

The Soviet Union and the United States' Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Lessons from Two Separate Approaches

A Monograph

by

MAJ Ian C. McLeod
US Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
US Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, KS

2019

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE					Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p> <p>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</p>						
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 23-05-2019		2. REPORT TYPE SAMS Monograph		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) July 2018-May2019		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Soviet Union and the United States' Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Lessons from Two Separate Approaches				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
				5b. GRANT NUMBER		
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Ian C. McLeod, USA				5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
				5e. TASK NUMBER		
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) 201 Reynolds Ave Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2134				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES						
14. ABSTRACT <p>The United States and Soviet Union both entered Afghanistan for vastly different reasons, and both nations struggled mightily adjusting their operational approaches to meet the problems encountered. This monograph examines the 40th army's withdrawal from Afghanistan and discusses issues US planners and commander are currently experiencing in Afghanistan. The elements of operational art provide a useful tool in examining the operational approach the 40th Army used to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan. The 40th Army's planners utilized the elements of operational art to great effect in some situations and ignored them to their peril in other instances. This monograph addresses conceptually how the Soviet's framework can be applied, and when their framework should be avoided by US planners in Afghanistan.</p>						
15. SUBJECT TERMS <p>Soviet Union (USSR), Soviet Withdrawal, Withdrawal Operations, Afghanistan</p>						
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			Ian C. McLeod	
(U)	(U)	(U)	(U)	39	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)	

Monograph Approval Page

Name of Candidate: Major Ian C. McLeod

Monograph Title: The Soviet Union and the United States' Withdrawal from Afghanistan:
Lessons from Two Separate Approaches

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Mark T. Calhoun, PhD

_____, Seminar Leader
Andrew J. Watson, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Kirk C. Dorr, COL

Accepted this 23rd day of May 2019 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, PhD

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

Fair use determination or copyright permission has been obtained for the inclusion of pictures, maps, graphics, and any other works incorporated into this manuscript. A work of the US government is not subject to copyright, however further publication or sale of copyrighted images is not permissible.

Abstract

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES' WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN: LESSONS FROM TWO SEPARATE APPROACHES, by MAJ Ian C. McLeod, 39 pages.

The United States and Soviet Union both entered Afghanistan for vastly different reasons, and both nations struggled mightily adjusting their operational approaches to meet the problems encountered. This monograph examines the 40th Army's withdrawal from Afghanistan and discusses issues US planners and commanders are currently experiencing in Afghanistan. The elements of operational art provide a useful tool in examining the operational approach the 40th Army used to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan. The 40th Army's planners utilized the elements of operational art to great effect in some situations and ignored them to their peril in other instances. This monograph addresses conceptually how the Soviet's framework can be applied, and when their framework should be avoided by US planners in Afghanistan.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Acronyms	vi
Illustrations	vii
Introduction	1
The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan	2
The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan.....	9
The Strategic Context for the United States' Involvement in Afghanistan.....	16
The US Experience in Afghanistan	19
Analysis of the Soviet Withdrawal.....	24
A Framework for the US Withdrawal	30
Conclusion.....	34
Bibliography	37

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a few people for their time, guidance, and motivation. First, thank you to my family for their support and understanding on some long hours in the library. Additionally, I would like to thank my monograph director, Dr. Calhoun, and my seminar leader, COL Watson, for their guidance and support throughout the year.

Acronyms

ALOC	Air Line of Communication
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
GLOC	Ground Line of Communication
PDPA	Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan
LCOSF	Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces
NA	Northern Alliance
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha
SLOC	Sea Line of Communication
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command

Illustration

Figure 1. Lines of Operation for Soviet Withdrawal.....	27
---	----

Introduction

There is a literature and a common perception that the Soviets were defeated and driven from Afghanistan. This is not true. When the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, they did so in a coordinated, deliberate, professional manner, leaving behind a functioning government, an improved military and an advisory and economic effort insuring the continued viability of the government. The withdrawal was based on a coordinated diplomatic, economic, and military plan permitting Soviet forces to withdraw in good order and the Afghan government to survive.

—Lester W. Grau, “Breaking Contact without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan”

The United States is entering its eighteenth year of combat in Afghanistan. Currently, there are discussions of peace talks circulating around Washington, DC. The US strategic end state has been redefined multiple times since the initial invasion in 2001. These end states at both the operational and strategic level have changed with the varying US political climate and with new assessments of what the United States hopes to achieve in Afghanistan. The current strategy under President Donald Trump closely mirrors the previous strategies of both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. The execution of the strategy calls for the consolidation of forces onto large bases within the strategic hubs across Afghanistan, such as Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad, counterterrorism operations, advising and assisting Afghan Security Forces, and finally peace talks with Taliban leadership to end the longest conflict in US history.¹

While the political context differs when comparing US and Soviet decision making, the conceptual framework at the operational level share many similarities, from the consolidation on larger bases to the focus on training of host nation forces. The social, cultural, religious, and physical geography in Afghanistan provide a conceptualization of reality that planners must take

¹ Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Helene Cooper, “Newest U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan Mirrors Past Plans for Retreat,” *New York Times*, accessed July 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/world/asia/trump-afghanistan-strategy-retreat.html>; Pamela Constable, Missy Ryan, and Paul Sonne, “U.S., Taliban Move Closer to Deal on American Troop Exit,” *Washington Post*, accessed February 7, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghan-president-calls-for-direct-talks-with-taliban-us-tentatively-agrees-on-framework-that-could-lead-to-troop-withdrawal/2019/01/28/23ecbaba-22f9-11e9-81fd-b7b05d5bed90_story.html?utm_term=.e079fedddab4.

into account when devising lines of effort and operation to extract the United States and its allies from Afghanistan and to leave the government of Afghanistan with the ability to retain power.

Commanders and planners at all levels of war, as well as policy makers can learn many valuable lessons from the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan nearly three decades ago. These lessons do not simply apply to the current US efforts in Afghanistan but may serve future planners on unforeseen battlefields. Historical case study analysis will look conceptually at how the Soviets utilized or failed to utilize the elements of operational art during their withdrawal, and then how their successes and failures can be applied to current and future US operations both inside and outside Afghanistan.

The Soviet Experience in Afghanistan

To understand the strategic context the Soviet military leaders were operating within, at the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, it is imperative to first understand how the participants in the war arrived at the end of the Soviet involvement in 1989. As Carl von Clausewitz wrote in “Two Letters on Strategy,” “How then is it possible to plan a campaign, whether for one theater of war or several, without indicating the political condition of the belligerents, and the politics of their relationship to each other?”² The political context for the Soviet Union’s military and civilian leaders is no less important than Clausewitz suggested nearly two centuries ago.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan began in December 1979, but much of the impetus for this invasion had roots decades prior. The newly forming Soviet Union initially recognized Afghanistan’s sovereignty on March 27, 1919 just after the end of World War I. The Soviet Union later signed and continuously renewed a series of neutrality and nonaggression agreements with Afghanistan every ten years up until 1975.

² Carl von Clausewitz, *Two Letters on Strategy*, ed. and trans Peter Paret and Daniel Moran (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 22.

In 1933, Zahir Shah became the king of Afghanistan, ruling over a relatively stable nation. However, the foundation of Zahir Shah's stable Afghanistan began to crack with the formation of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in January of 1965. The formation of the PDPA in 1965, and its subsequent split in 1967 into two rival factions led by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal, began the final series of events that would lead to the Soviet intervention fourteen years later. The PDPA split into the two groups, *Khalq* (Masses) and *Parcham* (Banner), after only two years, and it would take the heavy-handed approach of General Mohammed Daoud Khan to reunite the PDPA.³ The focus of Soviet leaders on Afghanistan increased in November 1968, when at the Polish Party Congress, Leonid Brezhnev, described his views on foreign relations to the gathered politicians. The basics of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" stated that the Soviet Union had an obligation to intervene in foreign countries where socialism is in danger.⁴

General Mohammed Daoud Khan, a pro-Soviet cousin of the king, appointed himself prime minister and president in 1973. Daoud, supported by leftist elements including moderate communists within Afghanistan, overthrew King Zahir Shah in 1973 in a bloodless coup while the king was away in Italy seeking medical attention. Over the next several years, Daoud would continue to foster a close relationship with Moscow. Daoud's control of Afghanistan relied on a much harsher brand of governance, which Rodric Braithwaite described in *Afgantsy*,

More forceful than Zahir, [Daoud] ruled with a rod of iron. The freedom of the parties and the students was curtailed. A former prime minister died mysteriously in prison. His government made hundreds of arrests and conducted five political executions, the first in more than forty years. In 1977 [Daoud]⁵ pushed through a new constitution which turned Afghanistan into a presidential one-party state, in

³ Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37-40; Lester Grau and Michael A. Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 7-9; Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1-15.

