

NO GREEN-ON-BLUE AGAINST THE REDS?: ORGANIZATIONAL
STRATEGIES BEHIND INSIDER ATTACKS IN AFGHANISTAN

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The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the organization-level forces that drive insurgent infiltrator behavior. More specifically, it answers the question, why has the current Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan adopted the infiltrator tactic of Insider Attacks when the Mujahidin did not against the Soviets in the 1980s? This is an important phenomenon to study based on the continuing ubiquity of insurgencies and the ever-increasing interaction between US forces and host-national militaries as the US attempts to increase partner-nation capabilities through training.

Current studies regarding Insider Attacks focus primarily on the personal reasons behind the behavior. They lack a holistic picture by ignoring higher-level causes, especially those at the organizational level. An analysis of key insurgent and counterinsurgent theorists was used to provide a list of key insurgent and counterinsurgent strategic goals. How these goals drove the Mujahidin and Taliban infiltrator tactics was then investigated by evaluating their common infiltrator missions (e.g. spying, stealing, recruiting, and delegitimizing the incumbent).

During the Soviet occupation, the Mujahidin used their infiltrators primarily for collecting intelligence, acquiring material, and enabling attacks. These tasks produced great benefits to the insurgency while minimizing the cost in relation to other tactics. The most beneficial use was intelligence gathering, because it provided warning to Mujahidin forces of impending Soviet attacks, thereby increasing the survivability of the insurgency. This information asymmetry exacerbated the Soviet's problem in identifying insurgents, causing the Soviets to injure and kill numerous civilians during their offenses. These casualties, in turn, caused the Soviets and their Afghan counterparts to lose the support of a majority of the Afghan population. The information leaks also led to mistrust between the Soviet military and their Afghan counterparts. Other tactics, such as recruiting, were avoided because the risk of identifying oneself to a potential counter-intelligence agent was too high.

Taliban infiltrators also conducted intelligence gathering missions. They did not acquire material because of the limited potential benefit, as arms and ammunition were much more available to the Taliban than they were to the Mujahidin. Because International Stabilization Assistant Forces (ISAF) were more dedicated to winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people than the Soviets, the Taliban were forced to develop a specific tactic that decreased the trust between ISAF and the Afghans, avoided collateral damage, and produced a propaganda victory.

It is important to note a key difference between Mujahidin and Taliban uses of insider violence against the third-party populaces of ISAF and the Soviet Union. The Mujahidin, less constrained by collateral damage considerations than the Taliban, were able to use infiltrators in a supporting role to inflict a large number of casualties that would negatively influence the Soviet people. Conversely, the Taliban were forced to use infiltrators in a more perilous role because they would most certainly lose the infiltrators access to the Afghan military. However they were willing to accept this cost because they were adapting to the specific character of the conflict.

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Introduction:

The Problem and Its Setting

- 29 November 2010, Nangarhar: An individual dressed as an Afghan Border Policeman shot and killed six International Security Assistance Forces' (ISAF) soldiers during a training mission. The attacker was also killed.¹
- 27 April 2011, Kabul: A colonel in the Afghanistan National Air Force shot and killed nine US advisors during their morning meeting before killing himself.² Press reporting indicated he was praised as a martyr by many of the approximately 1,500 Afghans who attended his funeral.³
- 25 October 2012, Uruzgan: A member of the Afghan National Police shot and killed two US soldiers before escaping. An Afghan official described the attacker as a "trusted member of the police force."⁴

These incidents represent three of the seventy-eight attacks by supposed Afghan National Security Forces' (ANSF) individuals against ISAF personnel from May 2007 through September 2012 (see Figure 1).⁵ The Department of Defense (DOD) has labeled these events "Insider

¹ "ISAF Investigates Shooting Incident in Eastern Afghanistan: 2010-11-S-365 4511," *ISAF - International Security Assistance Force*, November 29, 2010, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/isaf-investigates-shooting-incident-in-eastern-afghanistan.html>.

² *AFD-120111-051 Report of Investigation* (Department of the Air Force, September 4, 2011), 10, <http://www.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-120111-051.pdf>.

³ Craig Whitlock, "Afghan Pilot Said He Wanted to 'Kill Americans,' Probe of Kabul Shootings Finds," *Washington Post*, January 17, 2012, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-01-17/world/35438562_1_frank-d-bryant-philip-d-ambard-david-l-brodeur.

⁴ "Two US Soliders Killed in Insider Attack," *Tolo News*, October 25, 2012, <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/8092-isaf-solider-killed-in-insider-attack-corrected>.

⁵ For a current synopsis of all Insider Attacks in Afghanistan since 2008 see Bill Roggio and Lisa Lundquist, "Green-on-Blue Attacks in Afghanistan: The Data," *The Long War Journal*, January 8, 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/08/green-on-blue_attack.php.

Attacks,” although they are more commonly referred to as “Green-on-Blue” attacks. The Green-on-Blue epithet is derived from the practice that militaries use to refer to their own forces, in this case ISAF, as “blue,” while referring to allied forces, in this case ANSF, as “green,” and enemy forces as “red.” Such attacks have claimed over 120 Coalition lives with an additional 140 members wounded.⁶

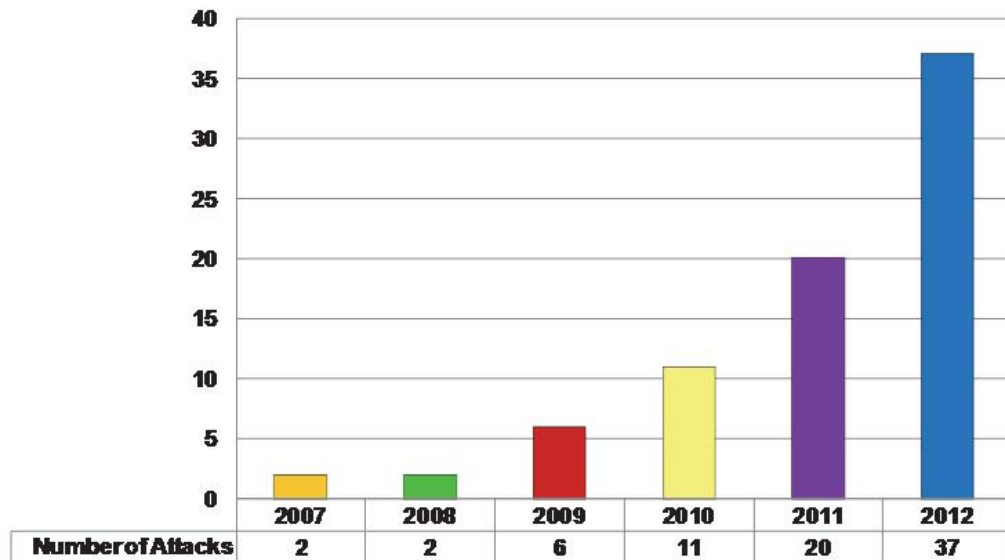


Figure 1. Number of Insider Attacks on ISAF Personnel

Source: Reprinted from Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012, 34.

The assessed motivations behind these attacks are often unknown; and even when they are discovered, they vary greatly. The DOD currently acknowledges four potential motivations for these attacks, one individual and three organizational (the Taliban): personal grievance, co-option, infiltration, and impersonation.⁷ However, the most recent DOD report indicates that the reason for almost 40 percent of all attacks - nearly half - remains unknown (see Figure 2). This report further

⁶ Roggio and Lundquist, “Green-on-Blue Attacks in Afghanistan: The Data.”

⁷ “Afghanistan - Insider Threat Training Briefing” (USAF Special Operations School, January 25, 2013), 9.

muddies the water in two additional ways. First, by creating a new “unknown reasons but having insurgent ties” category and second, by admitting that the accuracy of the assessed motivations is only “possible” or “likely.”⁸ This high degree of uncertainty, though common in warfare, has led to the implementation of a broad spectrum of potential solutions to address this issue. These solutions can be grouped into two broad categories, behavioral and security-related. The behavioral solutions primarily address the personal grievances. A prominent example is the enhanced cultural sensitivity training provided to Coalition forces by Afghan Cultural and Religious Affairs advisers.⁹ The security-related solutions primarily address the co-option, infiltration, and impersonation motivations. Examples include: increased ANSF-ISAF intelligence exchanges, additional counterintelligence teams, and improvements to the ANSF recruit vetting process.¹⁰ It remains to be seen if this large array of process improvements will provide a long-term answer to all of the potential Insider Attack motivations.

⁸ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, December 2012), 35, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/1230_Report_final.pdf.

⁹ *Statement of UK Lt. Gen. Adrian Bradshaw, Deputy Commander of ISAF*, Press Release 2012-09-CA-04 (Kabul: International Security Assistance Force, September 2, 2012), <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/statement-of-uk-lt-gen.-adrian-bradshaw-deputy-commander-of-the-international-security-assistance.html>.

¹⁰ *Statement of ISAF Commander Gen. John Allen on Insider Attacks*, Press Release 2012-09-CA-07 (Kabul: International Security Assistance Force, September 6, 2012), <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/statement-of-isaf-commander-gen.-john-allen-on-insider-attacks.html>.

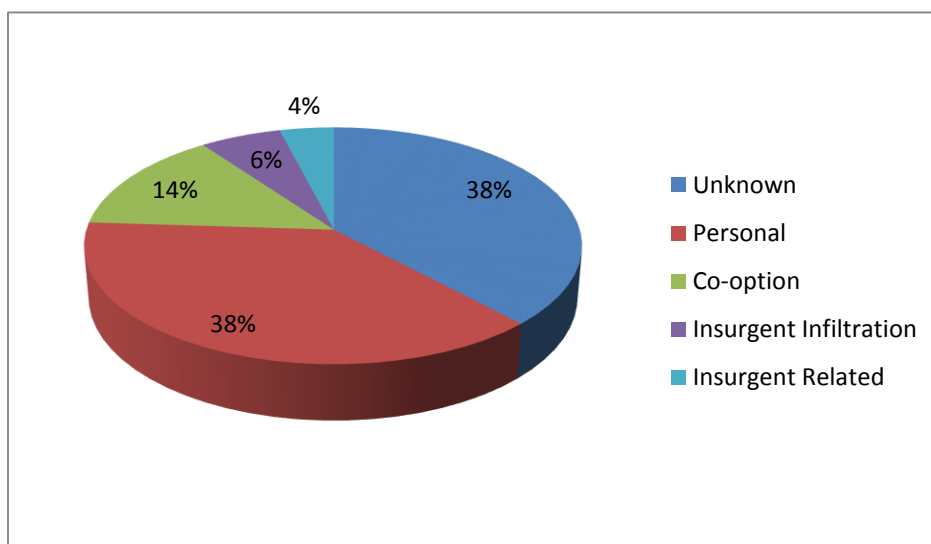


Figure 2. Individual Motivations of Insider Attackers

Source: Author's work adapted from Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012, 35.

Although the root cause of each individual attack is often unclear, what is certain about these attacks is their overall frequency has significantly increased over the last three years. Additionally, they have been responsible for an ever-increasing proportion of Coalition deaths when measured against other insurgent methods. In 2009 and 2010 only two percent of Coalition deaths were inflicted by Insider Attacks; this proportion increased to six percent in 2011 and jumped to 15 percent in 2012.¹¹ By 2012 the 37 reported attacks resulted in an astounding 51 deaths and 74 wounded.¹²

What is also clear is both sides of the conflict have acknowledged the disruptive effect these attacks have had on ISAF's current counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Afghanistan. After an unprecedented surge of seven Insider Attacks in a period of ten days in August 2012, President Obama declared "We are deeply concerned about

¹¹ Roggio and Lundquist, "Green-on-Blue Attacks in Afghanistan: The Data."

¹² Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 35.

this, from top to bottom¹³ and the DOD stated in its most recent report to Congress that “countering this threat is a top priority for both ISAF and GIROA [Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan].”¹⁴ Likewise, during the same series of attacks, the Taliban’s Supreme Leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, highlighted the success of the attacks in his annual Eid al-Hada message and called for increased infiltration operation over the next year.¹⁵ Mullah Omar’s message was followed by a more comprehensive evaluation by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. Zabihullah’s statement indicated that the recent wave of attacks was only the beginning of a larger infiltration campaign:

The Islamic Emirate is determined to come out from experimental stage in regard to the penetration in the enemy’s ranks and intensify this process extensively. Just now mujahideen have been appointed into the key and important points among the enemy who are just waiting for the implementation of operations... The other distinctiveness of the current year operation was the infiltration in the enemy’s ranks which was really a precise and profound tactic. In this tactic on one side very crucial and successful attacks were carried out on foreign forces in the shape of internal military personnel and on the other side mujahideen could manage to carry out well planned operations by getting vast intelligence reports from inside the Kabul administration.¹⁶

While it easy to dismiss many Taliban propaganda messages due to their content, which borders on hyperbole, they nevertheless contain two key themes that merit further study: 1) the Taliban recognize Insider Attacks to be a strategic weapon; and, 2) Insider Attacks are a subcomponent of

¹³ Robert Burns, “Rising Insider Attacks Imperil War Strategy,” *Air Force Times*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/08/ap-insider-attacks-imperil-united-states-afghanistan-strategy-082012/>.

¹⁴ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 36.

¹⁵ “Taliban Leader’s Eid Al-Adha Message Threatens More Insider Attacks in Afghanistan,” *Jane’s Terrorism and Security Monitor*, October 25, 2012, <https://janes-ihs-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org>.

¹⁶ “IntelCenter Special Notice: Taliban on Green-on-Blue Attacks,” January 20, 2013, <http://www.intelcenter.com>.

a larger infiltration program that includes spying. These two themes form the foundation of this study.

Impetus and Research Question

Following the rash of Insider Attacks in August 2012, insurgency expert Martin Windrow pronounced that the level of Insider Attacks was "almost unheard of" in previous conflicts.¹⁷ He attributed this to the fact that insurgents historically infiltrate opposition forces to either collect intelligence (i.e. spy) or subvert the enemy instead of conducting attacks.¹⁸ We can reasonably infer the following from these statements: in prior insurgencies there has been some cost/benefit advantage for insurgents to prefer less-obvious forms of infiltration over Insider Attacks. This assessment leads us to the questions, "what organizational considerations drive insurgent infiltration strategies?" and more specifically, "why have so-called Green-on-Blue attacks occurred more visibly in the current Afghan conflict than in previous conflicts?" These questions necessitate a look at the current insurgency through a different set of analytic lenses than we now use. Instead of a micro-level analysis fixated on current attack statistics, this study will take a macro-level approach centered on historical qualitative analysis focusing primarily on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979-1989. Before we can attempt to answer these deeper questions, however, there is one more fundamental question that must be addressed: What is the value to current and future military operations in studying this issue?

¹⁷ Kay Johnson, "Infiltration or Bad Blood Behind Afghan Attacks?," *Center for a New American Security*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.cnas.org/>.

