in the last eleven years. That title arguably goes to Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, published in 2006.¹¹³ The writers of this manual clearly intended to revise the existing US counterinsurgency model and provide methods to address a perceived shortcomings or lack of guidance provided to forces in Iraq by updating Field Manual 90-8, *Counterinsurgency Operations*.¹¹⁴ This section of the paper will briefly address the evolution of the doctrine presented previously. However, this section will focus on contemporary doctrine due to the practical aspect of evaluating the current standard for planning and operations because the current doctrine benefits from the improvements on previous editions.

Thus, an assumption must necessarily be made that current doctrine reflects not only a straw man of future conflicts, but certainly remains flexible enough to incorporate the nature of our current conflict in Afghanistan. For Joint doctrine, this monograph includes an assessment of Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (AUG 2011), JP 5-0 *Joint Operational Planning* (AUG 2011), and JP 3-24 *Counterinsurgency Operations* (OCT 2009). In addition, Army doctrine, including ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* provides the Army's current description of

¹¹² Department of the Army, Field Manual 1-0 (FM 3-0), *The Army*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 14, 2005).

¹¹³ Pepe Escobar, "The horror, the horror," *Al Jazeera*, March 15, 2012. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/201231491311254.html> (accessed March 20, 2012).

¹¹⁴ Department of the Army, Field Manual 90-8 (FM 90-8), *Counterinsurgency Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 29, 1986).

termination criteria whereas to a lesser extent in FM 5-0, ch1, *The Operations Process* (MAR 2011), that does not mention the term. However, FM 5-0 consistently describes the conditions required to reach a mission's end state.¹¹⁵

Although the concepts of Unified Action and Unified Land Operations were not commonly used concepts in 2001, the premise behind the concepts of providing a whole of government approach that integrates all capabilities to achieve an end state hold true then as they do today. Together, these concepts provide a model for understanding the alignment of ends, ways, and means. According to JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, Unified Action has a broad connotation that begins with national strategic direction, derived from the Constitution, Federal Law, US Government policy, international law, and US national interests. The concept of Unified Action synchronizes, coordinates, and integrates military operations, governmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations to achieve unity of effort. The design of this approach also extends to multinational partners and private sector actors, which leads to the term that represents the holistic nature of the varying partnerships, inter-organizational coordination.¹¹⁶

As doctrine evolves towards Army Doctrine 2015, the Army anticipates an interdependent relationship between Joint and Army doctrine. *Unified Land Operations* describes the Army's role in Unified Action. This concept integrates US Army operations into the overarching joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational hierarchy and provides the

¹¹⁵ Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0 (ADP 3-0), *Unified Land Operations*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 10, 2011), 5,9. and Department of the Army, Field Manual 5-0c1, *The Operations Process*, (FM 5-0), (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 18, 2011), Appendix B.

¹¹⁶ Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 11, 2011), I-8.

capability for the Joint Force Commander to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative on land to create conditions for advantageous conflict resolution.¹¹⁷

Operational art requires the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations to organize and employ forces.¹¹⁸ In designing campaigns and operations, planners must understand the strategic end state, which serves as the starting point for planning. Military planners must determine when to terminate military operations and how to maintain a position of advantage to achieve the national strategic end state. Termination criteria describe the standards that a force must achieve before the conclusion of a joint operation.¹¹⁹ The strategic end state may change over time and as a result, planners must continuously review and modify termination criteria to ensure they remain synchronized with desired end state. Thus, planners must maintain a dialogue between all elements of the US government as well as coalition partners involved in the campaign or operation. Applying these doctrinal principles to Afghanistan by the British and with contemporary international efforts, a pattern of misalignment arises – either because of a lack of political will or the immense challenge of using military ways to achieve political aims in an environment exceedingly difficult in which to achieve decisive success.

Achieving Transition Objectives by 2014

On June 22, 2011, President Obama delivered a speech that set out his objectives for the US mission in Afghanistan through 2014, in which he stated the US mission would change from combat to support. While he did not define what many consider doctrinal termination criteria, he

¹¹⁷ ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 3.

¹¹⁸ JP 3-0, *Operations*, xii.

¹¹⁹ JP 5-0, *Joint Operations Planning*, III-18.

directly stated his expectation for actions at the end of 2014 by declaring that “...we will draw down our forces and transition responsibility for security to the Afghan government.” In his statement he reinforced the necessity to train Afghan security forces; encourage multinational participation in peace and reconciliation talks, including discussions with the Taliban; prevent safe havens for launching terrorist attacks, in Afghanistan and Pakistan; and continue support to Afghan governance.¹²⁰

In the 2011 United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan, Ambassador Ikenberry and General Petraeus described in their 13 campaign objectives for achieving the US strategic end state in Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

“[T]he US Mission and US Forces - Afghanistan (USFOR-A), in partnership with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the international community, enable the Afghan government and its people to: counter the insurgency and prevent the use of Afghan territory by international terrorists, build a state that is accountable and responsive to its people, and establish the foundation for longer-term development.”¹²¹

The structure of the campaign includes three primary categories that facilitated a nested framework with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). The categories and their objectives include Security (Secure the Population, Action Against Irreconcilables, Countering Narcotics, and Limit Illicit Finance), Governance (Access to Justice, Expansion of Effective, Representative and Accountable Governance, Countering Corruption, Electoral Reform and Continuity of Governance), and Development (Agricultural Opportunity and Market Access, Advancing Livelihoods and Sustainable Jobs, Border Access for Commerce, not Insurgents).