⁴ John Dornberg, *Brezhnev: The Masks of Power* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 229.

⁵ Author changed the spelling from Daud to Daoud to match the spelling used by the majority of the authors cited in the monograph.

which only his own party, the National Revolutionary Party was allowed to operate.⁶

The Soviet Union attempted to reel in Daoud's heavy hand and encouraged Afghan Communist support for his government.

In addition to the internal strife Daoud caused in Afghanistan through his political heavy handedness, he also created fissures between himself and his closest ally, the Soviet Union. Concerned over becoming inexorably linked to the Soviet Union, Daoud began reaching out to various heads of government, including the Shah of Iran and the King of Saudi Arabia. The Soviet Union opposed these overtures, but found his later courtship of the United States especially egregious. Daoud met with the US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, in Vienna in 1977, and until January 1978 the US Embassy in Kabul characterized the relationship as excellent.⁷ Still, the link between Daoud's Afghanistan and the United States did not stand the test of time.

Mohammed Daoud's opposition to both branches of the PDPA soon led to his losing control of the Afghan government. The PDPA eventually reunited, much in response to the persecution at the hands of Daoud, deposed Daoud, and took control of Afghanistan on April 27, 1978 in what historians later named the Saur Revolution. Unlike the bloodless coup that brought Daoud to power, the Saur Revolution ended with the death of Mohammed Daoud. In the aftermath of the Saur Revolution, the people elected Mohammed Taraki, one of the original leaders of the PDPA, to serve as prime minister and president, with Babrak Kamal serving as the vice president.⁸

The new government under the original founding members of the PDPA, Taraki and Karmal, quickly burned bridges among the power brokers in Afghanistan. One of these rising power brokers was Hafizullah Amin, whose constituents led a coup d'état on October 14, 1979, to

⁶ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 31.

⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁸ Ibid., 37-40; Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 7-9; Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 16-24.

overthrow the government and then murdered Taraki.⁹ Artemy Kalinovsky recognized the importance of this event in his book *A Long Goodbye*, “Taraki’s arrest and murder seem to have started the final sequence of events that led to intervention. At first, Soviet leaders tried to make the best of the situation, instructing their officials in Moscow to accept Amin’s consolidation of power as a fait accompli while working to minimize repression against supporters of Taraki.”¹⁰ Leonid Brezhnev and the Soviet leadership did not receive the news of Taraki’s death particularly well. Amin’s ordering of the assassination of Taraki, a politician Brezhnev promised to protect, and suspicious meetings and overtures to the United States all contributed to the final decision to remove Amin from power.¹¹

Meanwhile, in the final few months of Taraki’s rule, the Soviets recognizing the increasingly destabilizing situation, started to honor requests for Soviet forces from Taraki. On June 16, 1979, a detachment of tanks, BMPs, and crews arrived to guard infrastructure in Kabul, Bagram, and Shindand airfields, and then on July 7, 1979 an airborne battalion arrived on Bagram airfield.¹² The requests from Taraki’s government only increased in size and capability, however the Soviet government did not rush to fill these requests. The intervention planning began in early December 1979 in an extremely limited inner circle within the Soviet Ministry of Defense. The General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union received orders on December 10, 1979 and began their own planning for the insertion of division sized units into Afghanistan. These elements would become the building blocks of the 40th Army. Brezhnev made the final decision to intervene on December 12, 1979.

There was a flurry of activity in the days leading up to the invasion of Afghanistan. The next day after the decision to intervene was made, Colonel-General Y. P. Maksimov, Commander

⁹ Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 8-9.

¹⁰ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 20.

¹¹ Ibid., 23.

¹² Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 10.

of the Turkestan Military District, approved the plan for the use of a Limited Contingent of Soviet Forces (LCOSF). General-Lieutenant Yu V. Tukharinov, the Commander of the 40th Army, began forming his staff and increasing the rate of preparation for the invasion. Lester Grau and Michael Gress noted in their book, *The Soviet-Afghan War*,

Divisions and regiments were filled out first, and then the combat service support and repair units and other support units of the 40th Army were filled out. Some of these support units were already moving with the intervention force before they were completely filled. This was the largest mobilization in the Turkestan and Central Asian Military Districts since the Great Patriotic War. The Minister of Defense set the time to cross the international border at 1500 hours Moscow time (1630 hours Kabul time) on 25 December.¹³

The Soviet military's operational level planners received less than two weeks to complete their plan and begin execution. While military planners received extraordinarily little notice, the Soviet political leaders pondered for months the decision to remove Amin and the potential consequences for their actions. With such an abbreviated timeline between military notification and execution, it remained to be seen whether the Soviet leadership could link their strategic end state to the military operation they were executing.

The Soviet's initial goals for their intervention were limited in nature and included the forceful changing of leadership, garrisoning cities, and protecting key bases. The Afghans largely welcomed Amin's removal, because of the ruthless rule he imposed on his subjects in the preceding months, but these initial pleasantries would soon wear out. Additionally, these good tidings were only applicable to the Afghans who directly experienced Amin's wrath. Most Afghans were at best indifferent concerning the presence of foreign troops, while many were openly hostile. The Soviet planners did not envision operations lasting much longer than a month and foresaw relatively little or no need to get involved in direct combat operations. The military plan was to garrison key infrastructure, support the military of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), and let the Afghan army conduct combat operations out and amongst the

¹³ Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 11.

populace. These would prove to be extremely flawed planning assumptions and the Soviet Union would bog itself down for nine years in a costly war in blood, treasure, and prestige.¹⁴

As many instances in history have proven, the war a nation intends to fight is seldom the war it ends up waging. Braithwaite writes in *Afgantsy*, “Their mistake was to assume that if the army was well prepared to fight a major war, it could without too much adaptation successfully fight minor wars as well. The Americans had thought the same at the beginning of the Vietnam War.”¹⁵ The equipment, tactics, training, and force structure of the 40th Army would be forced to change to meet the ever-changing conditions in a counterinsurgency fight. The Soviet Army of the late 1970s trained in large scale maneuver warfare based on their concepts of deep battle. The enemy armies the Soviets expected to face were going to be strung out across northern Europe in defensive positions. Their tactics, equipment, and training prepared them for this type of fighting.¹⁶ The story from the Soviet military perspective during the Soviet-Afghan War is the need for constant adaptation and adjustment to meet these strategic, operational, and tactical issues.

The Soviet-Afghan War and its conduct can be broken down into four main phases. The initial phase started with the invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas Day 1979 and lasted throughout much of the winter. The invasion and first few weeks’ worth of operations by Soviet forces were largely successful. Conspirators executed Amin on December 27, 1979, and shortly thereafter, former Vice-President, Babrak Karmal was installed as the Prime Minister. Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, the installation of Karmal as the Prime Minister did not have the intended consequence of normalizing the situation. Karmal was seen as a puppet of Moscow and drove many Afghans over to the opposition.

¹⁴ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 24-25.

¹⁵ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 127.

¹⁶ Lester Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2010), 198.

The mujahideen fighters learned quickly that Soviet forces had done little in the previous years but prepare for large scale combat operations. The first clashes between large Soviet and mujahideen forces quickly forced the adaptation of the mujahideen into guerilla or insurgency style operations carried out by small 20-100 men detachments. The adaptation to this style of warfare by the mujahideen and the increasing number of irregular forces, forced the expansion of the Soviet military's involvement in the conflict. No longer would Soviet forces be able to passively guard infrastructure while the Afghan Army conducted the bulk of the fighting.

The next phase of the Soviet-Afghan War would last considerably longer than the initial phase and would see the size of the Soviet footprint expand drastically. The second phase lasted from March 1980 until April 1985. The conduct of operations varied greatly, and the overall size of the Soviet force swelled from just over 50,000 to close to 82,000 total personnel, of which 61,800 were in combat units.¹⁷ The initial setbacks of the mujahideen forced them to abandon large forces and melt into the population in the many mountainous areas of the country. Braithwaite writes in *Afgantsy*, "The Soviet commanders had not worked out in advance how to deal with small, lightly equipped, and highly mobile groups of strongly motivated men moving across difficult terrain with which they were intimately acquainted. Until they had gained experience the officers and men of the 40th Army were not good at this kind of war."¹⁸ The Soviet military was forced to abandon much of its preconceived notions of operations and adopt a much more limited style of warfare. The Soviets shifted focus to the strengthening of the Afghan government, and the securing of vital lines of communication and strategically important regions of the country. This phase was typified by Soviet forces adapting to changing conditions and acting independently of the DRA military forces they were there to prop up.