¹⁸ Slobodan Lekic, "NATO Vows Action on Afghan Insider Attacks," *Army Times*, September 4, 2012, <http://www.armytimes.com/news/2012/09/ap-nato-vows-action-insider-attacks-090412>.

Significance

On 12 January 2012 President Obama announced that “America’s war in Afghanistan will be over” by the end of 2014. So one may ask, what is the value of another study on the insurgency, especially at this late date?¹⁹ In fact, there are two reasons for analyzing this issue now. First, there is still a great deal of uncertainty regarding ISAF’s role in a post-2014 Afghanistan. Second, insurgent and terrorist groups are quick to adapt successful tactics from other groups. It is likely that US forces will have to deal with this issue in future operations. The two most likely venues this would occur could be either be another large-scale counterinsurgency mission or as part of the US’ foreign partner capacity-building program to deal with insurgent or terrorist threats.

While ANSF are beginning to take the lead in day-to-day security operations, they remain dependent on ISAF training, indirect fire support, and logistical aid.²⁰ This dependence will require some Coalition presence in Afghanistan past 2014 to ensure US security interests remain addressed. Additionally, the ever-shrinking US military budget will ensure that the forces that remain in Afghanistan will be operating in a relatively resource-constrained environment compared to today. A lack of resources may constrain ISAF’s ability to support the myriad of programs they have created to address the infiltration problem. By closely analyzing this issue we may be able to direct those resources productively.

Next, we need to be aware of the fact that future adversaries are likely to mimic what they perceive to be a successful insurgent tactic.

¹⁹ “Weekly Address: Ending the War in Afghanistan and Rebuilding America,” *The White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, January 12, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/12/weekly-address-ending-war-afghanistan-and-rebuilding-america>.

²⁰ Kevin Seiff and Sayed Salahuddin, “After Karzai’s Visit to Washington, Fears About U.S. Withdrawal Linger in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, January 12, 2013, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-01-12/world/36312286_1_afghan-forces-president-hamid-karzai-afghan-troops-and-police.

Historian William McNeill summarized this historical trend succinctly when he wrote, “any human skill that achieves admirable results will tend to spread.”²¹ In his volume of edited writings titled *Counterinsurgency*, David Kilcullen argues that the insurgency in Afghanistan is part of a larger, Islamic Global Insurgency. The terrorist and insurgent groups that belong to this network freely exchange tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) across the Internet and other media.²² It was this global network that infamously allowed advanced improvised explosive device (IED) technologies to migrate from the insurgency in Iraq to Afghanistan in 2006. Likewise, it would be foolhardy to assume Taliban infiltration innovations will not spread to other parts of the globe.

The US commitment to prevent failed states from becoming terrorist safe havens, combined with the ubiquity of insurgencies, makes it impractical for the US to avoid involvement in future counterinsurgency missions. Insurgency has been one of the most prevalent forms of warfare throughout history. The Correlates of War Project, for example, indicates that of the 464 conflicts that have occurred since 1816, 385 (or more than 80 percent) were civil wars and insurgencies.²³ Since the conclusion of World War II, insurgencies have become the most prevalent form of armed conflict. According to the DOD, the number of insurgencies rose from 28 in 1958 to 43 in 1964.²⁴ This trend has only continued to rise since 1964. In 2001, for example, Max Manwaring of the US Army War College noted that over half of the nations in the world were dealing with instability resulting from small,

²¹ William Hardy McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since A.D. 1000* (Chicago, [IL]: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 147.

²² David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 180.

²³ Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, x.

²⁴ I. F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and Their Opponents Since 1750*, *Warfare and History* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001), viii.

internal conflicts such as insurgencies.²⁵ The American public's apparent distaste for future interventions following the messy and costly counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, for little apparent gain, also does not guarantee future US intervention if it is our national interest. Even after the US withdrawal from Vietnam, which resulted in a violent public aversion to future interventions, President Nixon continued to allow the military to provide "advice and assistance to friendly governments threatened by insurgents."²⁶ Special operations forces (SOF) of the US Special Operations Command carry out the bulk of the current US advisory and assistance missions.

USSOCOM often makes headlines through direct action attacks or raids against al-Qaeda and its affiliates throughout the world. These operations have had a "tremendous effect on our enemies' networks" only account for a small proportion of USSOCOMs overseas operations.²⁷ Instead USSOCOM conducts numerous missions more long-term in scope and results, designed to increase partner-nation capabilities throughout the world. In 2012, US SOF deployed to over 100 countries to assist host-nation security forces and deployed civil-military support elements (CMSE) to address humanitarian or disaster assistance in 17 nations. All of the SOF teams work closely with their host-nation counterparts, often in denied or disputed territory, making them particularly vulnerable to potential terrorist or insurgent infiltration techniques. This vulnerability will continue to increase as USSOCOM forecasts the number of CMSEs to increase to over 30 by 2017.²⁸ For these reasons it is apparent that we must begin to better understand the

²⁵ Max G. Manwaring, *Internal Wars: Rethinking Problem and Response* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), vii,.

²⁶ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed., rev (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2005), 8.

²⁷ William McRaven, *2012 SOCOM Posture Statement* (Washington, D.C.: USSOCOM, 2012), 5,

http://www.socom.mil/Documents/2012_SOCOM_POSTURE_STATEMENT.pdf.

²⁸ McRaven, *2012 SOCOM Posture Statement*, 9.

strategic factors that drive the infiltration techniques of our future adversaries.

Chapter One:

Methodology

This chapter addresses how best to answer the research questions posed in the preceding chapter, “what organizational considerations drive insurgent infiltration strategies” and “why have so-called Green-on-Blue attacks occurred more visibly in the current Afghan conflict than in previous conflicts?” The chapter also illuminates the need to move from the current method of micro-level analysis fixated on current attack statistics and instead take a macro-level approach centered on historical qualitative analysis focusing primarily on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979-1989. The analysis contains three component parts: macro-level analysis, historical analysis, and qualitative analysis.

To this end, we will first inspect the utility of studying events across different levels of analysis. This will demonstrate that current military practices can be interpreted in a different light when viewed through a broader historical lens.¹ Next, we will examine how history allows us to expand the scope of our experience, “because history is universal experience -- the experience of not another but of many others under manifold conditions.”² Finally we will explain the qualitative technique of the case study.

Levels of Analysis

Jeffrey Bordin’s *A Crisis of Trust: A Red Team Study of Mutual Perceptions of ANSF Personnel and U.S. Soldiers in Understanding and Mitigating the Phenomena of ANSF-Committed Fratricide Murders* is arguably the most influential study on Insider Attacks in Afghanistan.

¹ L. Douglas Keeney, *15 Minutes: General Curtis Lemay and the Countdown to Nuclear Annihilation*, 1st ed (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011), 3.

² Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Meridian, 1991), 4.

His work sounded the first argument that Insider Attacks were not isolated events but indicators of a “growing systemic threat.”³ As a result, his findings have been incorporated into a number of DOD pre-deployment training documents.⁴

The driving force behind Bordin’s study was to determine the specific causes of Insider Attacks by identifying the individual behaviors that sparked each event.⁵ By interviewing over 800 ANSF and US personnel, he was able to highlight a number of key issues that exacerbated the personal, social, and cultural rifts between the two sides that eventually resulted in violence.⁶ While this technique adeptly illustrates the foundation for attacks motivated by personal grievances, it leaves room to “zoom out” and conduct further analysis above the interpersonal level. A number of key studies have shown the utility of analyzing the same event, particularly those related to violence and warfare, through different analytical lenses.

Kenneth Waltz’s seminal work, *Man, the State, and War*, investigates the root causes of international conflict by perceiving the phenomenon through three different lenses, which he terms “images.” His first image focuses on how human behavior causes war. In short he postulates “the evilness of men, or their improper behavior, leads to war;

³ Bordin, Jeffrey, “A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility: A Red Team Study of Mutual Perceptions of Afghan National Security Force Personnel and U.S. Soldiers in Understanding and Mitigating the Phenomena of ANSF-Committed Fratricide-Murders” (ISAF, May 12, 2011), 3.

⁴ For example see “Afghanistan - Insider Threat Training Briefing” (USAF Special Operations School, January 25, 2013).

⁵ Bordin, Jeffrey, “A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility: A Red Team Study of Mutual Perceptions of Afghan National Security Force Personnel and U.S. Soldiers in Understanding and Mitigating the Phenomena of ANSF-Committed Fratricide-Murders,” 8.

⁶ Bordin, Jeffrey, “A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility: A Red Team Study of Mutual Perceptions of Afghan National Security Force Personnel and U.S. Soldiers in Understanding and Mitigating the Phenomena of ANSF-Committed Fratricide-Murders,” 52.

individual goodness, if it could be universalized would mean peace.”⁷ It is this level of analysis, where the individual is the key actor, which Bordin also applies to his work. Waltz, though, explains that because human behavior is responsible for both good and ill in the world, further refinement is necessary through the use of another lens. The second image examines how the internal structure of nation states affects conflict.⁸ While the second image explains why some types of governments may go to war, the theory is still not comprehensive. Therefore, he moves to his third image to examine how the international environment drives states toward war.⁹ He posits that conflicts occur between states due to the anarchical nature of international relations, or more succinctly, “In the absence of a supreme authority, there is then constant probability that conflicts will be settled by force.”¹⁰

Waltz’s work demonstrates how evaluating an issue at the individual level (first image), organizational level (second image), and international level (third image) can produce a much more accurate interpretation of conflict than using one lens alone. Waltz highlights the need for using all three images when he states, “The third image describes the framework of world politics, but without the first and the second images there can be no knowledge of the forces that determine policy; the first and second images describe the forces in world politics, but without the third image it is impossible to assess their importance or predict their results.”¹¹ This line of achieves greater clarity when shifted away from the general concept of international conflict and towards an individual historical event.

⁷ Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 39.

⁸ Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 80–81.

⁹ Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 122–123.

¹⁰ Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 188.

¹¹ Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 238.

Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow further suggest the necessity of exploiting multiple levels of analysis in *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. They begin their examination of US and Soviet actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis in reverse order from Waltz, by beginning at the national level (Model I), transitioning to the organizational level (Model II) and concluding at the individual level (Model III) of analysis. They effectively demonstrate how all three models preform complementary roles in understanding events than if used separately.¹²

Model I, also referred to as the rational actor model, posits that states make decisions solely based on the greatest probable net gain.¹³ Based on that logic, the Soviets withdrew their missiles from Cuba because any possible benefit was outweighed by the potential of US nuclear escalation.¹⁴ Model II focuses more closely at decisions as an output of an organizational structure. Choices made by individuals in organizations, especially governments, are affected by an organizational culture often enforced by rules or standard operating procedures.¹⁵ For example, while President Kennedy's choice of a blockade was less muscular than an airstrike, the US military continued to conduct activities that the Soviets could still have perceived as confrontational. For example, the Air Force conducted an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) test launch from an operational missile base and continued to conduct provocative U-2 flights along the USSR's eastern border escorted by nuclear-armed fighter aircraft.¹⁶ While the Soviets could have interpreted these events as a direct challenge from President Kennedy, Allison and Zelikow suggest they were actually the result of a

¹² Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed (New York: Longman, 1999), 392.

¹³ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 20.

¹⁴ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 380.

¹⁵ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 143.

¹⁶ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 239–240.

large organization, i.e. the DOD, following its normal Cold-War routine. Finally Model III examines national decisions in light of the leaders who make them and the advisors that influence them. This decision-making process is even more bewildering when you consider different advisors may have conflicting individual and organizational agendas. Throughout the crisis, both Kennedy and Khrushchev were “informed, misled, persuaded, or ignore by the officials around them, in some cases for better and some for worse.”¹⁷

It should come as no surprise that the amount of information needed to conduct Model II and III analysis is significantly greater than the amount of information required for Model I.¹⁸ In-depth intelligence regarding organizational patterns of behavior is not always readily available to decision makers and information on specific individuals is often exponentially harder to ferret out. As we have seen, the individual motivation behind almost half of the Insider Attacks in Afghanistan remains unknown, reflecting this pattern. As a result, if there is a decided lack of information regarding individual motivation behind these attacks, it should be beneficial to look at organizational-level causes. *Man, the State, and War* and *Essence of Decision* both demonstrate the utility of using multiple levels of analysis when examining war in general. There is a compelling argument that irregular warfare, primarily conducted through insurgencies and terrorism, is fundamentally different than conventional, interstate conflict.¹⁹ In response to this challenge, we will survey two additional works that apply particularly to the former mode of conflict.

¹⁷ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 383.

¹⁸ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 387.

¹⁹ For an overview on the peculiarities of Irregular Warfare see James Kiras’ treatise on Irregular Warfare in James D. Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” in *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Examining Irregular Warfare

In the opening decade of the 21st century numerous academic studies examined the root causes of irregular warfare. Ignited by the US's extended counterinsurgency operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, these studies reversed a steep decline in insurgency-related literature since the conclusion of the Cold War.²⁰ Two of the most significant works of this time era include Robert Pape's *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* and Stathis Kalyvas' *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. These works lay an important foundation for our further understanding of infiltrator motivations in Afghanistan today. Pape and Kalyvas both emphasize the that irregular warfare can only be truly understood if it is viewed through multiple lenses, just as Waltz, Allison, and Zelikow did for conventional warfare. In addition, they both address the specific nuances of having a third party involved in an intra-national conflict, such as the US involvement if Afghanistan.

In *Dying to Win*, Pape examines why suicide terrorism is employed as a weapon and why its popularity continues to grow.²¹ He argues that previous research into suicide attacks lacks fidelity because it focuses on the actions of the individual actor. This limited focus has created a number of misconceptions, such as suicide attacks are a product "of indoctrination into Islamic fundamentalism or of the suicidal inclinations of individuals who would likely end their lives in any event."²² Instead, he establishes that the motivations for suicide terrorism stem from a combination of strategic, social, and individual reasons.²³

To determine the individual motivations behind suicide attacks, Pape examines individual psychology coupled with the social background

²⁰ S. Metz, *Rethinking Insurgency* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2007), iii.

²¹ Robert Anthony Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Kindle Edition V3.0 (New York: Random House, 2005), sec. 109.

²² Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 247.

²³ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 321.

of the attackers. From these perspectives, he ascertains that suicide terrorists are not desperate people with nothing to live for, nor are they hopelessly poor or uneducated. Instead, they often act from a sense of altruism in an attempt to improve their society.²⁴ It is important to note that this data, while compelling, only give a general assessment of each individual. When Pape attempts to create a more in-depth profile on individuals, he is limited to only three case studies.²⁵ Pape's study overcomes this limiting factor by expanding his examination of the phenomenon to the strategic and societal levels as well.

By examining 18 suicide attack campaigns since 1980, Pape examines the strategic rationale and determines how these attacks support their respective organization's political goals.²⁶ He then scrutinizes suicide attacks to determine why some societies support them while others do not. Finally, he examines the individual logic of suicide attacks; however the analysis at this level is limited to a small sample size.²⁷ The data from the 18 cases, when analyzed through all three of these levels, paints a different picture of suicide attacks than previously hypothesized.