¹²⁰ Barack Obama, “*President Obama on the Way Forward in Afghanistan*,” The White House, June 22, 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/06/22/president-obama-way-forward-afghanistan>. (accessed November 30, 2011).

¹²¹ Embassy of the United States of America Kabul and United States Forces, Afghanistan, *United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan*, February 2011.

Conclusion: The Afghans Will Decide Their Fate

“All of the easy things have been done.”¹²²

As Operation Enduring Freedom heads toward the summer of 2012, President Obama saw the opportunity to accelerate the withdrawal of combat forces and initiate the transition to Afghan lead with US trainers.¹²³ The operating environment in Afghanistan in 2014 will include a small US strike presence and trainers and whatever remains of the ANSF. In this atmosphere, an Afghanistan presidential election will take place along with decreased foreign financial support to the Afghan government. The combination of these actions will certainly challenge the country's stability and provide efforts for the Taliban to mirror their rise to power in the mid-2000s after their initial defeat. Mirroring past transitional periods in the last thirty years, Afghan refugees, already the most populous diaspora in the world, could increase to flee a perceived civil war.¹²⁴ Others describe the likelihood that ANSF soldiers and policemen will desert their positions to ally with their tribes.¹²⁵ Whatever occurs in response to the transition objectives and resources applied towards them, it may not reflect the original spirit of the US and NATO desired conditions, nor that of the later Afghan strategy.

Similarly, the British experiences in Afghanistan demonstrate the difficulty that foreign powers have in Afghanistan, not simply because they are not native, but from the complex

¹²² Frederick Hodges. Guest speaker to the School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, December 6, 2011.

¹²³ Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Officials Debate Speeding Afghan Pullout,” *The New York Times*, March 13, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/13/world/asia/us-officials-debate-speeding-up-afghan-pullout.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed March 15, 2012).

¹²⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2012 UNHCR Country Operations Profile – Afghanistan. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486eb6> (accessed March 27, 2012).

¹²⁵ Timothy J. Lynch, “Switching Sides: Coalition Warfare and Recent Afghan History.” Monograph, United States Army War College, 2010. In Defense Technical Information Center Online, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA521992> (accessed March 20, 2012), 9.

interrelations of geography, history, and Islam. This results in observed behaviors that vacillate between those that are easy to grasp in perfunctory awareness and those that take into consideration the heavy influence of Islam and Shari'ah law. This drives understanding why tribal mullahs recognize the power of Taliban leaders and seek to avoid the uncertainty in their dealings with them and their manner of imposing Shari'ah law. Only after understanding the impact of Islam's role in Afghan society can one recognize the series of relationships that result and the loyalty that each requires. Using Islam as a method of projecting legitimacy proved useful for Afghan tribes during the British conflicts and to the rise of the Taliban. Furthermore, both historical and contemporary conflicts saw victors that tied Islam to their approaches of seizing power. Most notably, the Taliban's rise to fill a void in a weary society also exposed a society not accepting of the extent to which the Taliban imposed Shari'ah law. The support of the Northern Alliance before the US intervention and the impressive growth and support of the ANSF provide evidence of the fracture between the Taliban and Afghan society writ large. The US opportunities to fill voids between the desires of the general Afghan population and what the Taliban provided were exploited by the initial efforts early in Operation Enduring Freedom. Like the British experiences before them, the Coalition's inability to assure the population of long-term stability to their way of life and access to resources, along with the duration of the conflict created another generation of weary Afghans.

A concluding method of evaluating both the British actions and today's current efforts in Afghanistan connects both the need to appreciate culture with the need to achieve political aims. Patrick Porter's book *Military Orientalism* evaluates strategy and culture through the variables of time, motive, capacity, and skillful leadership.¹²⁶ The British overlaid their own concept of time

¹²⁶ Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 19.

and conflict resolution on to the Afghan forces, which consistently followed a pattern of regrouping from tactical and operational defeats to outlast the British resources and political will. The population's motivation to adjust to the British rule succeeded initially, but as the British failed to restore or improve the Afghan standard of living or to respect Islam, motivation waned and enthusiasm for native uprisings began. The capacity to make a change in the environment again points to the combination of a lack of British political will to dedicate enough resources to the conflicts and to provide a system of governance with acceptable decentralization and respect for Islam. Finally, and most notably, British leadership never seemed to grasp the lessons that history and culture provided – they achieved early success, the Afghan tribes adapted, and tribal differences provided opportunities for exploitation.

This monograph does not seek to prove that, because the British and Soviet experiences ended with withdrawals and a corresponding impression of strategic failure, that current efforts in Afghanistan will suffer a similar fate. Instead, the failure to evaluate these previous experiences and understand the chain of events that lead to failures in achieving and sustaining desired conditions serves as a warning for current planners. While contexts and key participants changed amongst the five Afghan conflicts presented in this paper, the lesson of the Vietnam prologue provides unique relevance in that it demonstrates that the US has previously been in a similar position to the one it currently faces in Afghanistan. In Vietnam, operations were expanded in a counterinsurgency without fully understanding recent historical precedent and the cultural environment. In Afghanistan, shades of those Vietnam War aspects have occurred, albeit with a better understanding of historical precedent and culture. However, those slight improvements are challenged by some of the same aspects that led to the British failures, including the overreliance of the economy and the military on external funding and the belief that foreign powers largely orchestrate the current Afghan government.

The British and Soviet examples portray lessons on the importance of understanding the interests and development of today's Afghan population – they are products of their history and culture, particularly after thirty years of conflict and the fractured society that remains. Despite the desired conditions that Western powers seek in Afghanistan, the Afghan interests will be the only ones that matter and endure.

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