¹⁷ Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 20.

¹⁸ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 127-128.

The third phase of the war, April 1985 to the end of 1986, marked the final phase before the Soviet Union began the withdrawal of their forces in earnest from Afghanistan. The 40th Army would increase to its largest size, some 108,000 personnel would be assigned to the 40th Army with 73,000 in combat units.¹⁹ In March 1985, immediately prior to the start of the third phase, Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the top seat in the Soviet Union's government. Shortly after reaching the zenith of power, Gorbachev began looking for ways to extract his nation's armed forces from Afghanistan.²⁰ As the political situation in Moscow shifted, the 40th Army adopted new methods for the employment of forces. Braithwaite writes, "Gorbachev began active negotiations to bring the soldiers home and there was a deliberate effort to reduce casualties in what was becoming an increasingly unpopular war. The Soviet forces sought to confine themselves to air and artillery operations in support of the Afghan forces, although motor-rifle units were primarily used to back up the operations and the fighting morale of their Afghan allies."²¹ This is the key difference between the second and third phase of the Soviet occupation. During the third phase, the Soviets would increasingly place the Afghans in the lead. While the third phase marks the high-water mark for troop numbers in Afghanistan, and the majority of the withdrawal would take place in the fourth and final phase, the third phase did mark the initial withdrawal of forces, including six regiments returning to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1986.

The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

The fourth and final phase of the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan began at the end of 1986 and extended into early 1987, but the planning and decision to extract itself from the quagmire the Soviets found themselves in was made months prior. Unlike the short timeline from

¹⁹ Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 26.

²⁰ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 74.

²¹ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 142.

notification of the decision to intervene, to crossing into Afghanistan, the 40th Army would have ample time to plan for and execute a phased withdrawal. The initial framework for a negotiated withdrawal began relatively soon after the invasion. Diplomatic talks started to take shape in late 1981, less than two years after the Soviet invasion. However, the numerous diplomatic hurdles and pitfalls required to get each side to the negotiating table would cause the talks to stall until Gorbachev assumed the premier position in the government. Tom Rogers states in, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, “In 1985 Gorbachev assumed power in the Soviet Union following the death of Chernenko on March 10. Although it was not immediately evident, Gorbachev’s government would eventually embark on overhauling Soviet foreign policy, including Moscow’s Afghan policy.”²² It would not take Gorbachev much time after taking power to announce publicly his true intentions concerning Afghanistan. In a speech to the politburo in February 1986, less than a year from becoming the general secretary of the Soviet communist party, Gorbachev called Afghanistan a “bleeding wound” and stated his intention to bring home Soviet troops in the “nearest future.”²³

While Gorbachev’s statements seem cut and dry, the final political maneuvering on the withdrawal of forces would last several months and prove to be a serious disruption for 40th Army planners trying to remove tens of thousands of soldiers and thousands of pieces of equipment from Afghanistan. A series of decisions by Gorbachev starting in May of 1986 required planners to relook and reevaluate previous assumptions. The strategic decisions made

²² Tom Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 21.

²³ Edward L. Arnston, “The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Three Key Decisions that Shaped the 40th Army’s Operational Withdrawal Plan” (Masters Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, 2014), 2; “Key Dates in the Afghan War,” *Washington Post*, accessed October 31, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/04/17/key-dates-in-the-afghan-war/e9e2cb81-0a78-4d31-85e3-4d78a317d48e/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.a2861b0a5d0d.

impacted the overall withdrawal plan, and the 40th Army planners in turn adjusted the plan after each decision.²⁴

With the decisions to withdraw forces made, albeit with changes still forthcoming, it was up to the 40th Army staff to begin the planning and execution of the phased withdrawal. The phased withdrawal would not start until May 15, 1988, and several operations and political decisions would consume elements of the 40th Army staff in the preceding months. The Soviet leadership hoped National Reconciliation talks between the warring factions within Afghanistan would provide a more agreeable end to their involvement. As a result, for the better part of 1987, the Soviet forces ceased offensive combat operations, with the main exception being Operation Magistral.²⁵

Operation Magistral took place between November 20, 1987 and January 21, 1988 and ended up being one of the largest operations of the entire war. Starting as early as 1981, Jalaluddin Haqani and his estimated 15,000 fighters threatened government control and cut off Khost from the rest of Afghanistan. As Soviet forces withdrew from offensive operations in early 1987, the only way to supply the struggling 25th Infantry Division of the DRA was via helicopter during the hours of darkness. To set the stage for their withdrawal, the road connecting Gardez to Khost had to be opened. General-Lieutenant Boris Gromov, the commander of the 40th Army at the time, mustered approximately 24,000 soldiers and significant amounts of artillery to complete the mission. Operation Magistral successfully opened the road, enabled Soviet support units to deliver over 24,000 tons of food and ammunition, and ensured they were able to extract their stranded equipment, including tanks, BTRs, and other weapon systems.²⁶ The Soviets held the road open until the end of January 1988, and then turned responsibility back over to the 25th

²⁴ Arnston, "The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," 3.

²⁵ Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 28.

²⁶ Lester Grau, *Khost in the Rearview Mirror: First City in Afghanistan Fall to Jalaludin Haqqani, The Pakistani ISI and the Inadequacies of Aerial Resupply* (Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2014), 2-3.

Infantry Division. However less than a month later, Jalauddin Haqani was back in control of vast swaths of Khost. This bleak ending to Operation Magistral would foreshadow many aspects of the 40th Army's final months in Afghanistan.

With Operation Magistral in the immediate rearview mirror and time dwindling down, one of the immediate planning priorities for the 40th Army was the transitioning of control to the three separate armed forces of the DRA. The Ministry of Defense, the *Sarandoy* (Ministry of the Interior) and the *Khad* (Ministry of State Security or secret police) all had armed forces that contributed to the overall defense of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Defense on paper had 132,000 personnel assigned, however the extraordinarily high desertion rate meant at the onset of the Soviet withdrawal, the Ministry of Defense was closer to 52,000 personnel. The other two ministries fared much better in total numbers, and actually outnumbered the Ministry of Defense.

Throughout Phase 3, the Soviet military trained, partnered, and strengthened the armed forces of the DRA. To increase the DRA's capabilities, the DRA with the help of the 40th Army planned a series of operations in 1986 to improve their fighting capability. However, out of necessity, Soviet forces provided more support than initially designed, to enable the DRA to successfully complete their mission. Throughout the conflict, the Soviet Union provided billions of rubles worth of military and economic aid to the DRA. Additionally, the Soviet Union sold their defense systems to the Afghanistan government, making it one of the top three recipients of Soviet arms among third world countries.²⁷ The years of training, equipping, and conducting joint operations did not prepare the DRA to conduct operations autonomously. As the 40th Army planned for and executed their draw down, including the handing over of bases, many of the bases were quickly abandoned by overwhelmed DRA units. To survive, the DRA would abandon

²⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "The Costs of Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan," CIA Intelligence Assessments, accessed October 31, 2018, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000499320.pdf.

less important garrisons and consolidate onto more strategic and defensible bases.²⁸ Olga Olikier explains the reasoning for this in *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience*, "In 1988, when the effort to transition to an Afghan lead had been ongoing for several years, Soviet representatives in Kabul reported to Moscow that the Afghan military was able to fight effectively against opposition forces only when in large formations. Small groups, up to the level of a garrison battalion, remained unstable."²⁹

The Soviet Ministry of Defense issued the final order for withdrawal on April 7, 1988, and one week later they signed the Geneva Accord, signifying the final intent for a Soviet withdrawal of combat forces. The final training, equipping, and turning over of large bases to their DRA partners undoubtedly took a considerable planning effort on the part of the 40th Army. In addition to these planning requirements, there was still a need to plan for and execute the extraction of 110,000 personnel, 500 tanks, 4,000 BMPs and BTRs, 2,000 artillery pieces and mortars, and some 16,000 trucks. Another vital consideration for the military planners, as seen during the run up to Operation Magistral, there were still vast areas of the country controlled by an estimated total of 150,000 mujahideen fighters.³⁰

The first subphase of the withdrawal started on May 15, 1988 and lasted until August 15, 1988. The first steps of the Soviet withdrawal were the closure of several smaller garrisons in Asadabad, Gul'bakhar, Bamian, Baraki, Chagcharan and Shadzhoy. The forces on these bases did not leave the country all together, but instead consolidated on bases closer to the ring route that would take them out of Afghanistan. The 40th Army separated their withdrawal routes into an eastern and western corridor and planned for a staged withdrawal from the separate garrisons along the ring route.