Pape originally asserted that suicide terrorism is employed by terrorist organizations because, bluntly speaking, it "pays" or is effective strategically.²⁸ His analysis of the suicide campaigns identified exactly what strategic objective it supports, namely coercion. He concludes, "what nearly all suicide terrorist attacks have in common is a specific

²⁴ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 3536.

²⁵ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 3583.

²⁶ A number of scholars have critiqued sections of Pape's methodology to include his use of overly specific definitions and oversimplified historical examples; however, they do not diminish the widely acknowledged importance of the work. See James D. Kiras, "Dying to Prove a Point: The Methodology of Dying to Win," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 2 (April 2007): 227–241, 1; David Cook, "A Critique of Robert Pape's Dying to Win," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 2 (April 2007): 243–254; Assaf Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of Dying to Win," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (December 2006): 707–729.

²⁷ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 314–319.

²⁸ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 337.

secular and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland.”²⁹ At the social level, Pape argues that while religion plays a role in suicide terrorism, Islam itself is not the driving factor. In fact, one of the first and most prolific executors of suicide attacks, the Tamil Tigers, are primarily Hindu.³⁰ He reports that merely having a difference of religions between the perceived occupying and occupied forces provides a level of social acceptance of this tactic, even though suicide itself is still considered within most societies as morally unacceptable.

Pape’s analysis of suicide attacks at the strategic and cultural levels highlights a number of key lessons that apply to the current Afghan insurgency. For example, he illustrated how important it is to recognize the insurgent’s key grievance against its opponent. In this case, looking at suicide attacks from the strategic perspective suggests that the perception of an outside occupier or invader was more likely to elicit an extreme response than being perceived as an infidel. Pape’s study also highlights a key issue with the current level of analysis with regard to Insider Attacks in Afghanistan. His work demonstrates that obtaining accurate personal information on suicide attackers is difficult as the attacker is already dead, and all information on them must be collected from unreliable second-hand sources, such as martyrdom videos and statements. Similarly, with Insider Attacks in Afghanistan, determining individual motivation is difficult. One conservative estimate assesses that almost 80 percent of all attackers are either killed or escape, prohibiting direct questioning or even proper identification of the perpetrator.³¹ For all of the reasons listed above, a multi-level assessment of Insider Attacks is necessary. The view is further supported by the conclusions of Kalyvas’ *The Logic of Civil War Violence*.

²⁹ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 49.

³⁰ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 2536.

³¹ Roggio and Lundquist, “Green-on-Blue Attacks in Afghanistan: The Data.”

Kalyvas proposes that there are three possible lenses that can be used to analyze civil wars. The macro-level lens focuses on interactions between political actors, such as nation states as well as non-state organizations. The meso-level focuses on the relationships among political actors, i.e. governments and insurgencies, and their local attendant populations. What he describes as the micro-level lens “concentrates on interactions within small groups and among individuals.”³² Kalyvas then argues that violence in civil wars is often misunderstood because it is often analyzed through only one lens, most often the macro-level. He corrects this bias by reviewing a plethora of historical examples, ranging from the American Civil War to modern-day Afghanistan, through two lenses simultaneously: the meso- and micro-levels.

Independently, the meso- and micro-levels of analysis have shortcomings that can only be overcome by applying them jointly. Kalyvas argues, as Allison and Zelikow demonstrated, the meso-level of analysis lacks fidelity regarding the true motivation of groups, which are essentially composed of individuals. Similarly, analysis at the micro-level is so dependent on information that borders on minutiae “it is extremely difficult to uncover with an acceptable level of accuracy the individual motives behind violent acts... Even when fully revealed, intentions often turn out to be mixed or even contradictory”³³ This insight leads Kalyvas to conclude that both levels of analysis must be used together. He is then able to synthesize a theory of violence addressing why political actors are more likely to choose indiscriminate or controlled violence when dealing with insurgents and their supporting populations. Likewise, the theory sheds light on what drives populations to collaborate with the opposing sides of an insurgency.

³² Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.

³³ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 24.

Dying to Win and *The Logic of Civil War Violence* provide three key considerations that shape the methodology of this thesis for analyzing Insider Attacks in Afghanistan. First, as already noted, we must avoid our current habit of characterizing the driving force behind Insider Attacks based solely on the imperfect picture provided by anecdotally relating disparate individual motivations. This method shows a lack of understanding that tactical actions frequently have strategic implications.³⁴ Instead we must turn our attention towards examining how these attacks support strategic organizational goals. The second consideration is the need for clear definitions and how they help us unravel the confusing of concepts of irregular warfare and insurgency.³⁵ For example, Kalyvas notes that the term “civil war” is interpreted in a myriad of ways by different people. He acknowledges that civil wars are often considered “internal wars,” but in his working definition includes “resistance wars against foreign occupiers.”³⁶ By expanding his definition, he avoids the trap of overspecializing, thereby broadening the utility of his study.³⁷ The third and final consideration is the importance of using historical case studies to map out a current phenomenon. The next chapter will address the first two considerations: definitions, and the organizational goals of insurgencies.

History as a Guide

Using history as a tool to understanding contemporary military issues has been a long-accepted methodological practice. In the preface to his classic work, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz warns that “theory and experience must never disdain or exclude each other; on the contrary,

³⁴ See the example of the “Strategic Corporal” in *The U.S. Army and the Marine Corps, The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24; Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*, University of Chicago Press ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 50–51.

³⁵ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 229.

³⁶ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 17–19.

³⁷ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 229.

they support each other”³⁸ This reasoning was popularized when Otto Von Bismarck’s coined the phrase, “fools say that they learn from experience, I prefer to profit by other’s experience.”³⁹ Given the relative rare occurrence of war as a teacher and individual source of experience, Bismarck’s sentiment has since been embraced by a number of military theorists and strategists. German Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke declared that history was “the most effective means of teaching war during peace.”⁴⁰ As previously mentioned, the character of insurgencies differs greatly from conventional war. Despite this difference, military theorists agree that history can be a valuable resource for those waging irregular warfare as well.

British soldier turned historian B.H. Liddell Hart argued that history plays an even greater role when preparing for irregular warfare, “‘forewarned is forearmed’ applies even more strongly to guerrilla and subversive warfare than to regular warfare as known hitherto. The basis of preparedness is understanding the theory and historical experience of such warfare...”⁴¹ This premise was validated by British officer Julian Paget’s experiences during the Aden insurgency when he reported,

In 1965 I found myself in Aden in a staff appointment directly concerned with the planning of measures, both civil and military, to be taken to defeat the insurgents then operating in those parts. The problems that arose were remarkably diverse and complex, but they were seldom completely new; they had almost all cropped up before in some previous Emergency, such as Palestine, Kenya,

³⁸ Carl von Clausewitz et al., *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 61.

³⁹ Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 3.

⁴⁰ David J. Lonsdale, *The Nature of War in the Information Age: Clausewitzian Future* (Frank Cass, 2004), 20.

⁴¹ Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 365.

Cyprus, or Malaya, and it would have been most helpful to be able to study this past experience and learn from it.⁴² Although these passages demonstrate the obvious practicality of using history as a tool for interpreting current events in Afghanistan, great care must be taken to ensure the correct comparisons are made. Clausewitz highlighted the need to use both theory and experience, but he also warned that drawing generalities from history can be dangerous. He cautioned that the potentially unique circumstance of each event must be considered.⁴³ Similarly, in *Analogies at War*, Yuen Foong Khong warns of the danger analogies created when the data from one event is forced to fit into the construct of another, i.e. a “top-down” approach. Instead he advises a “bottom-up” approach, in which data is collected independent of any preconceived context.⁴⁴ The best way to achieve this neutrality is through the use of the case study research method.

The Value of Case Studies

At the beginning of this chapter we outlined the need to use a qualitative vice quantitative approach to the issue of infiltrator behavior. The means to accomplish this will be via descriptive case studies. The two case studies provide a study in contrast in the same geographic area and similar variables. The first case study is the Soviet counterinsurgency in Afghanistan from 1979-1989. The second case study also involves Afghanistan, and an external counterinsurgency force, namely ISAF from 2001 until today. One recently published authority has opined that “in general, case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’

⁴² Quoted in Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 9.

⁴³ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 172.

⁴⁴ Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), 245.

questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context”⁴⁵ Case studies are also germane to this area of study because they facilitate process-tracing.

Process-tracing allows a researcher to examine historical data to determine the causes of observed outcomes. It is also useful in comparing two cases because it allows for analysis that determines if differences and similarities between the two cases are related or merely coincidental.⁴⁶ This cause-effect relationship can often be determined when the case study outlines the process in its correct chronological sequence.⁴⁷

Case studies that utilize process-tracing have already proved their value in research relating to insurgencies. Kalyvas argues that many activists and journalists tend to examine insurgent violence as an isolated outcome rather than part of a larger series of events. Instead, he proclaims that insurgent violence must be viewed as a dynamic process because it “allows an investigation of the sequence of decisions and events that intersect to produce violence, as well as the study of otherwise invisible actors who partake in this process and shape it in fundamental ways.”⁴⁸ In addition to analyzing general insurgent violence, case studies provide a distinct advantage when analyzing the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. Case studies are also useful when the historical data has been unevenly or sparsely recorded.⁴⁹ The closed nature of the Soviet Union during the 1980s, coupled with lack of documentation provided by the mostly-illiterate Afghan insurgents, has

⁴⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed, Applied Social Research Methods Series v. 5 (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2003), 1.

⁴⁶ Alexander L. George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, BCSIA Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005), 6–7.

⁴⁷ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 125–126.

⁴⁸ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 21–22.

⁴⁹ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 55.

led to gaps in the conflict's narrative that do not lend themselves to statistical analysis but are advantageous for process-tracing. Additionally, the covert nature of infiltration operations does not lend itself to exhaustive paper trails or primary source documents. Indeed, it is possible a successful infiltrator whose only mission was to gather intelligence may never be recognized. Due to these facts, information on infiltration operations needs to be gleaned from a variety of sources such as after-action interviews and propaganda reporting. Seeing as how the case study is an appropriate tool for addressing our research question, we must now look at how studying the particular case of the Soviet-Afghan conflict has value to today's current fight in Afghanistan.

The Soviet-Afghan Case Study

The choice of the Soviet-Afghan conflict as an analogue to the current ISAF adventure in Afghanistan should come as no surprise. The analogy has been used successfully in a legion of military and academic studies.⁵⁰ The primary benefit in using the Soviet-Afghan analogy is its similarity to the current conflict mitigates the potential number of variables between the two cases, leading to a more effective comparison. The obvious similarity is the fact that both conflicts are composed of insurgents battling against an Afghan regime supported by a foreign party. Other similarities such as the geography, the extended duration of the conflicts, the presence of religious differences between the two sides, and the existence of an insurgent safe haven, e.g., Pakistan, all

⁵⁰ For example see, Lester W. Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998); Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*, 1st ed. (Quantico, VA: United States Marine Corps Studies and Analysis Division, 1995); Scott R. McMichael, *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan* (London; Washington: Brassey's, 1991); Olga Oliker, "What the Soviets Can Teach Us About Leaving Afghanistan," *RAND*, October 18, 2012, <http://www.rand.org/blog/2012/10/what-the-soviets-can-teach-us-about-leaving-afghanistan.html>; Nils N. French, "Learning from the Seven Soviet Wars: Lessons for Canada in Afghanistan," *Canadian Army Journal* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 36–47.

provide a point of reference between the two cases. The main variation between the two cases is the form of government native to the intervening foreign party. ISAF, led by the US, is composed of democratic states, while the Soviet Union was a centrally controlled, authoritarian state. However, this difference is not as significant when viewed in respect to foreign counterinsurgency operations. Counterinsurgency studies have shown that both democracies and centrally controlled governments both have common struggles in maintain long-term counterinsurgency efforts in foreign nations, especially with regard to providing security, building viable allies, and understanding local culture.⁵¹

The analysis of the case studies will be conducted in Chapters Three and Four, respectively, in the following format. First, we will provide a brief historical overview of the insurgency to include its key players and their strategic objectives. Next, we will characterize and chronicle insurgent infiltrator tactics and highlight Insider Attacks when they occur. Finally, we will examine the cost/benefit of the noted infiltrator behavior and assess how it supported the insurgent's overall strategy or conversely degraded the counterinsurgent's strategy. Before embarking on this journey, we will return to the two key methodological considerations raised by Pape and Kalyvas: definitions of core terms and categories of organizational strategies of insurgents and counterinsurgents alike.

⁵¹ See for example Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 11.

Chapter Two:

Insurgency and Infiltration

In the previous chapter, we noted that current studies on Insider Attacks in Afghanistan lack fidelity because they focus primarily on micro-level, or individual, motivations. We then proposed the need to augment this point of view by identifying the insurgent organizational strategic motivations for these attacks through historical analysis. In order to realize this goal, we must develop a clear understanding of insurgent organizational strategies and how infiltration, to include Insider Attacks, plays a role in supporting these strategies. We will accomplish this first by, defining the concept of insurgency. Second, we will review a number of works by military, insurgent, and counterinsurgent theorists to discern fundamental organizational strategies common to insurgencies. Finally, we will identify the main types of insurgent infiltration behaviors in the context of a cost-benefit equation. We will then connect the specific infiltrator behaviors from the case studies with the organizational strategies outlined in this chapter to determine the strategic motivations of Insider Attacks.

What is Insurgency?

The word “insurgency” is now commonly used, largely as a result of the involvement of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 10 years. While the term itself is bandied about effusively by both the public and the media, constructing a working definition of “insurgency” is not as easy as it would appear. Bard O’Neill says one of the underlying reasons for this is that “terms like insurgency, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and revolutionary have not only been defined in

various ways but have often been used interchangeably.”¹ The importance of disaggregating these myriad terms was elevated above “intellectual hair-splitting” by James Kiras when he noted that the meanings we attribute to words affect the actions we take.² For example, Kiras notes that the US missed opportunities to address the root causes of violence in Iraq during 2003-2004 because a number of DOD senior leaders “forbade the use of the term ‘insurgency’ to describe the violence.”³ Similar confusion reigned in Afghanistan when the Taliban “insurgency” ran headlong into Coalition “counterterrorism” strategies that were part of the Global War on Terrorism.

The word insurgency is derived from the Latin verb *insurgere* which means “to rise up.”⁴ This basic meaning serves as the foundation for today’s current definitions. O’Neill highlights the theme of uprising in his definition; “Insurgency may be defined as a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses politics and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.”⁵ William Olson refines this concept in his more neatly packaged definition: “the purpose of an insurgency is to overthrow a government.”⁶ Both definitions agree with the current official DOD definition of insurgency in Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Operations*. Here insurgency is defined as “the organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that

¹ Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed., rev (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2005)., 80.

² James D. Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” in *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 230.

³ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 230.

⁴ Merriam-Webster, Inc, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed (Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2003), 649.

⁵ O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 15.