²⁸ Lester W. Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 2 (13 June 2007): 235-261.

²⁹ Olga Olikier, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2011), 71.

³⁰ Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 88.

Security was of the utmost concern to the 40th Army leadership and they expended significant amounts of resources to ensure the safe travel of Soviet forces along the routes. Combined forces of DRA and Soviet troops in excess of 100,000 personnel guarded different sections of the routes leading out of the country. The concern over secure routes made headlines in the Soviet media, as fear over a “war on the road” spread.³¹ However, these fears ended up not materializing to the extent feared. Lester W. Grau writes in “Breaking Contact without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan,” “In fact, after initial Mujahideen attempts to take Jalalabad, Konduz and Faizabad from the DRA failed, Mujahideen activity slowed for the rest of the withdrawal. The Mujahideen were building for the contest with the DRA in the aftermath of the withdrawal.”³² Throughout the first subphase, the Soviets would transfer 184 garrisons, 990 armored vehicles, 3,000 trucks, 142 howitzers, 231 air defense systems, 14,443 small arms, and 1,706 rocket launchers to the DRA armed forces. The Soviets withdrew 50,200 soldiers, with another 50,000 more still planned in the next subphase. Even with these impressive numbers, the 40th Army did not check all the blocks they initially intended. The original plan called for the evacuation of all garrisons along the western corridor, however unforeseen political maneuvering by President Najibullah kept Shindand and Herat open until the next subphase.³³

The final subphase of the Soviet withdrawal was set to begin on November 15, 1988 and proceed until the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan on February 15, 1989. However, increased mujahideen presence in the abandoned areas, political issues, a need to reposition forces, and disagreements between the Najibullah government and Moscow would delay the start of the phase until January 2, 1989.³⁴ The 40th Army and Najibullah sat down during the pause to discuss potential options to ensure the survival of the DRA in a post-Soviet Afghanistan. These

³¹ Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 37.

³² Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” 14.

³³ Ibid., 15.

³⁴ Ibid., 16.

options included the Soviets leaving a division in country to secure key lines of communication, replacing Soviet forces with United Nation peacekeepers, or paying Soviet volunteers to secure the lines of communication. There was risk associated with each of the options presented, but eventually the DRA chose an option not presented during the engagements. Najibullah would hire militias to secure lines of communication. The loss of both November and December had profound effects upon the 40th Army's withdrawal plan. The eastern corridor would support the exit of the vast majority of the approximately 30,000 Soviet forces still left in Afghanistan.

In addition to the larger number of personnel, the terrain in the dead of winter was not conducive to the movement of such large formations. Just like the first withdrawal phase, security was of the utmost concern to the military leaders. The dwindling number of Soviet troops and besieged DRA forces meant the 40th Army had to look for different options to secure their withdrawal. The 40th Army ended up negotiating with individual rebel leaders, negotiations which included payment to local mujahideen leaders. Word of these local arrangements eventually made their way back to Najibullah, who quickly protested to Moscow. The Kremlin responded by ordering the cancellation of the local agreements and the reengagement with mujahideen forces.

The 40th Army responded with a large aerial bombardment, code named Operation Typhoon, of multiple mujahideen strongholds. Tom Rogers writes in *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, "By heavy bombing and covert negotiations, Moscow attempted to achieve either a political settlement in Afghanistan or safe passage for withdrawing forces. To the end the Soviets sought a settlement that would help them regain an element of prestige or buy some influence in a future government."³⁵ Operation Typhoon ended on January 25, 1989, and the transition of the last few remaining Soviet garrisons followed shortly. The eastern corridor was clear by February 10, 1989 with the remaining Soviet forces staged within proximity of the border, and by February

³⁵ Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 52.

8, 1989, the last Soviet garrison, Herat, on the western corridor closed. Lester W. Grau writes, “On 15 February, with a large amount of press coverage and fanfare, the last elements crossed. General Boris Gromov’s son met him on the “Friendship” bridge and they walked into the Soviet Union together. General Gromov was the last member of the 40th Army to cross over.”³⁶

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was a reasonably well executed operation. The Soviet military trained for decades on large scale operations planned for and executed at the operational level. The extraction of over 100,000 personnel and tens of thousands of pieces of equipment that had built up over the nine-year Soviet occupation, was exactly what the Soviet Union’s armed forces knew how to execute. Their planning and execution provide a valuable framework for the withdrawal of forces from a prolonged counterinsurgency campaign.

The Strategic Context for the United States’ Involvement in Afghanistan

Much like the Soviet experience, the seeds of conflict were sowed in the years prior to a US service member stepping foot in the country. The mental image that comes to most people’s minds when they think of the start of the US involvement in Afghanistan are the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Four planes used as weapons of terror struck the US homeland, marking the largest attack on US soil since Pearl Harbor almost sixty years prior. The planes struck symbols of US economic and military might, and a fourth plane possibly heading for the US Capitol Building or White House, was taken down by passengers aboard the plane in a field in Pennsylvania. The combined death toll for the attacks was approximately 3,000 people.³⁷

The men who launched these attacks on multiple civilian and government targets belonged to an international terrorist organization known as al-Qaeda. Osama bin Laden, the leader of the organization, cut his teeth fighting with the mujahideen in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. These were not the first attacks on US targets, previously al-Qaeda targeted the

³⁶ Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” 21.

³⁷ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 940.

USS Cole and embassies in Africa, but the attack on September 11, 2001 was on a completely different scale. The enormous size of the attacks would garner a much broader response from the United States and its allies.³⁸

The familiarity with Afghanistan and the power vacuum left after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 made Afghanistan the perfect planning and training location for bin Laden and his network of extremists. The planning would take place in areas US servicemembers would become intimately familiar with in a post-invasion Afghanistan. Lawrence Wright writes in *The Looming Tower*, “In the three years since Khaled Sheikh Mohammed had proposed his “planes operation” to bin Laden in a cave in Tora Bora, al-Qaeda had been researching a plan to strike the American homeland.”³⁹ In the vast ungoverned spaces of Afghanistan, the al-Qaeda recruits were free to train on a myriad of tasks. The training included map reading, weapons training, and bomb making. The trainees came from a variety of countries, but surprisingly very few came from Afghanistan or Pakistan. They consisted mostly of Saudis and Egyptians, who were from the middle or upper class with a college education, and usually had degrees in engineering and natural sciences. Thanks to the permission and support of their hosts, the Taliban, these well-educated recruits had the terrain and freedom necessary to expand the capabilities of their organization.

The Soviet Union’s nine-year war in Afghanistan left behind devastation. The communist puppet government, led by Najibullah, did not last long past the Soviet withdrawal. The war forced millions of Afghans to flee for Pakistan, and while exact figures of deaths are difficult to come by, historians put the range somewhere between 600,000 and 1.5 million.⁴⁰ Neamatollah Nojumi writes in his book, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*,

³⁸ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Random House, Inc, 2006), 301-32.

³⁹ Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 307.

⁴⁰ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 347.

The UN peace initiative on Afghanistan tried to foster the development of a positive environment for a peaceful transition of government, but this also failed. The internal interaction of Afghan armed political forces from the Afghan government and Afghan resistance factions left the UN peace plan without any power or ability to succeed. A bloody civil war shattered this already war-ruined country and forced the Afghans into larger fragmentation.⁴¹

The civil war that developed in Afghanistan between different warlords and the Najibullah government eventually brought about the rise of the Taliban.

The Taliban began in 1994 as an ad hoc force in the Pashtun controlled province of Kandahar and the refugee camps across the Pakistan border. The Soviet-Afghan War forced many Afghans to flee into Pakistan where the Afghan refugees would attend madrasas, or Islamic schools. These students would eventually return to Afghanistan and form the Taliban. The Taliban aided by Muslim militants from across the Muslim world would set out on a campaign to control Afghanistan and set up a country governed by sharia law. One of the more notable foreigners fighting alongside the Taliban was Osama bin Laden, who would again find himself fighting in the mountains and valleys across Afghanistan. The Taliban secured Kandahar by September 1994, and at once installed their government and began preparations for their military campaign to the north.⁴² The winter of 1994 to 95 was a busy season for the Taliban, and by the end of it, they owned almost half of Afghanistan and controlled the high ground around the southern edge of Kabul. The fighting for control of Kabul would sway back and forth between Taliban offensives and government backed militia counteroffensives. While the fighting continued for Kabul, the Taliban seized Herat in the west on September 5, 1995 without a fight. The securing of Herat would mark the last significant territorial gain until the Taliban seized control of Jalalabad on September 11, 1996. A couple of weeks later, the Taliban marched into Kabul from the east, with only minimal fighting. After the Taliban secured Kabul, Najibullah the former ruler of Afghanistan, was hung by a lamp post near the UN compound in Kabul. The

⁴¹ Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 60.

⁴² Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*, 118.

primary defender of Kabul, Ahmad Shah Masoud, opted to retreat his forces to the north and defend the northern mountains of the Hindu Kush.⁴³ The forces under Masoud, collectively known as the Northern Alliance (NA), would continue to wage war on the Taliban up until they received support from US forces in the wake of the attacks on September 11, 2001.⁴⁴

By the time the first plane slammed into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Taliban controlled around 90% of the country of Afghanistan. With most of Afghanistan under control, Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, and Osama bin Laden, set in motion the sequence of events that would lead to the US involvement in Afghanistan. The attacks on September 11, 2001 would force many planners at United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) to quickly learn about the organization that attacked the US homeland, the “government” harboring al-Qaeda, and a country that had experienced decades of uninterrupted conflict.

The US Experience in Afghanistan

The US goals, at least initially, were already a bit wider in scope than their Soviet counterparts. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan with the initially limited aims of changing leadership, garrisoning cities, and protecting key bases. The Soviet Union did not look for a whole sale change in governmental style and leadership. The Soviet Union simply wished to remove Amin, an unpredictable and sometimes defiant personality, and install a more stable head of state. The United States invaded Afghanistan with a more complex set of initial goals. Aaron O’Connell in *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* writes, “The Americans’ objectives were threefold: topple the Taliban government, destroy al Qaeda’s training bases, and

⁴³ Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43-50.

⁴⁴ Donald P. Wright, *A Different Kind of War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 20-21.

capture or kill all terrorists connected to the network.”⁴⁵ The removal of an entire governmental structure and associated personalities brings with it more moving parts than the replacement of a single person, as the Soviets had done decades prior. The comparison of the initial goals of the Soviet Union and the United States, to their end state, illustrate that while both countries looked to keep their goals limited, the complexity of the terrain and people of Afghanistan forced an expansion of those aims.

The US goals did not remain in a quick and easily defined three bullet point list. The scope and breadth of the US involvement would quickly expand well past the limited initial aims. The goals of the US involvement in Afghanistan have expanded and contracted throughout the eighteen-year involvement, and one could argue that the overall goals are still in flux as new leadership all the way up to the President of the United States reviews and revises the aims of the military’s mission. The overthrow of the Taliban government ended up being a relatively simple task to accomplish. Issues arose when questions of what government could or should replace the Taliban emerged. The lack of government control after the Soviet withdrawal previously enabled the rise of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Perhaps recognizing past failures, the United Nations stepped in and sent representatives to Bonn, Germany to discuss possible ways forward in Afghanistan.⁴⁶

The Bonn Agreement signed on December 5, 2001 began the process of broadening and logically lengthening the US involvement in Afghanistan. The agreement set up a new interim government, with Hamid Karzai appointed as the acting leader, and set in motion the framework the US and international community would operate under for the next few years of involvement. The Bonn Agreement asked that member nations support the interim government and enable free elections in Afghanistan. These requests of the Bonn Agreement were relatively simple to

⁴⁵ Aaron B. O’Connell, “The Lessons and Legacies of the War in Afghanistan,” in *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Afghanistan*, ed. Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman, Chapter 13, 308-331 (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 309.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 309.

accomplish, but other lines of the agreement meant a much more difficult way forward for the United States and its allies. The Bonn Agreement included lines such as, “Determined to end the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in the country.” The agreement also hinted at the extended time that would be necessary to reach all the goals set forth in Bonn, the agreement stated, “Recognizing that some time may be required for a new Afghan security force to be fully constituted and functional.”⁴⁷ This agreement marked the first open acknowledgement of the expanding role the United States and the international community would play in the future of Afghanistan.

The Bonn Agreement was not the last UN document that would lead to the further adjustment of the overall goals and end state for Afghanistan. The US government on February 1, 2006 agreed to “The Afghanistan Compact,” which spelled out fifty-two benchmarks for Afghanistan, with the aid of the international community, to achieve by the end of 2010. These goals ranged from eradicating all illegally armed groups, establishing a 70,000-person Afghan National Army, inclusion of women in governmental institutions, and steps to reducing the country’s counter-narcotics efforts. The Afghanistan Compact signaled an even further commitment by the United States, and yet another update to what the United States hoped to accomplish in Afghanistan.⁴⁸

Without the foresight to comprehend how the US mission would eventually expand, USCENTCOM began preparing to invade Afghanistan, to accomplish the much more limited initial goals spelled out by strategic leaders. The first Special Forces team, Operational Detachment A (ODA), entered Afghanistan on October 19, 2001, just over a month after the attacks on September 11, 2001. The initial invasion force was kept purposefully small by

⁴⁷ United Nation, “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions,” accessed November 2, 2018, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm>.

⁴⁸ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “The Afghanistan Compact,” accessed November 2, 2018, https://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and USCENTCOM Commander General Tommy Franks. Part of the reasoning for this move by two senior leaders, were lessons learned from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the desire to not look like an invading army, which had a long and negative connotation for the people of Afghanistan. The initial US elements consisted of seven ODA teams, that were largely responsible for devising their own plans once in country. The commander of the 5th Special Forces Group, Colonel John Mulholland described their mission as, “Advise and assist the Northern Alliance in conducting combat operations against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, kill, capture, and destroy al-Qaeda, and deny them sanctuary.”⁴⁹ These simple but effective orders allowed the ODA teams to partner with local forces from both the NA and Pashtun tribes that were hostile to the Taliban. Afghans backed by ODA teams marched into Kabul on November 14, 2001, less than two months after the first ODA team entered Afghanistan. On December 7, 2001, the symbolic home of the Taliban, Kandahar City, fell to the ODA teams and their local partners.⁵⁰

The next several months would see a series of operations aimed at the final destruction of the remaining elements of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. These operations by and large consisted of a mixture of conventional and special operations forces, attacking strong holds in the mountainous regions of eastern Afghanistan. The first of these operations took place in the mountains of southern Nangarhar Province known as *Spin Ghar* (White Mountains), and specifically in a valley called Tora Bora. The Battle of Tora Bora took place between December 6-18, 2001, and aimed to destroy a large enemy sanctuary, where Osama bin Laden was rumored to be hiding. The mission did not achieve its overall aim, and bin Laden and substantial amounts of al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters slipped across the border into Pakistan.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 75.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 88-112.

⁵¹ Ibid., 114.

After the Battle of Tora Bora, combat operations in Afghanistan slowed down. The key al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders had slipped into Pakistan and much of the US forces' focus shifted to redeployment planning. However, it was not long before another target would present itself. Operation Anaconda was another large-scale operation planned with the goal of destroying large elements of al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters operating in the mountains of Paktia Province. The operation took place over the span of eighteen days from late February to early March 2002. This operation like the one before it still showed significant gaps in the US military's ability to plan for operations in the mountains of Afghanistan, but unlike the Battle of Tora Bora, Operation Anaconda had better results. Wright states in *A Different Kind of War*, "The end result—several hundred enemy troops killed, wounded, or captured and the rest driven underground or into Pakistan—would be a critical strike against the remnants of the enemy in Afghanistan."⁵² Operation Anaconda marked the last major offensive during the initial invasion phase of the war, and operations would quickly shift focus to the way ahead highlighted in the Bonn Agreement.

Over the next several years, the attention of both military planners and the American people, would pivot 1,500 miles to the west to the US military actions in Iraq. Operation Iraqi Freedom began on March 20, 2003, and quickly shifted Afghanistan operations to the strategic backburner. Wright states in his book *A Different Kind of War*, "Simply put, from 2003 on, the United States was directing the lion's share of its military manpower to its main effort: the campaign in Iraq. In fact, from the fall of 2003 through 2005, US troops levels in Afghanistan remained only 15 to 20 percent of the troops levels in Iraq."⁵³ It would take a new president to shift the nation's focus back to Afghanistan.

Operation Enduring Freedom was over seven years old when President Barak Obama took the oath of office to become the 44th President of the United States. One of the first actions

⁵² Ibid., 128-29.

⁵³ Ibid., 323.