⁶ Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Army War College (U.S.), and National Defense University, *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency: U.S.-Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 19.

seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority.”⁷ Although this definition in isolation appears clear, it can lead to confusion when individuals try to define insurgency by specific tactics, rather than its overarching goal. This idea is made clear when we consider that insurgency is nested in a larger, more complex, concept termed “irregular warfare.”

Irregular Warfare (IW) has been defined as consisting of five different forms: coup d’état, revolution, civil war, terrorism, and insurgency.⁸ While each form of IW has its own specific mechanism for success and goal, the two most often confused today are terrorism and insurgency. The DOD defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies” which is clearly distinct of the insurgent goal of completely overthrowing a government.⁹ Violent acts such as car bombings, assassinations and hijackings are often incorrectly assumed to exist solely in the realm of terrorism.¹⁰ While these acts can be used to coerce a government, i.e., terrorism) they can also be used as a subversive insurgent tool.¹¹ The divergent meanings of the words describing these forms of violence are often exacerbated by the assumption that another form of violence, guerrilla warfare, is synonymous with insurgency.

Guerilla warfare, which includes hit-and-run attacks that avoid casualties, is a commonly used insurgent tactic. However, it is important to note that it is only *one* of several possible methods of

⁷ “Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations” (Department of Defense, October 5, 2009), GL-6, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_24.pdf.

⁸ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 232.

⁹ “Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms” (Department of Defense, November 15, 2012), 311, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/DOD_dictionary.

¹⁰ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 271.

¹¹ Subversion is defined as an action designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a governing activity in “Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations,” II-1-2.

prosecuting an insurgency.¹² Guerilla warfare's popularity among insurgents is often due to the insurgent's relative lack of strength in comparison to his adversary during the early stages of a conflict.¹³ This popularity has led to the misconception that insurgents *only* use guerilla tactics. This misperception lingers despite the fact that widely-quoted but little read insurgent theorists, such as Mao Zedong and Che Guevara, clearly outline the need to use of a wide variety of tactics including terrorism.¹⁴ Evidence throughout history has also shown that insurgent tactics, techniques and procedures rarely remain static and evolve to reflect the circumstances that insurgents encounter.¹⁵

Understanding IW and insurgency through the study of tactics is extremely difficult, as tactics continually evolve and often overlap with operations and strategy. Tactics such as guerilla warfare, bombings, assassinations, and even Insider Attacks are merely a means to achieve the insurgent's most common objective, overthrowing the incumbent government. It is thus very important to focus on how the tactics relate to the insurgent organization's strategic goals.¹⁶ Identifying general strategic goals for insurgents is no easy task because "insurgencies, like cancers, exist in thousands of forms."¹⁷ However we will see that a number of general insurgent strategies can be discerned by carefully evaluating the writings of prominent military, insurgent, and counterinsurgent theorists.

¹² *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986), 817.

¹³ "Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations," I-1.

¹⁴ Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," 271.

¹⁵ John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago: From Mao to Bin Laden* (London: C. Hurst, 2009), 5-6.

¹⁶ Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," 226.

¹⁷ David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1.

Evolution of Insurgent Strategy

Insurgencies have erupted on relatively small scales over the last 2,000 years, leaving a great deal of time for general military theory to evolve.¹⁸ However the majority of insurgent-related literature has only appeared within the last 200 years. The advent of the earliest of these works coincides with Napoleonic France's occupation of Spain from 1808-1814, which is widely considered the first large-scale, modern insurgency.¹⁹ While the insurgent strategies from each conflict have assumed the character derived from its individual era and geography, they also provided key strategic lessons for future insurgents and counterinsurgents alike.

The Classical Theorists

The military theorists Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz are well known for their overall contributions to general military theory. They also have significantly contributed insightful and timeless ideas that directly relate to current insurgent goals. For example, Sun Tzu highlighted the fact that nations deteriorate militarily, economically, and mentally from the strain of protracted wars.²⁰ This concept relates directly to insurgent strategies to outlast their adversaries through extended conflicts of attrition.

Sun Tzu's maxims regarding the importance of intelligence, known today as information superiority, and flexibility in warfare have proven to be key elements in insurgent strategies. The concept of "know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril" is critical for insurgencies that are battling relatively stronger incumbent

¹⁸ John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago: From Mao to Bin Laden* (London: C. Hurst, 2009), 15 .

¹⁹ See, Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 7; Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 239.

²⁰ Sunzi, *The Illustrated Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 106–107.

forces.²¹ The tactical flexibility we previously noted was a reoccurring factor in insurgencies is highlighted in his truism, “one able to gain the victory by modifying his tactics in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine.”²² Finally, he continually stresses the need to strike an adversary where he is not prepared. This tactic allows the insurgent to gain local superiority against an adversary with greater overall strength.²³

While Sun Tzu’s concepts originally pertained to general military strategy and later could be applied to insurgency, Clausewitz was able to provide a slightly more specific focus on the subject in his work *On War*.²⁴ *On War* was based on Clausewitz’s observations of the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century. In this work, he broaches the concept of “the people in arms,” a device for employing non-professional citizen-soldiers in a war.²⁵ He notes that a primary insurgent goal is survival. Clausewitz stresses that irregulars should “not employ against the main enemy force” nor “form a concrete body... or it will be crushed.” He also notes the need to maintain a sanctuary where the “uprising cannot be smothered by a single stroke.”²⁶ This concept parallels closely with the contemporary idea of the insurgent safe haven.

Clausewitz then notes where locally raised militias can have the greatest effect, by raiding the enemy army’s lines of communication (LOC).²⁷ These attacks serve two purposes. First, they will cause the adversary to divert his strength to defending convoys and placing extra guards at key chokepoints. More importantly, these raids also serve a propaganda purpose. He writes that insurgent raids will cause the

²¹ Sunzi, *The Illustrated Art of War*, 125.

²² Sunzi, *The Illustrated Art of War*, 153.

²³ Sunzi, *The Illustrated Art of War*, 15, 97, 148.

²⁴ Clausewitz does concede that insurgent warfare is still so new that his thoughts are “less an objective analysis than a groping for the truth. Carl von Clausewitz et al., *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 483.

²⁵ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 480.

²⁶ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 481–482.

²⁷ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 481.

enemy to respond, but the actions of the enemy detachments “will fan the flames of the insurrection.”²⁸ We will see that this thought is the precursor to the insurgent strategy of gaining popular support by provoking an incumbent to overreact. This strategic goal will become a staple of many of insurgencies to follow.

Even though the writing of Sun Tzu and Clausewitz were separated by over 2,000 years, they both contained ideas useful for future insurgencies. The next wave of military theorists would adopt and refine their key concepts to include: protracted warfare, information dominance, flexibility, survivability, and propaganda. However, these refinements would not occur until more than a century after the conclusion of the Napoleonic invasion of Spain.

Insurgent Theory: Post-World War I

Military theorists writing in the wake of World War I, the so-called “War to End All Wars,” took an interest in IW and insurgency for two reasons. First, they had a desire to develop strategies that would prevent a repeat of the horrors of trench warfare. Second, they had the desire to explain the perceived successes of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Turks in the Arabian Peninsula. These two rationales would be explored in detail by the British theorists Basil Henry Liddell Hart and Thomas Edward Lawrence.

Liddell Hart’s contribution to IW and insurgent strategy was his development of what he called “the indirect approach.” He noted that the insurgent bands of the early 19th century, backed by British advisors, did more to undermine Napoleon’s grip on Spain than any of Wellington’s conventional victories.²⁹ Liddell Hart expounds on the previously mentioned concepts of flexibility and survivability. He counsels that

²⁸ Clausewitz et al., *On War*, 482.

²⁹ Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Meridian, 1991), 212.

fluidity of force is more important than concentrated large-scale engagements and that it is prudent to avoid battle when it is likely to cause losses. He also identifies the civilian population as the war's center of gravity. Liddell Hart goes on to state that guerillas have "to be collectively backed by the sympathy of the masses"³⁰ and that insurgents must maintain the initiative in order to flame the desire of the population to "join or help the guerrillas."³¹

T.E. Lawrence, who was also the subject of one of Liddell Hart's biographies, was able to bring his personal knowledge of insurgency to military theory due to his significant role in the Arab Revolt against the Turks in Trans-Jordan from 1916-17. During this campaign, he was able to break away from the ideas of the leading military theorists of the day, such as Marshal Ferdinand Foch, who advocated seeking out and destroying the enemy army.³² Instead Lawrence learned from experience and failure, after Arabs fled in conventional battles against the Turks, to initiate a form of asymmetric warfare. Lawrence realized that he would be more successful if he preserved his limited and most valuable resource, the relatively small Arab tribal guerrilla bands, while attacking the Turks' most limited resource, or critical vulnerability, their material supplies brought largely by rail. He stated this could only be accomplished through a complete understanding of the enemy situation through "perfect" and "faultless" intelligence collection.³³ Lawrence's practical insurgent experience would validate Sun Tzu's ideas on the strategic importance of intelligence as well as Clausewitz's prediction of the role that safe havens would contribute to the survivability of insurgent groups. Finally, like Liddell Hart, Lawrence identified the decisive significance of the civilian population during an insurgency

³⁰ Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 369.

³¹ Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 365.

³² T.E. Lawrence, "The Evolution of a Revolt" (Combat Studies Institute Press, December 4, 1990), 3.

³³ Lawrence, "The Evolution of a Revolt," 10.

when he declared that at a minimum, they must not betray the insurgents to their adversaries.³⁴

Liddell Hart and Lawrence were able to advance a number of strategic concepts relative to insurgency put forth by Sun Tzu and Clausewitz. Lawrence, in particular, was able to validate a number of these concepts and ideas given his practical experience. These ideas would go through another crucible during and after World War II with the growth of post-colonial insurgencies in both Asia and Latin America.

Insurgent Theory: World War II and Beyond

In the introduction we cited the exponential growth of insurgencies just prior to, during, and immediately following World War II. One result two of the most influential insurgent theorists would arise during this period. Both Mao Zedong and Ernesto “Che” Guevara would have an advantage over previous theorists in that they would be able to oversee an insurgency from its beginning to its final victory over an incumbent adversary.³⁵

China’s insurgent success over the Japanese occupation during World War II created a blueprint, based on Mao’s theory of insurgent warfare, imitated by numerous other organizations. It is significant to point out, however, that Mao’s intent was not to create a general theory of insurgency. Rather, he sought to create a strategy, based on theoretical ideas, which dealt with a specific adversary, geography, and time.³⁶ Nevertheless, Mao’s writings contain a number of axioms that can be directly related to insurgent strategy.

³⁴ Lawrence, “The Evolution of a Revolt,” 22.

³⁵ While the Arab Revolt was successful in diverting Turkish military resources and pinning them down in static garrisons, the decisive victory over the Turks in the Arabian Peninsula was clearly due to the Entente’s conventional military actions led by General Edmund Allenby. For details see Archibald Wavell, *The Palestine Campaigns*, 3rd ed. (London: Constable, 1936).

³⁶ Mao Zedong, “On Protracted War,” in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 199.

Mao refutes Sun Tzu's notion that no nation benefits from protracted warfare. In his treatise, "On Protracted War," Mao argues that China's prolonged insurgency would cause Japan's economy and morale to break.³⁷ Mao was able to wage protracted war by ensuring that his forces, which were initially technologically inferior to the Japanese, would survive until they were able to achieve a positive "correlation of forces" in relation to their adversary. He did this by advocating flexibility between three stages of warfare. These stages were: a "strategic defensive," an attritional guerrilla war, and finally a full-scale conventional offensive.³⁸ Mao's success was based on his ability to simultaneously conduct and transition between each phase as the situation dictated.

Other key components of Mao's writings are the importance he put on winning the support of the population and the value of intelligence. In his work *Basic Tactics*, Mao states that armies alone cannot determine victory but "we must rely on the force of the popular masses, for it is only thus that we can have a guarantee of success."³⁹ In order to ensure the support of the population, he published a code of conduct for his guerrilla forces, titled "Three Rules of Discipline and Eight Points of Attention," which provided guidance on how his forces should interact with the local population. This guidance proved to be effective in winning the hearts and minds of civilians particularly when juxtaposed against the brutal tactics employed by both the Japanese forces and the Kuomintang Chinese Nationalist forces.⁴⁰ Winning the support of the population would produce a windfall of useful intelligence by linking the guerrilla "fish" to the "sea" of the population. Mao noted that all people, from schoolteachers, to priests, to goat herders, could provide

³⁷ Mao, *On Protracted War*, 262.

³⁸ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 74–75.

³⁹ Zedong Mao, *Basic Tactics*, trans. Stuart R. Schram (New York: Praeger, 1966), 57.

⁴⁰ Zedong Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, intro. and trans. by Samuel B. Griffith II (Baltimore, MD: Nautical & Aviation Pub. Co. of America, 1992), 112.

information about the enemy. It is this information that Mao declares “is the decisive factor” in operational planning.⁴¹

Mao and Guevara differed on a number of issues, the primary being Guevara’s use of “propaganda of the deed” as a means to recruit and undermine the legitimacy of the incumbent government. Propaganda of the deed refers to insurgent actions that have a low direct military value but create significant publicity that increases the perception that the government is utterly unable to stop the insurgents.⁴² Guevara chief publicist, Regis Debray, suggested that a small cadre of insurgents could ignite a popular revolt through guerrilla action in a relatively short period of time, rather than having to use Mao’s time-consuming mobilization of the populace through education to transform them into an effective insurgent, and ultimately conventional, army.⁴³ Despite this difference, Mao, Guevara, and Debray did agree on the importance of popular support and good intelligence. Like Mao, Guevara directed his insurgent groups to be respectful to all local rules and traditions. In this way, the insurgents could “demonstrate effectively, with deeds, the moral superiority of the guerrilla fighter over the oppressing soldier.”⁴⁴ Gaining popular support, would not only lead to material support but would directly affect the amount of information that reached the insurgency rather than the enemy. Guevara identified this information superiority as “one of the most important characteristics” of this style of warfare.⁴⁵

At this point, it is apparent that despite the differences between the theorists we have examined, there are a number of similar themes running through their works. These themes can be boiled down into

⁴¹ Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 49–50.

⁴² For a comprehensive definition see “Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations,” II–25.

⁴³ Kiras, “Irregular Warfare,” 259.

⁴⁴ Ernesto Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, Brian Loveman, and Thomas M Davies, eds, (Wilmington, DE.: SR Books, 1997), 62–63.