President Obama took, vis-à-vis Afghanistan, was to increase the number of US forces in country by 21,000. The overall commander in Afghanistan at the time, General Stanley A. McChrystal, would eventually ask for additional troops, which the president would agree to, after a long and often contentious debate between various members of the president's national security staff.⁵⁴ President Obama on December 1, 2009 announced the deployment of another 30,000 troops to Afghanistan.⁵⁵ The US forces operated along several lines of effort throughout the "surge" period in Afghanistan, and the counterinsurgency field manual championed by General David H. Petraeus remained the doctrinal guiding star. The US military continued to partner with and advise the Afghan Security Forces with the hopes of eventually transferring the mission to them. James Gannon wrote in *Obama's War*, "The Pentagon had spent billions of dollars training Afghan security forces to prepare the way for an American exit beginning in July 2011."⁵⁶

The surge troops began to head home in July 2011, but the official end of Operation Enduring Freedom would not be until December 28, 2014. Even with this mark on the calendar reached, thousands of US troops remain in Afghanistan for what US policymakers term an advise and assist mission.⁵⁷

Analysis of the Soviet Withdrawal

The Soviet Union and their armed forces spent considerable amounts of time planning, preparing, and training for large tank battles in the Soviet deep battle style in the years after World War II. They planned for large scale attacks in depth against a known force in large built up defensive positions. The war the Soviets encountered in Afghanistan was anything but a war

⁵⁴ Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Random House, 2014), 349-360.

⁵⁵ James Gannon, *Obama's War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2011), 142-44.

⁵⁶ Gannon, *Obama's War*, 143.

⁵⁷ Aaron O'Connell, "What Will be the Fate of Trump's Afghan Campaign," *War on the Rocks*, accessed January 24, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/01/what-will-be-the-fate-of-trumps-afghan-campaign/>.

of maneuver consisting of large motorized and mechanized forces smashing their way across the plains of Europe. The Soviet's involvement in Afghanistan is often seen as a comedy of errors, of poorly planned and executed operations, and armed forces operating toward an end state that was either ill-defined or consisted of unobtainable goals.⁵⁸ While some of these perceptions have their merit, the Soviet planners did plan several successful large-scale operations, such as the initial invasion, Operation Magistral, and the eventual withdrawal.⁵⁹ These combat operations, which involved division and larger Soviet formations, required planners to understand, visualize, and describe the war through what US planners term operational art.

While the 40th Army did not use the same definition of operational art nor view it exactly the same as current US Army doctrine; the US Army doctrine's conceptualization of operational art is a useful tool for analyzing the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Soviet leaders planned for large-scale operations conducted at the operational level of war, and as such many of the principles and elements of operational art the US Army uses today can be identified as they planned and executed their withdrawal. The US Army defines operational art as "the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgement—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means."⁶⁰ Analyzing the Soviet withdrawal through the lens of this cognitive approach enables planners to see both the good and the bad in the overall operation.

The first element of operational art considered is end state and conditions. A leader that provides a clearly defined end state and set of conditions helps planners and executors synchronize and integrate resources that enables lower level commanders to utilize disciplined

⁵⁸ Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*, 196-200; Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 73.

⁵⁹ Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 1.

⁶⁰ US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 2-1.

initiative to reach a common vision of the desired end state.⁶¹ At the operational level, the 40th Army had a clearly defined end state, which was the withdrawal of their forces from Afghanistan. There were bench marks for progress, the closing of bases, the removal of men, weapons, and equipment from bases built up during nine years of war, and all these conditions enabled commanders to synchronize their resources and remove the 110,000 personnel and the over 20,000 vehicles from the country. Unfortunately for the 40th Army's operational planners, as doctrine states, operational art applies to all levels of war, including the tactical, operational, and strategic.⁶² The operational level end state and conditions were clearly defined, but the strategic leaders had difficulty maintaining a clearly defined end state and set of conditions, and this difficulty would delay and force Soviet military leaders to adjust plans to meet these shifting priorities. At the strategic level an agreed upon end state remained elusive many years prior to the initiation of troop withdrawals from Afghanistan. Kalinovsky states in *A Long Goodbye*, "Although Gorbachev understood the importance of bringing Soviet troops home in early 1985, the imperative of protecting Soviet prestige and relations with client states, as well as avoiding the domestic ideological damage of a failure in Afghanistan, led him to support a series of initiatives during his first three years in power."⁶³ The issue of translating strategic end state and conditions down to the operational and tactical level would plague the Soviets to the very end.

The 40th Army used clear lines of operation and lines of effort to facilitate the planning and execution of their withdrawal from Afghanistan. Generally, the Soviets broke down their lines of operation into two distinct corridors across the country, a western corridor and eastern corridor.

⁶¹ US Army, *ADRP 3-0*, 2-4.

⁶² US Army, *ADRP 3-0*, 2-1.

⁶³ Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye*, 217.

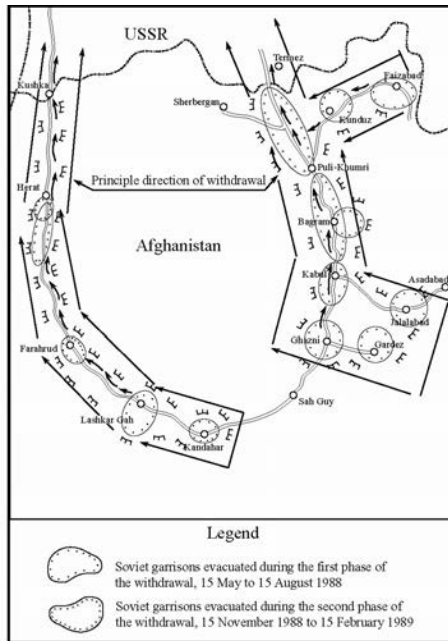


Figure 1. Lines of Operations for Soviet Withdrawal. Lester W. Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 2 (13 June 2007): 248.

The use of these two separate corridors enabled planners to stage and prepare equipment and personnel along a clear geographic corridor connected by the primary road system within the country. A framework for Soviet lines of effort is also evident in the overall planning and execution, and while planners acknowledged these problems in their planning they often had to be adjusted after issues surfaced. One of the primary lines of effort for Soviet planners was the turnover of responsibilities to their Afghan partners. The buildup of Afghan security forces was determined to be the means for enabling the overall withdrawal of Soviet forces.⁶⁴ However, the execution of this transition would result in unforeseen problems that would have to be corrected. The turning over of large bases with large stockpiles of equipment required some adjustments to the overall plan. Grau writes in “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” “On the morning of 14 May 1988, the Afghan 1st Corps Commander signed for the garrison and the entire 66th

⁶⁴ Oliker, *Building Afghanistan’s Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience*, 75.

Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade left Jalalabad by convoy heading toward Kabul and eventually home. The Afghans took over the garrison and stripped it bare by that afternoon.”⁶⁵ The line of effort to build up the Afghan security forces and leave them on firm footing would require a more concentrated effort to ensure the security forces could retain their readiness after withdrawal.

40th Army planners broke down the withdrawal into two separate phases, with a transition period used to reorganize, assess, and stage equipment. Phase 1 and 2 of the Soviet withdrawal would last from May 15, 1988 until February 15, 1989. The ability to logically break down and sequence tasks enables planners to see and translate how the commander envisions an operation occurring across time.⁶⁶ The plan originally called for the removal of the majority of forces along the western corridor during the first phase, and the removal of the garrisons along the eastern corridor during the second phase. The military planners additionally allocated a several month transition period to rearrange forces, equipment, and manage the security of the routes leading out of Afghanistan. The large amount of real estate between the eastern and western corridors made the necessity of a planned transition a fairly obvious choice. The delineated transition period also enabled Soviet commanders to adjust to changing conditions at the tactical or strategic level. The Soviets planned for the withdrawal of all forces along the western corridor during the initial phase, however Afghan political actions forced an alteration of the Soviet phased withdrawal. Grau writes in “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” “Originally, the plan called for the 40th Army to evacuate all of the Western corridor during the first phase. However, Najibullah did not feel ready to assume responsibility for the entire West at this time, so he requested that the evacuation of Shindand and Herat be postponed until the second phase.”⁶⁷ ADRP 3-0, *Operations* implores commanders and planners to take into account the amount of time necessary to plan for and execute transitions. The Soviet identification of this

⁶⁵ Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” 14.

⁶⁶ US Army, *ADRP 3-0*, 2-8.

⁶⁷ Grau, “Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos,” 15.

necessity enabled them to continue with their withdrawal without breaking the agreements stipulated in the Geneva Accord.