⁴⁵ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 99.

three interlocking strategic objectives vital to insurgencies. These objectives are: 1) gaining and maintaining information superiority, 2) gaining and maintaining the support of the populace, and 3) preserving resources. The importance of information superiority consistently runs through the works of all of the insurgent theorists we have examined; from Sun Tzu's "know the enemy" to Lawrence's need for "perfect" intelligence to Mao's declaration that information is decisive to operational planning. Gaining and maintaining the support of the population is also ubiquitous, but as the theorists show, can be achieved through a variety of means. First, the insurgents must not alienate the people by mistreating them, as noted most strikingly by Mao and Guevara. Second, offensive actions against the incumbent can increase popular support. This can be accomplished by either evoking an overly aggressive response that inflames the population or by merely lowering the people's perception of the incumbent's legitimacy. Finally, preserving resources, especially manpower, is an objective common throughout the theoretical literature. Clausewitz, Lawrence, and Mao all highlight the need for insurgents to possess a safe haven from enemy attack. Additionally, insurgencies can maintain their strength and minimize casualties by attacking only when they have an advantage. Sun Tzu implores generals to attack where their adversaries are weak and Clausewitz advises insurgents to avoid attacking the main enemy force. Hart's "indirect approach" makes a similar argument. Mao perfected this technique in his concept of the protracted war. Two of his three phases of warfare, strategic defensive and strategic stalemate, stress the need to minimize casualties by avoiding direct contact with the enemy. Only when the insurgency has achieved equality or superiority of strength with the incumbents can the insurgents contemplate a major force-on-force engagement. Furthermore, strategic flexibility comes from being

able to move back and forth among the three phases as circumstances require.

Strategic objectives such as information superiority, popular support, and survivability have proven to be critical to modern insurgencies. Despite the complex and disparate origins of insurgent strategy, a number of contemporary analysts have attempted to distill these generalities into prescriptive plans to defeat insurgencies. For as Sun Tzu wrote “Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy.”⁴⁶

Contemporary Counterinsurgency Theories

The number of current counterinsurgency (COIN) theories is legion, and they vary in complexity from the ubiquitous and simple “winning hearts and minds” to complicated statistical formulae. Despite the variety of theories, a careful review reveals a number of recurring principles. These principles highlight key COIN centers of gravity and serve as foundations for both incumbent and insurgent organizational strategies. By examining a representative cross-section of academic, practical, and military doctrinal works, we can derive a useful list of strategic goals that will aid analysis in the following chapters. For the purposes of this thesis we will survey four works (Figure 3). Two of these works will be from academic theorists, one from a former COIN practitioner, and one from current counterinsurgency doctrine.⁴⁷ These four sources were chosen not only for their varied background, but also

⁴⁶ Sunzi, *The Illustrated Art of War*, 115.

⁴⁷ For a number of complementary works with similar lists of principles see David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc, 1964); Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study–Volume 4*, vol. 4 (Rand Corporation, 2008); Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); The U.S. Army and the Marine Corps, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*.

because they identify a limited number of principles, rather than an extended, prescriptive list.⁴⁸

In *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, Ian Beckett lists six factors that are key to formulating a successful COIN strategy. He derives these factors from his analysis of British COIN operations in Malaya and the Philippines.⁴⁹ Similarly, James Kiras of the USAF's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies has also identified six COIN principles. Kiras's view is more expansive than Beckett's as he analyzes a much broader sample of lessons-learned from past insurgencies.⁵⁰ Former Australian infantry officer and advisor to the US leaders in Iraq, David Kilcullen, developed eight COIN "best practices." This list stems from his personal observations of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Timor, Thailand, and Pakistan.⁵¹ Finally, the DOD's current COIN doctrine, Joint Publication (JP) 3-24, includes 13 principles based on "historical record and recent experience."⁵² By comparing these four sources, we can derive a number of strategic objectives critical to COIN operations.

The most common strategic themes embedded in these lists of principles are 1) gaining popular support, 2) denying popular support to the insurgency, 3) creating legitimate security and government institutions, and 4) collecting intelligence (Figure 4). As should be expected, there is significant overlap, between insurgent and COIN strategic goals. Most obviously, both sides are attempting to gain the support of the local populace while discrediting the other side. This battle for the "hearts and minds" of the populace becomes even more

⁴⁸ For example, the complex SWORD methodology lists 72 factors that affect the outcome of insurgencies. See John T. Fishel and Max G. Manwaring, "The SWORD Model of Counterinsurgency: A Summary and Update" (Small Wars Journal, December 20, 2008), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-sword-model-of-counterinsurgency>.

⁴⁹ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 107.

⁵⁰ Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," 263.

⁵¹ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 264-5.

⁵² "Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations", III-10-19.

complicated in COIN operations conducted by an intervening power. In such cases, not only is the local population a center of gravity, but so is the population of the intervening nation. The latter's population can significantly affect the COIN strategy by influencing the intervening power's government directly through elections or indirectly through public displays of support or displeasure.⁵³

These strategic objectives, coupled with the previously identified insurgent strategies - information superiority, popular support and survivability - provide us with an initial baseline of organizational strategies that we can use to analyze past infiltrator behavior in a strategic context. To finalize this blueprint, it is important to be able to clearly define and characterize different types of infiltrator behavior.

⁵³ Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 144.

Beckett	Kiras	Kilcullen	JP 3-24
Prevent insurgents from gaining popular support	Control/track population	Win over insurgent sympathizers & allies	Understand the operational environment
Civil-military cooperation	Gain support of population	Closely integrated civil and military efforts	Develop effective, legitimate governance
Coordinated intelligence	Prevent population support to insurgency	Continuity of key personnel and policies	Unity of effort
Separate insurgency from population	Obtain precise info on insurgent/terrorist groups	Population-centric security	Support the host nation
			Manage information and expectations
Pacify through appropriate use of force	Create legitimate local security forces	Synchronized governance and security	Appropriate Level of Force
Lasting political reform	Develop just and responsive governance	Host nation government in the lead	Intelligence drives operations
		Build effective local security forces	Isolate insurgents from their support
		Disrupt insurgent safe havens	Security under the rule of law
			Learn and adapt
			Empower at lowest levels
			Long-term commitment
			Political factors are primary

Figure 3. Common COIN Principles

Source: Adapted from Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, 107. Kiras, "Irregular Warfare," 263. David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 265. "Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations," III-10.

Gain Popular Support	Deny Support to Insurgents	Legitimate Institutions	Information Superiority
Pacify through appropriate use of force (IB)	Prevent insurgents from gaining popular support (IB)	Civil-military cooperation / Lasting political reform (IB) / Integrated civil and military efforts (DK) / Unity of effort (JP)	Coordinated intelligence (IB)
Gain support of population (JK)	Separate insurgency from population (IB)	Create legitimate local security forces (JK) / Build effective local security forces (DK)	Obtain precise info on insurgent/terrorist groups (JK)
Win over insurgent sympathizers & allies (DK)	Prevent population support to insurgency (JK)	Develop just & responsive governance (JK) / Security under rule of law (JP)	Understand the operational environment (JP)
Manage information and expectations (JP)	Control/track population (JK)	Develop effective, legitimate governance (JP)	Intelligence drives operations (JP)
Appropriate Level of Force (JP)	Disrupt safe havens / Isolate insurgents from their support (DK)	Host nation government in the lead (DK) / Support the host nation (JP)	

Figure 4. Common COIN Objectives Key: Beckett (IB), Kiras (JK), Kilcullen (DK), Joint Publication 3-24 (JP)

Characterizing Infiltration

The infiltration of incumbent security forces is considered to be essential to an insurgency for a number of reasons.⁵⁴ In fact, changes in infiltration rates are often considered to be a significant indicator of potential insurgent success or failure.⁵⁵ Infiltrators often have their greatest impact on the intelligence they provide their organizations. The information “allows the insurgents to avoid regime attempts to arrest or kill insurgent cadre. In addition, it gives the insurgents inside information that greatly increases their effectiveness in planning attacks.”⁵⁶ Infiltrators can, however, provide more than just information. The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), which is considered one of the most well-developed insurgencies in the Western Hemisphere, used infiltration for another reason. One of the FMLN’s three main strategies was infiltration of the El Salvadoran armed forces to foment dissent and desertion.⁵⁷

The 2007 RAND study, *Subversion and Insurgency*, lists five types of infiltration activities. The first is intelligence collection, primarily generating information of adversary capabilities, vulnerabilities, and intentions. Second, infiltrators can be used to provide false information in an attempt to disrupt incumbent operations. Third, infiltrators can divert money and military equipment to the insurgency. Fourth, infiltrators can identify other individuals who may be willing to support the insurgency. Fifth, they can work toward “weakening and

⁵⁴ Daniel L. Byman, “Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 97.

⁵⁵ Ben Connable, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010), xv.

⁵⁶ Byman, “Friends Like These,” 97.

⁵⁷ José Angel Moroni Bracamonte and David E Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995), 18,37,
<http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=494880>.

delegitimizing the incumbent power.”⁵⁸ The fifth behavior is noteworthy for one key reason. Unlike the other four behaviors, the “weakening and delegitimizing” method can involve violence. Infiltrator violence can weaken the government through its symbolic value via “propaganda of the deed” or by simply removing key personnel from an incumbent’s organization. In some instances both can be accomplished, such as when Indira Gandhi was shot by her two Sikh bodyguards in retribution for Operation BLUE STAR. BLUE STAR also stands as a classic example of an incumbent overreaction that incites the population against the government. In an attempt to root out Sikh separatists, the Indian Army killed almost 500 people and destroyed much of the Golden Temple, one of the Sikh’s holiest places. As Clausewitz and other theorists, this attack not only resulted in Gandhi’s assassination, but led to a massive increase in the size of the Sikh insurgency.⁵⁹

There is a significant difference between infiltrator violence and other infiltrator missions. Infiltrator violence almost always creates with it a clear opportunity cost. Opportunity cost is an economic concept which is based on the reality that individuals (and organizations) cannot meet all of their requirements because resources are finite. Therefore, a rational actor, when making a choice between two potential actions, will choose the course of action that bestows the greatest gain or requires the least sacrifice.⁶⁰ By deciding to conduct an Insider Attack, an infiltrator often crosses the line from private to public action against the incumbent.⁶¹ In other words, infiltrators who conduct spying or

⁵⁸ William Rosenau and National Defense Research Institute (U.S.), *Subversion and Insurgency*, Rand Counterinsurgency Study Paper 2 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2007), 106.

⁵⁹ Pape, *Dying to Win*, sec. 2610.

⁶⁰ Jurgen Brauer, *Castles, Battles, & Bombs: How Economics Explains Military History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 12.

⁶¹ Kalyvas notes there are three forms of “defection”: informing, non-compliance, and switching sides. Switching sides is considered a “dramatic and consequential act.” Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 104-5.

subversion can conduct operations over an extended period of time. They can even switch roles. However, the overt and violent nature of an Insider Attack can potentially prevent an infiltrator from conducting any future covert activity on behalf of the insurgency. In the previous example, due to their placement and access, Gandhi's bodyguards may have been able to provide the Sikh nationalist movement with valuable intelligence. However, the symbolism the attack provided, in conjunction with removing a key adversary leader, seems to have been considered more valuable to the movement.

Summary

In this chapter we defined insurgency within the confines of larger concept of irregular warfare. We then noted the difficulty of trying to interpret IW tactics outside of their strategic context. We then reviewed a number of insurgent and counterinsurgent theories. By evaluating these theories, we were able to derive a number of common strategic objectives that we can now be used to evaluate the case studies. Finally, we highlighted five missions that can be used to characterize infiltrator behavior in the case studies. These characterizations will allow us to better connect the activity of Insider Attacks to the strategic goals.

Chapter Three:

Soviets in Afghanistan

Conflict Overview

The Soviet Union's decision to invade Afghanistan in 1979 has been likened to a Russian tale in which two men "debate whether one can get a light bulb into his mouth. When the one who insists it is possible tries to do so, he finds out that, yes, one can get the light bulb in—but getting it out is very difficult. One must either bite down and face the prospect of a mouth full of broken glass or find a surgeon to unhinge the jaw."¹ In this case, the cost of the experience was over 15,000 Soviet dead, 85,000 wounded, and over 400,000 more suffering from various diseases.² The toll on the Afghan population was much worse, especially for the civilian population. Over 850,000 were reportedly killed during the occupation, with another 1.5 million injured or disabled. Another six million civilians were forced to flee the war zone into Pakistan and Iran, creating a substantial humanitarian crisis.³

The exact date the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan began remains a subject of controversy. Soviet KGB records indicate that a 600-man airborne unit was covertly flown into Bagram Airfield in July.⁴ This deployment was reportedly a safeguard to ensure Afghanistan's stability under the fledgling Afghan Communist Party, which had taken power

¹ Artemy Kalinovsky, "Decision-Making and the Soviet War in Afghanistan: From Intervention to Withdrawal," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 4 (2009): 72.

² I. F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and Their Opponents Since 1750*, Warfare and History (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001,) 210; Mark Galeotti, *Afghanistan, the Soviet Union's Last War* (London, England; Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 1995), 224.

³ William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 2nd ed, Twentieth-century Wars (Basingstoke, UK ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 128.

⁴ Vasily Mitrokhin, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, Working Paper (Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center, February 2002), 10.

during the 1978 “April Coup.”⁵ Despite this deployment, the Afghan government’s stability was further threatened in September 1979 when Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin overthrew and executed his “rival and fellow communist,” President Nur Muhammad Taraki.⁶ The instability that followed this coup led to a further Soviet military buildup on 29 November, when elements of the 105th Airborne Division arrived in country to prepare for the arrival of follow-on armored units.⁷ What is certain is that the main occupation force, composed of the 40th Army led by Lieutenant General B.I. Tkach, entered Afghanistan on the evening of 25 December.⁸ The “Coup de Main” occurred on 27 December when the Soviets quickly seized Kabul and a number of other key cities by storming their radio stations and military centers.⁹ That evening concluded with the execution of President Amin and the installation of Babrak Karmal as the President of the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA).¹⁰

One of Karmal’s first moves was an attempt to legitimize the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. He quickly broadcast that the Soviet troops were in the country at the Afghan Government’s request under the auspices of the 1978 Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Cooperation.¹¹ Despite Karmal’s claims, a large portion of the Afghan population, already chafing under Amin’s Communist rule, correctly perceived the Soviets to be invaders, not invitees. This perception was evident when large numbers of the armed forces defected, while the

⁵ Lester W Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998), xvii.

⁶ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 4.

⁷ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, 29–30.

⁸ Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 97.

⁹ Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*, xvii.

¹⁰ For a narrative describing the storming of the Presidential Palace and Amin’s execution see M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 22–31. The KGB’s leading role in the storming of the Presidential Palace is described in Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 99.

¹¹ Kakar, *Afghanistan*, 47.

Soviets simultaneously conducted purges of those whom they perceived to be potentially disloyal. These initial actions would foreshadow the latent level of distrust between the Afghan and Soviet armed forces. Karmal himself told the Soviets, “the population now thinks that the Soviet Union brought Karmal Babrak and the new government to power. It will therefore be necessary to teach the people the correct interpretation of the events.”¹² Under Amin’s rule, thousands of disaffected Afghans had already crossed the Durand Line into Pakistan. Many of those Afghans joined Islamic organizations determined to return Afghanistan to battle the oppressive government.¹³ The invasion increased the emergence of these “Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas known as the Mujahidin (Warriors of God).”¹⁴ The Mujahidin would form the core of the insurgency. They eventually formed the nucleus of what would become a ragged alliance of seven major Muslim resistance groups that would fight the Soviet occupiers and their DRA allies for the next nine years. The Soviets completely withdrew from Afghanistan on 14 February 1989 under the auspices of the 1988 Geneva Accords. However, the fighting between the Mujahidin and DRA would continue for three more years. In 1992 the Mujahidin overthrew the DRA and established the Islamic State of Afghanistan.¹⁵ But the victory was short-lived, as ethnic and tribal differences continued to divide Afghan society.