Military planners should constantly assess risk to both the force and mission and provide recommendations to commanders on mitigating perceived risks. It is up to the commander to accept risk, which commanders will do when they determine the accepting of a perceived risk provides an opportunity to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.⁶⁸ The Soviet commanders in past large scale combat operations, such as Operation Magistral, accepted prudent risk to force and mission to achieve mission success. However, during the withdrawal, there were few risks to force that the military planners and leaders were willing to leave unmitigated. The primary risk to force identified pertained to route security as large convoys of Soviet vehicles rolled down a few primary routes that condensed forces into small and potentially lethal engagement areas. The 40th Army allocated considerable resources to the security of their forces along the withdrawal routes and at the prepared bivouac sites. Grau and Gress state in *The Soviet-Afghan War*,

The prepared bivouac sites were prepared for defense with dug-in positions for tanks and BMPs. There was a prepared fire plan. The site was protected by mine fields. Further, there were coordination plans for convoys and the stationary guard posts that lined the route. Army aviation also supported the march units. Defensive battle planning was conducted between the march columns and army aviation. Detailed artillery fire support was planned to cover the withdrawing units during the withdrawal and for three or four days before each unit began its withdrawal.⁶⁹

The risk of moving copious amounts of equipment down known routes was an easily identifiable risk, and the planners took ample time to plan and prepare to mitigate this risk to their forces. However, this emphasis on route security surely tied up a significant amount of combat power that potentially could have helped the Afghan security forces better prepare for operations without their Soviet partners. Perhaps, the 40th Army commander needed to take a closer look at the balance between risk to force and risk to mission.

⁶⁸ US Army, *ADRP 3-0*, 2-10.

⁶⁹ Grau and Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War*, 88.

The 40th Army and its associated planners grew up in an army preparing to fight an enemy through large scale successive operations. The education and training of Soviet officers towards this end created a robust ability to plan for operations of this level of magnitude. Unfortunately for the Soviet military, Afghanistan was not that fight. However, when the 40th Army conducted large scale operations, they performed well, and the US Army's elements of operational art clearly stand out in their planning and execution.

A Framework for the US Withdrawal

The US withdrawal continues to progress in stages, which initially began back in June 2011, when President Obama announced the start of the withdrawal of US forces. US forces originally at a high of approximately 100,000 in June 2011, numbered less than 20,000 when President Obama announced the end of the combat mission in December 2014. The number of US troops in country has since fluctuated between 8,000-11,000, however the current administration has not been as open as previous administrations on the total number of US forces. The most recent announcement of total troop levels indicates a force around 11,000 personnel.⁷⁰

The comparison between the Soviet withdrawal in Afghanistan and the ongoing US withdrawal is not a precisely equal comparison for primarily two reasons. An argument can be made that the US withdrawal of forces and equipment began back in 2014 and has come in fits over the course of the last four years. This means the United States will draw down from approximately 100,000 troops over the course of five plus years, and a final withdrawal will only consist of a few thousand personnel. The Soviet withdrawal on the other hand occurred on a much more condensed timeline. Additionally, the Soviet Union shared a border with Afghanistan, allowing GLOCs (Ground Lines of Communication) to serve as the primary means of extraction,

⁷⁰ "A Timeline of U.S. Troop Levels Since 2001," *Military Times*, accessed November 29, 2018, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2016/07/06/a-timeline-of-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-since-2001/>; Helene Cooper, "U.S. Says It Has 11,000 Troops in Afghanistan, More Than Formerly Disclosed," *New York Times*, accessed November 29, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/30/world/asia/afghanistan-troop-totals.html>.

while a final US withdrawal will have additional sovereign nations to negotiate with for the movement of forces and equipment across the various GLOCs. Additionally, to retrograde all personnel and equipment to their home stations, US planners will have to incorporate the use of SLOCs (Sea Lines of Communication) and ALOCs (Air Lines of Communication) into the final movement plan.

The value of assessing the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan does not lie in looking at a detailed comparison for the removal of forces. The Soviets provided a unique example of how a nation can extract itself from a protracted war. The value for military planners is looking at conceptually how the 40th Army balanced the allocation of resources along their lines of operation and effort, the difficulties tying strategic and operational end state and conditions together, the balancing of risk to mission and risk to force, and where their decisions did or did not translate to success.

Current US joint doctrine lists six phases of joint operations, shape, deter, seize initiative, dominate, stabilize, and enable civil authority.⁷¹ According to Joint doctrine's construct of large scale combat operations, after the dominate phase, there are multiple phases ensuring the US military is leaving behind conditions favorable to the United States' international interests. The length of these final two phases can last an unknown amount of time, and as both the US and Soviet Union saw in Afghanistan, these phases can lengthen considerably. Joint doctrine currently provides little information on the withdrawal or redeployment of forces out of theater, and depending on the nature of the threat, length of time in theater, and difficulties accessing the theater, these operations may require a more extensive planning effort than currently considered in joint doctrine.⁷² The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan can be considered not just in the

⁷¹ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 1, Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), I-16.

⁷² US Department of Defense, *Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), VIII-29.

context of a continuing US withdrawal from Afghanistan, but also as an example for planners tasked with extracting troops from future battlefields.

There are several elements of operational art that apply to both the US and Soviet withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan, and planners should consider them as US policy makers continue to shape the way forward in Afghanistan. The element of operational art, end state and conditions, plagued Soviet planners at the strategic level and these same problems currently plague US forces operating in Afghanistan. The current US strategy lacks an achievable end state and set of conditions that operational planners can accomplish with the means available. The current plan calls for the United States to extract itself from Afghanistan, however with the amount of US troops in the country and the uneven quality of the Afghan forces, negotiating a favorable peace deal with the Taliban appears increasingly difficult. Additionally, successful attacks by Taliban forces on a long time Kandahar police chief and other high profile incidents, further highlight issues the United States will face in negotiating with Taliban leadership.⁷³ The United States' current approach, consisting of falling back to a few bases and conducting advisory missions in conjunction with limited lethal targeting, mirrors Soviet approaches from thirty years prior and is not significantly different than approaches utilized since the end of combat operations in late 2014. The issue for US military planners, is how a force of 8,000 to 11,000 is going to accomplish what 100,000 could not six years ago. Achieving a favorable settlement with the Taliban is not a feasible end state for this small footprint to accomplish in the time US policy makers appear to be dictating to the military.⁷⁴ This approach fails to link

⁷³ Matthew Pennington, "U.S. goals in Afghanistan Seem more Remote After Attack," accessed January 31, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-goals-in-afghanistan-seem-more-remote-after-attack>; Mushtaq Yusufzai, Hans Nichols, Ahmed Mengli, and Alastair Jamieson, "Kandahar Police Chief Killed in Afghan Attack, U.S. Gen. Scott Miller is Unhurt," *NBC News*, accessed January 31, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/gunfire-kills-afghanistan-police-chief-senior-u-s-general-scott-n921551>.

⁷⁴ Donald J. Trump, State of the Union Address, February 5, 2019, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 7, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-26>.

strategic end states with what US and Afghan Security Forces can feasibly achieve. The inability to clearly link strategic end state to operations plagues US planners just as it did their Soviet counterparts in the 1980s.⁷⁵

Additionally, the Soviet consideration of both lines of operation and lines of effort provide a helpful tool in looking at how withdrawal operations can be logically organized. The Soviets clearly defined two separate lines of operation along two distinct corridors in the eastern and western halves of Afghanistan. In addition to this delineation of operations along geographic features, Soviet planners also worked along logical lines of effort, including the training and transitioning of security to Afghan forces. The Soviet planners weighted their planning effort to the lines of operation to withdraw from Afghanistan, which is evident in their detailed withdrawal movement and security plan. A failure on the Soviet side in their overall withdrawal effort was the lack of preparedness for a transition to Afghan control. There were numerous problems with the transition of bases over to Afghan control, plans for maintaining trained and proficient security forces, and a security force that was capable of meeting its own logistical requirements.⁷⁶ Ensuring a focus on not only lines of operation, but on concurrent lines of effort by military planners will aid in ensuring there are adequate plans for not just the removal of people and equipment, but also local national forces capable of continuing on with the mission. The establishment of clearly defined conditions for Afghan Security Forces to meet, will enable commanders and planners to logically sequence operations towards these goals.