For the purposes of this thesis, we will restrict the analysis to the period of Soviet occupation. The nine-year Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was one of the longest third-party counterinsurgencies in modern history. The length of the conflict, coupled with the conflict’s international dimensions, including the largest covert action in American

¹² Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 105–106.

¹³ Kakar, *Afghanistan*, 43.

¹⁴ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 209.

¹⁵ Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 14–15.

history, creates certain challenges when attempting to conduct strategic-level analysis.¹⁶ These complications become clear when we examine how historians have attempted to analyze the conflict by breaking it into different sections. As the old saying goes, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” The different ways historians have “carved up” this elephant can indicate changes in the strategic character of the conflict, but also the challenges of identifying its overall strategic themes.

For example, if one were to examine the conflict from a purely Afghan historical perspective, the Soviet occupation would merely be one of a series of insurgencies against foreign and local oppressors, i.e. the 19th Century British, 20th century Soviet, and 21st century U.S. invasions.¹⁷ A shorter-term, Afghan-centric political division could be made based on DRA leaders by examining cleavages between Karmal’s regime and that of Mohammad Najibullah, who replaced Karmal in 1986.¹⁸ A historian looking at the conflict from the Soviet or international perspectives could divide the conflict based on the terms of the four Soviet leaders who oversaw the occupation, i.e. Leonid Brezhnev 1979-81, Yuri Andropov 1982-1983, Konstantin Chernenkov 1984, and Mikhail Gorbachev 1985-1989.¹⁹

A number of historians have divided their discussion of the Soviet campaign based on the character of the conflict within Afghanistan. For example, the former UK ambassador to Afghanistan, Sir Rodric Braithwaite, periodizes the conflict based on the political and military environment. His four sections are the Soviet deployment (1979-80), the guerrilla warfare stage (1980-85), the negotiations (1985-86), and the

¹⁶ The fact that the Geneva Accords, which ended the Soviet occupation, were signed by representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, the USSR and the US highlights the international aspects of the conflict. A copy of the Geneva accords can be found in Diego Cordovez, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 391–392.

¹⁷ Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study–Volume 4*, vol. 4 (Rand Corporation, 2008), 26.

¹⁸ Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars*, vii.

¹⁹ For example see Cordovez, *Out of Afghanistan*, vii–ix.

reconciliation and withdrawal phase (1986-1989).²⁰ More simply, in *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan*, Scott McMichael divides the conflict into three parts based exclusively on the military character of the conflict: the invasion (1979), the initial occupation (1980-82), and counterinsurgency (1983-1989).²¹ It is important to note these different divisions and how they reflect the potential for changes in both insurgent and incumbent strategies. Despite the myriad eddies and currents that affected the flow of this insurgency, it is possible to identify a number of key overarching strategies undertaken by both the insurgents and incumbents alike.

Insurgent Overview and Strategy

In this section we will provide a brief organizational overview of the Afghan insurgency. We will also attempt to assess its success in achieving consistent insurgent strategic goals. As we will see, the Mujahidin were adept at collecting intelligence, which not only made their operations more effective, but also allowed them to preserve their forces. The Mujahidin were also far superior to the Soviets at winning the support of the majority of the Afghan population.

During the era of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the literacy rate among the Afghan population was between 10-15 percent.²² This limitation obviously constrained the amount of available historical records on Mujahidin manpower numbers. However, the DRA and Soviets estimated that the insurgency increasingly expanded in size throughout the conflict. There were approximately 90,000 in 1985 and over 130,000 with another 110,000 reserves by 1988.

²⁰ Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-89* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139.

²¹ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, v-vi.

²² "Human Resources Development and Culture," *Afghan Jihad* 2, no. 1 (September 1988): 46.

At no single time was the full power of the insurgency brought to bear against the DRA and its Soviet masters. This was due to the fact that the insurgency was composed of at least seven disparate and sometimes competing organizations. Six of these groups were highly decentralized organizations composed of local units led by leaders that “gave their loyalty, support, and assistance to a party in return for the resources necessary to maintain their resistance activities.”²³ A majority of the insurgents came from the two largest ethnic groups in the country. These groups were the Pashtuns and Tajiks, which comprised over 40 percent and 30 percent of the Afghan population respectively.²⁴

The insurgency’s fragmented nature produced difficulties as well as advantages. The primary disadvantage was that local field commanders often had their own local agenda, be it tribal, religious, or political. The schisms caused commanders to clash with one another, including those from the same party.²⁵ The local nature of each group also prohibited the rapid sharing of effective tactics within the insurgency. Tactics not only varied between tribes, but even from “valley to valley.”²⁶ Anecdotal evidence suggests some groups tried to combat this deficiency through regional shuras, in which leaders would exchange information on tactics, techniques, and procedures.²⁷ Despite these shortcomings, the decentralized nature of the insurgency provided it with a key advantage, namely survivability. Because there were so many

²³ The Hizb-I-Islami Gulbudinn (HIG) was the only centralized organization according to Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 1.

²⁴ Six of the seven largest insurgent groups were Pashtun with Burhanuddin Rabbani’s Jamiat-i-Islami being ethnically Tajik, for more information see Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 143.

²⁵ Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 130.

²⁶ Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*, 1st ed. (Quantico, VA: United States Marine Corps Studies and Analysis Division, 1995), xiv.

²⁷ Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 168–169.

sub-leaders supporting the insurgency, if one were killed, the overall effect on the Mujahidin strategy and operations would be minimal.²⁸

At its most basic level, the ultimate objective of the Mujahidin was the same as other insurgent groups, the replacement of the existing regime with one more tolerable to the insurgents.²⁹ The key approaches the insurgents used to achieve this goal were survivability, use of intelligence, and winning the support of the populace. Due to the Soviet 40th Army's overwhelming conventional superiority on the ground and in the air, it would have been impossible for the Mujahidin to dislodge the Soviets through a direct force-on-force engagement. Instead, the Mujahidin focused on discrediting and isolating the DRA "puppet regime" locally, regionally, and internationally.³⁰ Because the Soviets made Kabul the center of their invasion, the Mujahidin also focused significant attention on the capital. One former Mujahidin leader, known as Brigadier Yousef, described a three-part strategy against the capital that highlights a number of the historical insurgency strategies we noted in the previous chapter, "First, there was a concerted effort on my part to coordinate attacks aimed at cutting off Kabul from supplies or facilities coming from outside the city. This involved ambushes on convoys on roads. Next was sabotage and assassination from within. I always emphasized that our targets were Soviets,... government officials and their facilities in Kabul.... The third way of hitting Kabul was by stand-off long range rocket attacks³¹

Isolating Kabul follows Clausewitz's dictum for insurgents to avoid direct confrontations with the enemy main force, and instead threaten incumbent LOCs. Ali Ahmad Jalali's study of Mujahidin

²⁸ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 401.

²⁹ Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: RAND Counterinsurgency Study—Volume 4*, vol. 4 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008), 26.

³⁰ H. J Poole and Ray L Smith, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods* (Emerald Isle, NC: Posterity Press, 2004), 92.

³¹ Poole and Smith, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon*, 92.

tactics noted that the conflict was essentially “a fight to strangle the other’s logistics.”³² The Mujahidin’s ability to successfully interdict the main LOCs throughout the country was highly dependent on a robust informant network of civilians and government contacts.³³ The intelligence network that supported insurgent attacks against Soviet supply convoys was also crucial to ensuring the insurgency’s survivability.

Throughout the conflict, DRA rule was limited to Kabul, several other key cities, and a few rural areas the Soviets chose to defend.³⁴ The Mujahidin controlled the vast rural areas throughout the country. As a result, the Soviets were forced to send out motorized units on search-and-destroy missions against insurgent base areas. This tactic would have been successful were it not for the advanced warning the Mujahidin received from their intelligence networks. With advanced warning, the Mujahidin were able to set ambushes against the Soviet convoys. These ambushes were the most effective defense to the regime’s military activity and “threatened the ability of the Soviets and DRA to prosecute the war.”³⁵ The ambushes allowed the Mujahidin to minimize casualties by fighting at times and places of their choosing. The ambush tactic that supported the strategy of survivability was augmented by two other tactics, use of a safe haven and the use of stand-off weapons.

In the latter stages of the conflict, the Mujahidin had over 200,000 warriors including reserves. Such a large force may have made a tempting target for the Soviets. However, a majority of the

³² Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, xx.

³³ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*, 5.

³⁴ Kakar, *Afghanistan*, 74.

³⁵ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*, 3.

forces were relatively safe from Soviet attacks because they found refuge in other countries, Pakistan, but also in Iran. In fact, one estimate suggests there were only 20,000 insurgents conducting operations in Afghanistan at any one time.³⁶ The Mujahidin also preserved their fighting strength through the use of stand-off weapons, so they did not have to directly confront the Soviet military. One such weapon was the land mine. Land mines helped interdict LOCs while limiting insurgent casualties. During the conflict, the Soviets lost almost 2,000 men and over 1,000 vehicles to mines.³⁷ Another key stand-off weapon was the long-range rocket. A key Mujahidin leader in the Kabul area, Abdul Haq, was a proponent of using CIA-purchased 107-mm rockets, not only because their extended range kept the shooter outside of the regime defense perimeter, but also because of the “political symbolism” the attacks generated.³⁸ These spectacular attacks, much as Guevara had posited, called into question the legitimacy of the DRA regime. These attacks were only part of the Mujahidin’s strategy of winning the battle of the hearts and minds of the Afghan population against the regime.

The Mujahidin already had a significant advantage over the DRA regime in winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people because of the DRA’s alliance with the Soviets, whom the people saw as “godless communists.”³⁹ The people’s faith in the DRA regime was further eroded by Yousef’s tactic of conducting surgical attacks within Kabul that focused on Soviet and DRA targets. These operations not only highlighted the regime’s inability to secure the capital, but also prevented collateral damage that may

³⁶ Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Army War College (U.S.), and National Defense University, *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency*, 164.

³⁷ Poole and Smith, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon*, 101.

³⁸ Cordovez, *Out of Afghanistan*, 155.

³⁹ Kakar, *Afghanistan*, 11.

have alienated the populace. The Mujahidin also deprived the regime of legitimacy by providing local services to the people. Insurgent leaders often usurped the role of local leadership from government officials. The Mujahidin would provide law and order, often settling arguments in accordance with local customs.⁴⁰ As we will see in the following section, the Soviets and DRA significantly contributed to their own illegitimacy through a number of strategic errors.

Incumbent Overview and Strategy

According to KGB records, the objective of the invasion of Afghanistan was to ensure the security of the Soviet Union by creating a solidly loyal communist regime.⁴¹ The importance that Soviet leaders attributed to securing this key border nation was supported with what appears to be a surprisingly insufficient amount of resources. During the occupation, Soviet manpower never exceeded 150,000, and Soviet expenditures never exceeded two percent of the defense budget. In contrast, the US committed 500,000 men and 23 percent of its defense budget in 1969 to the operations in Southeast Asia.⁴² This Soviet lack of manpower in Afghanistan led to the Mujahidin controlling from 75 to 90 percent of the country.⁴³ The limited Soviet manpower commitment makes more sense when considered in the context that Soviet leaders initially planned for a “quick operation to install a more stable and reliable leader, [and] rebuild the army.”⁴⁴ As it turns out, rebuilding the DRAs security organizations, particularly their intelligence apparatus,

⁴⁰ Kakar, *Afghanistan*, 127.

⁴¹ Numerous members of the Soviet expressed concerned that President Amin’s independent tendencies could lead to an eventual positive Afghan-US relations. Mitrokhin, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 11. For a comprehensive look at factors that may have led to the invasion see Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 108.

⁴² Galeotti, *Afghanistan, the Soviet Union’s Last War*, 224.

⁴³ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 211.

⁴⁴ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 15.

would be the only counterinsurgency aspect at which they would succeed; but even this success would occur neither quickly or completely.

As we saw in the previous chapter, counterinsurgency strategies can be divided into four broad components 1) gaining popular support; 2) denying support to the insurgency; and 3) creating legitimate security and government institutions, and 4) collecting intelligence. The Soviets and DRA failed miserably in their attempts to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan population. In fact, it appears that the Soviets intentionally chose to terrorize the population to make up for their small numbers.⁴⁵

The best analogy regarding the Soviet policy on dealing with the Afghan population comes from C.J. Dick's work, *Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*. "The Soviets started from Mao Zedong's famous premise that the guerrilla is a like fish that flourishes in the sea of a friendly population; he requires this benign environment for food, shelter, recruits and intelligence. But there was no attempt to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan peoples in order to make the attempt win the hearts and minds of the Afghans. Instead, the Soviets set about draining the sea."⁴⁶ In their attempt to "drain the sea," the Soviets conducted indiscriminate attacks on women and children. For example, a July 1982 report from the Afghan Information Centre highlighted a Soviet attack of several villages in Logar Province. The Soviets used helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to kill 54 Mujahidin, which also resulted in 90 civilian casualties.⁴⁷ The arbitrariness of the attacks was

⁴⁵ Grau, *The Bear went over the mountain*, 20.

⁴⁶ C. J Dick, *Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* ([Camberley, Surrey]: Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 2002), 6.

⁴⁷ *Monthly Bulletin* 32-33 (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, December 1983), 8. This publication, written by Afghan expats in Pakistan, was a pro-Mujahidin publication. However it maintained its credibility by providing accurate reporting. For instance the original Mujahidin reports on this attack claimed the Soviets killed up to

also indicated by the indiscriminate Soviet use of chemical weapons, to include the nerve agents Sarin and Soman.⁴⁸ Sometimes the attacks were directly aimed at civilians. A Soviet soldier interviewed after the conflict admitted to shooting all of the women and children in a village as revenge for the death of his friend. In another village, his unit herded a number of civilians into a small room and killed them by throwing hand grenades into the house.⁴⁹ The Soviets also alienated the population by implementing a scorched-earth policy against rural agricultural areas to deprive the insurgents of their primary source of food. These operations included destroying buildings, killing livestock, damaging fields, and setting fire to grain reserves during harvest.⁵⁰ While this type of warfare was conducive to the Soviet strategy of holding urban areas, it drove large portions of the civilian population into the arms of the insurgency.

As the conflict continued, the Soviets, DRA, and the international community took note of the negative effects of this flawed strategy. Karmal began to complain to his Soviet liaisons that their brutal methods might leave Afghanistan without a workforce.⁵¹ Soviet leader Konstantin Cherenkov acknowledged in 1984, “we have got ourselves into a war against the people, which is without prospects.”⁵² This realization did little to diminish the slaughter, as Cherenkov continued to authorize large-scale, high-altitude bombing offensives as well attacks on refugee camps.⁵³ In 1985, 40th Army issued a booklet titled *The Life, Habits and Customs of the Peoples of Afghanistan: Rules and Norms of Behavior for Military Personnel Serving Outside their Own Country*. This

600 civilians. The publisher included an independent French observer’s estimation of 90 civilian casualties.

⁴⁸ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, 210.

⁴⁹ Alexander Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan* (DTIC Document, 1988), 58–59, <http://oai.dtic.mil>.

⁵⁰ *Monthly Bulletin 44-45* (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, December 1984), 8.

⁵¹ Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 122.

⁵² Quoted in Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 241.

⁵³ Galeotti, *Afghanistan, the Soviet Union’s Last War*, 17.

booklet highlighted the criminal nature of murdering civilians. Despite this fact, 714 Soviet soldiers were charged with murder during the course of the war; but this did not stem the flow of abuses throughout the country.⁵⁴ The Soviet invasion was repeatedly condemned in the United Nations' General Assembly.⁵⁵ Descriptions of the abuses became the centerpiece of Mujahidin international propaganda (Figure 5) fueling public outrage in the US and other nations that were providing aid to the Mujahidin.

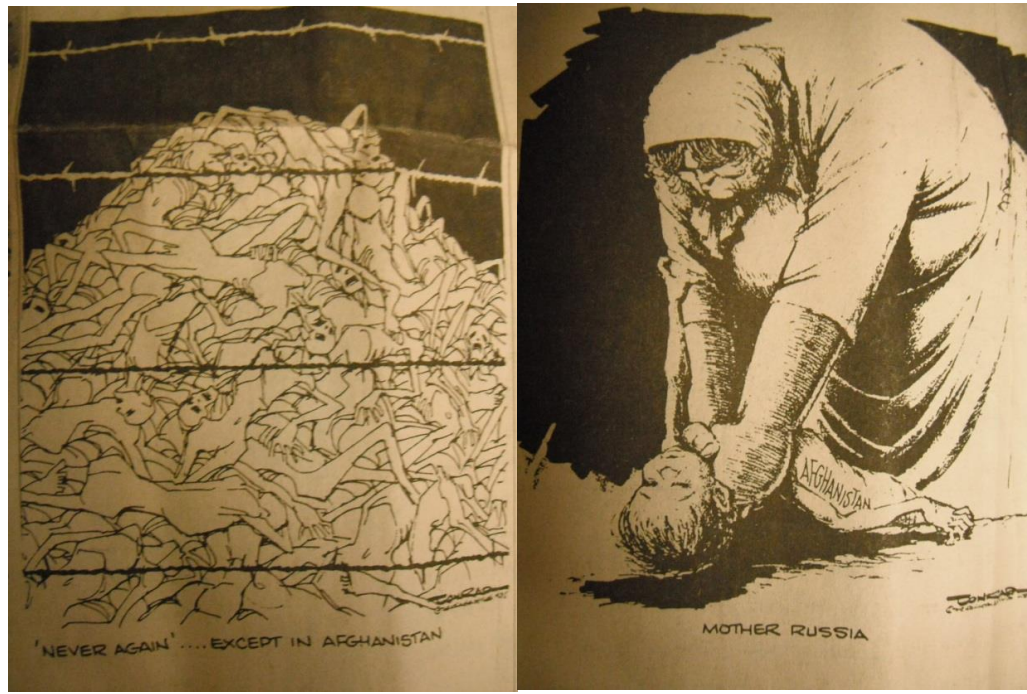


Figure 5. Anti-Soviet Propaganda in New York-Based Mujahidin Publication

Source: Reprinted from "Afghan-Soviet War Cost," Afghan News, New York, April 1, 1986, 1 edition, 6.

Another opportunity that may have provided the Soviets with a chance to turn the tide of the popular war was the presence of Muslim soldiers from the Central Asian States (CAS) in the Soviet Army. The

⁵⁴ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 226–227.

⁵⁵ French, "Learning from the Seven Soviet Wars: Lessons for Canada in Afghanistan," 39.

Muslim troops were originally used because they were stationed close to the Afghan border.⁵⁶ If used correctly, the ethnic and religious similarities between the troops and the Afghan population could have been exploited to gain a degree of empathy for Soviet soldiers, and hopefully lead to a degree of trust among the troops as well as popular support and acceptance. In February 1980, when it appeared to Soviet leaders that the Muslim troops were fraternizing too closely with the locals as well as the Mujahidin, they were replaced by Slavic soldiers. This deployment may have backfired on the Soviets on the domestic front because the returning Muslim troops brought back an increased awareness of the oppression faced by fellow Muslims across the border.⁵⁷

Domestic issues in the CAS were symptomatic of the larger domestic popular resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Soviet leaders were less than forthcoming during the first few years of the occupation. The state-run press published pictures of Soviet soldiers building orphanages and did not mention there was a conflict.⁵⁸ Local officials gave strict orders to families of deceased soldiers to conceal the cause of death from their neighbors.⁵⁹ Of course, this deception was impossible to maintain when Soviet casualties began to climb. By 1982, public disgruntlement against the conflict began in earnest. Despite the official propaganda, word-of-mouth tales regarding mounting casualties spread.⁶⁰ Reporting about the war became much more transparent in 1987 under Gorbachev's *glasnost*, but by that stage in the conflict, the damage to public opinion had already been done.⁶¹ Increasing public disgust with the war, which most Soviets considered to be "brutal, costly,

⁵⁶ Stephen Blank, *Operational and Strategic Lessons of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1990* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1991), xii.

⁵⁷ S. Wimbush and Alex Alexiev, "Soviet Central Asian Soldiers in Afghanistan" (RAND Corp, January 1981), 17.

⁵⁸ Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*, 201.

⁵⁹ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 235-236.

⁶⁰ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 124, 243.

⁶¹ Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*, 201..

and pointless,” eventually eroded the Soviet leadership’s determination to continue the war.⁶² The Soviets failed to gain public support inside Afghanistan, among their own people, and in the broader international community. Despite this failure, the Soviets were able to maintain their grip on Afghanistan and build a DRA regime that would outlast the Soviet Union by three years.

Immediately following the Soviet invasion, Karmal’s puppet government lacked domestic legitimacy and was unable to provide for its own security because the military had been decimated by defections and purges.⁶³ However, over the next nine years, the DRA was able to rebuild its institutions to the point it could implement the Soviet’s limited strategy of holding urban areas and preventing the Mujahidin from making any significant gains.⁶⁴ These institutions, while marginally competent, proved to be unsustainable. By ceding the rural agricultural areas to the insurgents, the DRA government lacked enough income to pay for these needed institutions resulting in a dependence on Soviet economic aid. Thus, when the Soviet’s withdrew in 1989, the Najibullah regime did not immediately collapse as most experts predicted.⁶⁵ This was largely attributable to the Soviet subsidization of the Afghan government and armed forces at a cost of over three billion dollars a year.⁶⁶ When the USSR ended this support as part of an agreement with the US on 15 December 1991, the government institutions quickly

⁶² Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 124.

⁶³ French, “Learning from the Seven Soviet Wars: Lessons for Canada in Afghanistan,” 38.

⁶⁴ Alex Alexiev, “The War in Afghanistan: Soviet Strategy and the State of the Resistance” (RAND Corp, November 1984), 1–2.

⁶⁵ These experts ranged from Soviet Generals, US analysts, and probably Najibullah himself who pleaded for the Soviets to continue the occupation. “Afghan Jihad,” 178; Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 175; Oliker, “What the Soviets Can Teach Us About Leaving Afghanistan”; Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Army War College (U.S.), and National Defense University, *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency*, 74.

⁶⁶ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 296.

dissolved, allowing the Mujahidin to take Kabul in April 1992.⁶⁷ Despite the long-term insolvency of these institutions, they still bear further study, as their reconstruction was a key strategy in the Soviet/DRA counterinsurgent fight.

The turning point on the domestic front came in 1986 when Najibullah replaced Karmal as head of state. Najibullah began a program of “National Reconciliation,” which increased compromising with local leaders, as well as making the Afghan institutions relatively independent from their Soviet counterparts.⁶⁸ He also took care mitigate the perception that communists were atheists, a key Mujahidin complaint, by accelerating the government’s Islamization. Through this program, he changed the constitution to acknowledge Islam as the religion of the Afghan people, required senior government officials to attend daily prayers, and created a Centre for Islamic Studies in Kabul.⁶⁹ While this program did not assuage all of the Mujahidin’s grievances, it did allow Najibullah to co-opt a number of groups following the Soviet withdrawal, giving the regime a legitimate chance of survival.

In addition to reforming the government, the armed forces also underwent improvements during the Soviet occupation. The net improvement from 1979 to 1989 appeared to be negligible because the forces were in a shambles following the initial invasion. In 1979 the DRA army had an overall strength of over 90,000. Defections and purges of unreliable officers caused that number to fall to 40,000 by the end of 1980.⁷⁰ Defections continued to enervate the army as another 30,000 individuals reportedly deserted in 1981. To ameliorate the effects of

⁶⁷ Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 14; Oliker, “What the Soviets Can Teach Us About Leaving Afghanistan”; Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-insurgencies*, 210.

⁶⁸ Najibullah’s push for greater independence was also aided by Mihail Gorbachev’s desire to pull his forces out of Afghanistan, which he considered a “bleeding wound” Galeotti, *Afghanistan, the Soviet Union’s Last War*, 18- 19.

⁶⁹ *Monthly Bulletin* 78 (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, September 1987), 15.

⁷⁰ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 1.

these desertions, the Soviets and DRA began a massive conscription campaign to stabilize the hemorrhage of army personnel.⁷¹ Mass conscriptions were only a short-term solution as the new troops would often desert en masse at the first opportunity.⁷² From 1984-1987, the Afghan army finally began to show signs of improvement. General Kutsenko, a Soviet advisor, noted that during this period Afghan commanders who had been fighting for over five years were better suited to understanding the Mujahidin than their Soviet counterparts who were in country for two-year tours of duty.⁷³

Kutsenko's observation would eventually be proven accurate. As the conflict progressed, thousands of Afghans soldiers and policemen were sent to the Soviet Union for advanced training.⁷⁴ When the time came for the Afghan armed forces to act independently, they performed adequately in holding off the Mujahidin.⁷⁵ External training in the Soviet Union also played a key role in building the DRA's intelligence capability, by assisting in the creation of the State Information Service (KHAD).⁷⁶

KHAD was initially led by Najibullah and quickly grew under his watch from an initial cadre of 120 agents to over 30,000.⁷⁷ Between 1980 and 1989, approximately 30,000 agents underwent training in a number of Soviet cities and eventually in their own training center in Kabul.⁷⁸ KHAD, much like its Soviet counterpart, the KGB, performed many critical functions in support of the regime. These included hunting

⁷¹ Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 125.

⁷² Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Army War College (U.S.), and National Defense University, *Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency*, 72.

⁷³ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 138.

⁷⁴ *Monthly Bulletin* 85 (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, April 1988), 5; *Monthly Bulletin* 17 (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, September 1982), 10.

⁷⁵ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 51.

⁷⁶ Khedamati-i Dalati, meaning Intelligence and Security, McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 49.

⁷⁷ Kakar, *Afghanistan*, 157.

⁷⁸ Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 138; For more information on training see Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 139.

down insurgent infiltrators in urban areas, penetrating insurgent organizations within Afghanistan and Pakistan, and bribing local tribes to support the government.⁷⁹ The resources devoted to make KHAD an effective intelligence agency highlights the understanding Soviet and DRA leaders both had on the importance of quality intelligence to the counterinsurgency fight. Soviet and American analysts alike have assessed KHAD to be the most successful institution built during the Soviet occupation. It was the first security organization in Afghan history that was able to function throughout the entire country and penetrate all social classes. As early as 1981, President Karmal noted that before the conflict his intelligence agencies had “started at lower than zero” but were now the “real fighting force against the enemies of the Revolution.”⁸⁰

In summary, it would be easy to say the Soviet/DRA counterinsurgency strategy failed because the regime fell in 1992. A more nuanced view shows why this failure occurred. The overall Soviets/DRA strategy was supported by a self-defeating counterinsurgency approach that addressed short-term issues while exacerbating the underlying longer-term ones. The Soviet/DRA decision to build legitimate government, military, and intelligence services proved sufficient to maintain the DRA regime. However, the Soviet’s blatant disregard of winning the support of the population proved to be a boon to the insurgency. Even Najibullah’s later attempts at reconciliation were insufficient to win over enough of the population to prevent the Mujahidin from taking the country in 1992 a year after the withdrawal of Soviet economic support in 1991. By way of contrast, the Mujahidin used an extensive intelligence network, asymmetric tactics, and safe havens to ensure their survivability and prolong the war. Their focus on

⁷⁹ Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 138–145.

⁸⁰ Mitrokhim, *The KGB in Afghanistan*, 138.

winning the hearts and minds of the local populace, greatly aided by Soviet atrocities, was a critical component of their strategy to overthrow the incumbent regime. Having identified key strategies employed by both sides, it is now possible to analyze insurgent infiltrator behavior and assess its strategic impact.

Chapter Four:

Mujahidin Infiltrator Behavior

Historical accounts of the Soviet-Afghan war are rife with examples of Mujahidin infiltration of Soviet/DRA security forces. The accounts are usually written in descriptive, third-person formats that do not provide significant into the individual motivations for the action. The few times individual motivations are revealed, they incorporate most of the types we see in Afghanistan today. Personal grievances also existed but often led to desertion, as opposed to active infiltration operations. In the previous chapter, we saw that the Soviets were indifferent to winning the hearts and minds of the people. This indifference was also demonstrated toward their Afghan counterparts, or “Soviet brethren,” as well as to their own Muslim troops. For instance, the Soviets forced Muslim conscripts to shave their beards in contravention of their religious and ethnic beliefs.¹ Soviet officers also insulted Afghan officers by forcing them to surrender their weapons when visiting Soviet-controlled areas.² Incidents such as these, coupled with the Muslim belief that they would die “dirty deaths” if they killed other Muslims, led to regular, large-scale desertions and defections.³ Apart from those that left DRA service at the first opportunity, there is evidence that the Afghan security forces were

¹ Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: the Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-89* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 138.

² Scott R McMichael, *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan* (London; Washington: Brassey's, 1991), 47. To be clear, Soviet officers and Non-commissioned officers also habitually abused their own troops, which led to defections and violent reprisals in garrison and in the field, such as ‘fragging.’ For more information on the low morale and discipline of Soviet troops in Afghanistan see, Svetlana Aleksievich, *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*, 1st American ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1992), 41 and Alexander Alexiev, *Inside the Soviet Army in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, May 1988), <http://oai.dtic.mil>, 37–40.