In addition to end state and conditions and lines of effort and lines of operation, there are a couple other elements of operational art seen in the Soviet withdrawal plan that can be applied to future withdrawals following prolonged engagements. The 40th Army planners analyzed risk

⁷⁵ Rod Nordland, "What an Afghanistan Victory Looks Like Under the Trump Plan," *New York Times*, accessed November 29, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/world/asia/afghan-victory-trump-plan.html? module=inline>.

⁷⁶ Grau, "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos," 14.

to force in great detail concerning their movements out of Afghanistan. The focus on planning and rehearsals to secure their force along hundreds of kilometers of roads ensured an overall successful removal of forces from Afghanistan. The focus on analyzing risk and determining methods for mitigating that risk can prove useful in similar operations. The 40th Army balanced much of their risk towards risk to force, often to the detriment of the overall mission. This highlights the difficult decisions commanders must make when balancing risk.

Additionally, the sequencing of the operation into phases with a specific focus on transitions demonstrates another valuable example for planners to consider. Units are inherently vulnerable during transitions, and preparation for transitions must begin well in advance of the operation.⁷⁷ The 40th Army's ability to forecast the need for a transition period, and then build that into their plan, supplied an excellent example for future planners when considering a similar problem set. The Soviet military's planners provided a useful lens to consider for the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, as well as additional lessons to heed when considering withdrawal operations from long wars.

Conclusion

The withdrawal of forces from a theater of operations, particularly after a prolonged war, requires a concerted planning effort by various echelons. A withdrawal of forces, just like any campaign or operation, necessitates the use of operational art and the consideration of its different elements. The 40th Army's withdrawal from Afghanistan provides a unique example of a withdrawal of forces from a protracted war, and this example demonstrates for US planners a conceptualization of withdrawal operations from Afghanistan. Soviet planners demonstrated the conceptualization of multiple elements of operational art in the execution of their withdrawal plan, most notably end state and conditions, lines of effort and operation, phasing and transitions, and risk.

⁷⁷ US Army, *ADRP 3-0*, 2-8- 2-9.

The Soviet Union and the United States' decisions to invade Afghanistan were made for vastly different reasons, however, each nation's forces experienced strikingly similar problems over their years spent in Afghanistan. The defining of a strategic end state and matching the operational force structure and actions to achieve these end states plagued both nations. Additionally, an eventual withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan must strike a balance between the need to move personnel and equipment out of Afghanistan, securing the withdrawal of forces, continued counterterrorism efforts, and the continued advising and assisting of Afghan Security Forces to enable an Afghan government capable of maintaining power in a post-US Afghanistan. The balancing of resources between these different lines of operation and effort, the phasing of the withdrawal operation, and the assessing and mitigating of risks, will be a challenging task for planners and create complex decisions for commanders and political leaders.

Afghanistan as an operational environment provides a unique example of a complex system, which inherently makes predicting outcomes difficult. Future US decisions concerning Afghanistan will undoubtedly have unforeseen outcomes in the country itself and across the regional and global community. The removal of coalition or US forces will create emergent properties within this complex system that are impossible to predict. Robert Jervis wrote in *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life*, "The complexity involved helps explain why the results of actions are often unintended and why regulations often misfire: Actors can rarely be fully constrained and will react in ways that those who seek to influence them are unlikely to foresee or desire."⁷⁸ This complex system has many moving and interacting parts, and how the United States extracts itself and what conditions are set in place upon its departure will have many unforeseen consequences.⁷⁹ Planners and commanders must realize that an optimal

⁷⁸ Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 91.

⁷⁹ US Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 5-0.1, Army Design Methodology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 1-7-1-8.

solution in the design of operations rarely exists, but learning from past mistakes and applying those lessons to their own conceptual framework provide a useful starting point.

Bibliography

- Arntson, Edward L. "The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Three Key Decisions that Shaped the 40th Army's Operational Withdrawal Plan." Masters Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2014.
- Bowman, Steve, and Catherine Dale. *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service, 2009.
- Braithwaite, Rodric. *Afgantsy, The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Central Intelligence Agency. "The Costs of Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan." CIA Intelligence Assessments. Accessed October 31, 2018. https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000499320.pdf.
- Constable, Pamela, Missy Ryan, and Paul Sonne. "U.S., Taliban Move Closer to Deal on American Troop Exit." *Washington Post*. Accessed February 7, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghan-president-calls-for-direct-talks-with-taliban-us-tentatively-agrees-on-framework-that-could-lead-to-troop-withdrawal/2019/01/28/23ecbaba-22f9-11e9-81fd-b7b05d5bed90_story.html?utm_term=.e079fedddab4.
- Cordovez, Diego, and Selig Harrison. *Out of Afghanistan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Dornberg, John. *Brezhnev: The Masks of Power*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974.
- Fivecoat, David D. "Leaving the Graveyard: The Soviet Union's Withdrawal from Afghanistan." *Parameters*, (Summer 2012): 42-55.
- Fultz, Brad. "Cautious Optimism." *Small Wars Journal*. Accessed August 29, 2018. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/cautious-optimism>.
- Gannon, James. *Obama's War*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2011.
- Gates, Robert M. *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*. New York: Random House, 2014.
- Gibbons-Neff, Thomas, and Cooper Helene. "Newest U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan Mirrors Past Plans for Retreat." *New York Times*. Accessed July 28, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/world/asia/trump-afghanistan-strategy-retreat.html>.
- Goodson, Larry, and Thomas Johnson. "Parallels with the Past: How the Soviets Lost in Afghanistan, How the Americans are Losing." Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2009.
- Grau, Lester. *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2010.
- . *The Afghan Guerilla's Dilemma: Tying up Loose Ends after the Soviets Left*. Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2014.
- . *Khost in the Rearview Mirror: First City in Afghanistan Fall to Jalaludin Haqanni, The Pakistani ISI and the Inadequacies of Aerial Resupply*. Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2014.
- . "Breaking Contact Without Leaving Chaos: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20, no. 2 (13 June 2007): 235-261.

- Grau, Lester W., and Michael A. Gress. *The Soviet-Afghan War*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002.
- Herring, George C. *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Jalali, Ali, and Lester W. Grau. *The Other Side of the Mountain*. Quantico, VA: Books Express Publishing, 2010.
- Jervis, Robert. *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Kalinovsky, Artemy M. *A Long Goodbye*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
- “Key Dates in the Afghan War.” *Washington Post*. Accessed October 31, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/04/17/key-dates-in-the-afghan-war/e9e2cb81-0a78-4d31-85e3-4d78a317d48e/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.a2861b0a5d0d.
- Marsden, Peter. *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Matthews, Matt M. *We Have Not Learned How to Wage War There: The Soviet Approach in Afghanistan 1979-1989*. Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2011.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “The Afghanistan Compact.” Accessed November 2, 2018. https://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf.
- Nojumi, Neamatollah. *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- O’Connel, Aaron B. “The Lessons and Legacies of the War in Afghanistan.” In *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Afghanistan*, edited by. Beth Bailey and Richard H. Immerman, Chapter 13, 308-332. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- . “What Will be the Fate of Trump’s Afghan Campaign.” *War on the Rocks*. Accessed January 24, 2019. <https://warontherocks.com/2019/01/what-will-be-the-fate-of-trumps-afghan-campaign/>.
- Oliker, Olga. *Building Afghanistan’s Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011.
- Pennington, Matthew. “U.S. Goals in Afghanistan Seem more Remote After Attack.” Accessed January 31, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-goals-in-afghanistan-seem-more-remote-after-attack>.
- Rogers, Tom. *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992.
- Savranskaya, Svetlana. “Volume II: Afghanistan: Lessons from the Last War.” The National Security Archive, October 9, 2001. Accessed September 4, 2018. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/soviet.html>.
- Trump, Donald J. State of the Union Address, February 5, 2019. The American Presidency Project. Accessed February 7, 2019. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-26>.
- United Nations. “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions.” Accessed November 2, 2018. <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm>.
- US Department of the Army. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2016.

- . *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 5-0.1, Army Design Methodology* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015.
- US Department of Defense, Joint Staff. *Joint Publication (JP) 1. Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013.
- . *Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017.
- West, Bing. *The Wrong War*. New York: Random House, Inc., 2011.
- Wright, Donald P. *A Different Kind of War*. Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010.
- Wright, Lawrence. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York: Random House, Inc, 2006.
- Yusufzai, Mushtaq, Hans Nichols, Ahmed Mengli, and Alastair Jamieson. “Kandahar Police Chief Killed in Afghan Attack, U.S. Gen. Scott Miller is Unhurt.” *NBC News*. Accessed January 31, 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/gunfire-kills-afghanistan-police-chief-senior-u-s-general-scott-n921551>.