³ Mujahidin propaganda often highlighted the belief that Muslims working for the Communists would go to hell if they killed other Muslims. *Monthly Bulletin* 32-33 (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, December 1983), 10.

compromised by a wide array of infiltrators who provided a strategic advantage to the Mujahidin. To analyze this phenomenon we will examine examples in infiltration in the context of the five categories of insurgent activities identified in the previous chapter: intelligence collection, providing false information, diverting money and equipment, identifying potential supporters, and weakening and delegitimizing the incumbent.

Intelligence Collection

Scott McMichael maintains that the greatest advantage the Mujahidin had over the Soviets and the DRA was their wide intelligence network. Their ability to infiltrate all levels of the government, particularly the security forces, proved to be invaluable. Individuals linked to the insurgency reportedly worked in the government offices, KHAD, police, and army units throughout the country. Even a significant number of personnel in the Prime Minister's office provided information to the Mujahidin.⁴ The most important intelligence provided can be divided into two categories: information regarding impending regime offensive operations and information about targets the insurgents planned to attack. Apart from the obvious military advantage this information provided, these infiltrators also created a secondary effect, a lack of trust between the Soviets and the Afghans.⁵ The high level of infiltration forced the Soviets to withhold timely information regarding joint operations from the Afghans. This limited the Afghan armed forces' effectiveness by limiting the time it had to prepare for their missions.

Being an infiltrator was risky. KHAD was notorious for performing large sweeps and capturing insurgent sympathizers. Often the arrests would come only after the infiltrators had passed on significant

⁴ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 35–36.

⁵ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 136.

intelligence to the insurgency. One of the highest-ranking infiltrators captured was General Khalil of the Afghan General Staff. He oversaw an entire spy network that funneled intelligence about impending operations to insurgent leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. Massoud would later claim his agents provided him with advanced warning about every offensive launched against him. General Khalil and eight of his officers were eventually arrested in 1985.⁶ In 1982, 29 Afghan army officers, including a general, were arrested in Ghazni. All the individuals were charged with providing information about Soviet troop movements to the Mujahidin.⁷

Infiltrators affected large and small operations alike. In late 1987, the Soviets launched Operation MAGISTRAL in an attempt to open the road between Gardez and Khowst. According to General Gulzarak Zadran, Mujahidin sources in the DRA provided warning of the offensive.⁸ On a much smaller level, Major S.G. Davydenko, an advisor to an Afghan brigade, recounted that an operation his unit was about to execute in 1984 had to be altered because the plan had been suspected of having been leaked to the Mujahidin by an Afghan officer.⁹

Due to Kabul's importance as the regime's center of power The Mujahidin took great pains to obtain information from infiltrators in the national capitol. In 1983 the Mujahidin helped an officer of Kabul's 8th Infantry Division and his family escape to Pakistan. They were willing to risk the enterprise because the officer had previously provided the insurgency with much intelligence.¹⁰ As noted previously, the Mujahidin attacked key regime targets in Kabul, and these operations were highly dependent on intelligence provided by infiltrators. One report indicates

⁶ Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 139.

⁷ *Monthly Bulletin 16* (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, August 1982), 4.

⁸ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 165.

⁹ Lester W Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998), 27.

¹⁰ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 382.

that Mujahidin were able to drive around Kabul freely in DRA army uniforms because sympathetic members of the army would provide them with each day's passwords.¹¹

The infiltrator's ability to collect intelligence directly benefited a number of key insurgent objectives noted in Chapter Three. The importance the Mujahidin placed on these operatives is apparent based on the risks they were willing to take to extract one key source and his family from Kabul. The intelligence gained from the infiltrators provided the Mujahidin with a tremendous advantage in the information superiority arena. This asymmetry of information gave the Mujahidin many advantages. First, the information helped preserve key resources. Advanced warning of Soviet and DRA attacks saved countless Mujahidin lives and negated the potential loss of morale these attacks would have caused had they been successful. Secondly, information collected in the capital allowed the Mujahidin to conduct strikes against government supporters. These attacks undermined the legitimacy of the DRA's security apparatuses and avoided civilian casualties. However, the Mujahidin's concurrent use of more indiscriminate weapons against Kabul, such as rockets, suggests that avoiding collateral damage was not an overall priority when attacking Kabul. The rationale for this judgment will be made clear shortly.

The intelligence collection efforts also helped to negate Soviet/DRA COIN objectives. When the Mujahidin were alerted to a potential Soviet/DRA attack, they could blend into the local community. This complicated the Soviet's ability to differentiate insurgents from the local population. This inability, in turn, frequently caused Soviet offenses to degrade into indiscriminate attacks that killed insurgents and innocent civilians alike, resulting in the Soviets and the DRA losing popular

¹¹ Monthly Bulletin 16 (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, August 1982). 11.

support. In light of the large numbers of atrocities committed during these operations, it is probable that the Mujahdin were willing to accept relatively insignificant collateral damage when conducting attacks against Kabul. Also, as noted previously, the existence of spies within the Afghan Army forced the Soviets to withhold operational information from their Afghan counterparts. This divide engendered a lack of trust that undermined the legitimacy of the DRA security forces, as they were shown to Afghan soldiers and citizens alike to be mere lackeys to the 40th Army.

From a cost/benefit perspective, it is apparent that the use of infiltrators to collect information was lucrative. Not only did spies produce the information necessary to increase the insurgency's survivability, but they also created two, equally important, secondary effects. The resulting information asymmetry forced the Soviets to conduct indiscriminate violence against the rural population. The information leaks also created a high level of distrust between the Soviets and their Afghan counterparts, lowering the effectiveness of the institutions they were desperately trying to build.

Diverting Money and Equipment

Mujahidin infiltrators provided not only critical intelligence, but also mission essential war material. Jalali's argument that the "strategic struggle for Afghanistan was a fight to strangle the other's logistics" highlights the importance the Mujahidin placed on keeping themselves supplied.¹² Because the insurgents lacked their own industrial base, their primary means of obtaining weapons was by raiding Soviet/DRA facilities. When possible, the Mujahidin would use infiltrators to obtain weapons from the regime without having to risk a potentially costly assault on an armory or a base.

¹² Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, xx.

One of the easiest targets from which to obtain weapons was remote outposts, as these facilities were particularly vulnerable when an “inside accomplice” was available.¹³ One such accomplice was stationed in Herat. On seven separate occasions he enabled Mujahidin dressed in Afghan Army uniforms to enter the supply depot and drive off with “truckloads of materials.”¹⁴ The 15th Infantry Division in Kandahar City was another unit filled with infiltrators. In 1987, a number of infiltrators allowed the Mujahidin to steal weapons from the unit’s military police company. Some of the infiltrators were on “sentry duty,” while another infiltrator escorted the Mujahidin raiders from barracks to barracks, stealing weapons from the sleeping soldiers before taking them to the armory where they obtained hundreds of weapons.¹⁵

Sometimes the Mujahidin would send individuals to join the DRA army with the sole intent of obtaining weapons for the insurgency. In 1984, two separate Mujahidin commanders accomplished this feat. One, known as Commander Abdullah, joined the regime then quickly returned to the Mujahidin bringing with him a number of mortars, artillery, and trucks. Another commander was able to provide 89 weapons to the insurgency after “surrendering” to the Mujahidin. When his duplicity was discovered he was captured and executed by DRA regime forces.¹⁶

The Mujahidin use of infiltrators to obtain needed resources was vital to their survival. It is true that the Mujahidin obtained war material from a number of sources throughout the conflict, most notably from the US through Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate. However, a majority of these weapons did not arrive until 1986. Additionally, up to one-third of weapon shipments from Pakistan were

¹³ H. J Poole and Ray L Smith, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods* (Emerald Isle, NC: Posterity Press, 2004), 28.

¹⁴ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 28.

¹⁵ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War*, 396.

¹⁶ *Monthly Bulletin 50* (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, May 1985), 9–10.

reportedly intercepted by the Soviets. Furthermore, ISI did not distribute weapons to all insurgent forces equally.¹⁷ This left a number of Mujahidin groups with two main ways to acquire weapons, either by foraging for them after a battle or by stealing them. As noted earlier, a number of infiltrators provided information that allowed to the Mujahidin to conduct attacks against Soviet/DRA units. Armed with this information, the Mujahidin suffered fewer casualties. Thus, the benefit gained from the weapons the Mujahidin gained during these attacks was probably greater than the cost incurred in casualties. Similarly, it is apparent that several Mujahidin groups were willing to put their infiltrators at risk by taking observable actions, namely stealing and transporting weapons, for the benefit of gaining a reliable supply source.

Identifying Potential Supporters

There is little evidence that Mujahidin infiltrators in the DRA security organizations conducted missions specifically aimed at identifying potential supporters to their cause. It is possible, however, that recruiting was left to civilian sympathizers. This may have occurred for two reasons. First, there may have been a fear that active recruitment may bring unwanted attention from KHAD, i.e. a significantly higher cost. In a 1985 newspaper interview, a 26-year-old named Massoud reported that when he was in the Army he successfully smuggled documents to the Mujahidin. After serving his tour, he worked in a bank where he was arrested for handing out anti-regime propaganda. Following his arrest, he was re-inducted into the army. Two months later he fled to the US via Pakistan.¹⁸ In 1984 a high school student used his identification card to move around Kandahar City to

¹⁷ Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 135.

¹⁸ Patrick Boyle, "U.S. Detained Afghans - From Heroes to Illegal Aliens," *Afghan News*, November 1, 1985, Volume 1, Issue 4 edition, 1.

identify DRA soldiers for potential assassination. If a soldier expressed support for the insurgency, the student would set up meetings between that soldier and the Mujahidin.¹⁹ Second, there may also have been no real need for infiltrators to recruit actively because the best recruiters were the Soviets themselves. Continued Soviet atrocities against the population, combined with the high desertion rate in the DRA Army, created a large pool of eager recruits for the Mujahidin. Therefore, it would not be in the Mujahidin's interest to risk infiltrators on this mission because there was little to gain, and each action had a possibility of increasing costs in the form of increased KHAD attention.

Weakening and Delegitimizing the Incumbent

The Mujahidin clearly understood the political value of attacks against government strongholds. Infiltrators played a key role in these attacks, either by enabling them or conducting them on their own. In stark contrast to the other infiltrator examples we have already examined, the success of some of these operations relied on the infiltrators to commit acts of violence.

There are numerous examples of infiltrators enabling Mujahidin raids on government facilities without resorting to violence. Infiltrators not only decrease risk to the raiding party, but also allowed less professional groups to conduct operations because with “a turncoat ready to open the gate, one no longer needs advanced assault techniques.”²⁰ For example, in 1984 Hasan Khan Korokhel, the local DRA militia leader facilities provided support to three Mujahidin groups as they raided Soviet/DRA outposts on the main highway from Jalalabad to Kabul.²¹ Also in 1984, Mujahidin commander Ghulam Farouq recruited two DRA soldiers who facilitated an attack against the

¹⁹ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 389.

²⁰ Poole and Smith, *Tactics of the Crescent Moon*, 125.

²¹ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 89.

Kandahar Telephone Exchange Center. One soldier, Hanif, hid the raiding party from roving sentry patrols in a secure building. Hanif then tricked the sentries, one-at-a time, to take a tea break in that building. As each sentry entered the building he was captured.²²

Sometimes, infiltrators were forced to kill Soviet/DRA officers to help ensure the success of an operation. In one such attack, Captain Yar Mohammad, a member of the 81st DRA regiment, assisted a Mujahidin operation to capture a District center. In addition to providing the Mujahidin with intelligence, he signaled the raiding party after his co-conspirators had killed the communist officers.²³ At other times, infiltrators would conduct spectacular attacks on their own. Afghan officers conducted sabotage against aircraft at airbases in Shindand, Kabul, and Jalalabad. The attack at Shindand resulted in destruction of “22 aircraft, 2 helicopters, and 18 oil tankers.”²⁴ In 1982, the Soviets executed 80 Afghan officers who were planning to assassinate their Soviet advisors.²⁵ Although, the Soviet authorities stopped the attack, the executions backfired by antagonizing even more officers. This led to “further uprisings and defections within the armed forces.”²⁶ Apart from the great cost of infiltrator lives, the propaganda resulting from the regimes overreaction may have had a greater impact than the actual assassinations may have had.

These violent activities had one more significant effect on the conflict. They were the primary means the Mujahidin had at their disposal to affect the Soviet population and government. Earlier, we noted that the Soviet government attempted to limit negative information regarding the war from reaching the people. They could not, however,

²² Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 391.

²³ Jalali and Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 119–120.

²⁴ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 47.

²⁵ *Monthly Bulletin 20* (Peshawar, Pakistan: Afghan Information Centre, December 1982), 17.

²⁶ McMichael, *Stumbling Bear*, 47.

conceal the coffins returning to the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. As the casualties mounted, word of mouth spread from bereaved family members to their communities, eventually evolving into a groundswell of public discontent against the government. This pressure was one of the main reasons Soviet leaders eventually decided to withdraw from Afghanistan.

Summary

Based on this evidence, it is clear that the Mujahidin infiltrator tactics supported the key insurgent strategies of information superiority, preservation of resources, and gaining the support of the population. It thus appears that the highest priority roles for infiltrators were intelligence collection and diverting resources. This is due to the myriad of benefits they provided compared to other possible infiltrator missions. The primary purpose of the Mujahidin's intelligence collection was to ensure the survivability of their forces. This was accomplished by avoiding regime attacks. It also supported the strategy of flexibility by ensuring their own attacks would be used against well-measured adversaries. Spies in the Afghan military also produced a second-order effects of leading the Soviets to conduct operations that resulted in high levels of civilian casualties and by creating a significant level of distrust between the Soviets and the DRA security forces. Infiltrators who diverted resources, specifically arms ammunition, provided the Mujahidin with an immediate stream of supplies that augmented relatively ponderous and sometimes unreliable external supply systems.

Mujahidin infiltrators also played a role in undermining the Soviet/DRA by enabling or conducting high-profile attacks against military targets, but infiltrators were not the major source of these attacks. As noted earlier, the Mujahidin conducted indiscriminate rocket attacks against Kabul and other Soviet/DRA centers of control. It is

highly probable that the Mujahidin were willing to accept civilian casualties during these attacks because the propaganda gain was greater than the cost of potentially alienating the populace. This was because the civilian casualties from Mujahidin attacks paled in comparison to the atrocities committed by the Soviets.²⁷ These atrocities also explain why the Mujahidin were not likely to risk infiltrators as recruiters, because the Soviets were the ultimate recruiters for the Mujahidin. This problem was identified by the Soviet General Staff after the fact. In the General Staff's official history they noted that they "did little to win them over to the government's side."²⁸

It is apparent that Mujahidin infiltrators did not play a key role in attempting to influence the Soviet Union's home population. The Mujahidin were more likely to benefit from indiscriminate attacks that resulted in more Soviet casualties than surgical strikes that resulted in a few casualties, but with little collateral damage. As the number of Soviet casualties continued rose, it became difficult for Soviet officials to conceal information coming from the war zone. As a result, average Soviet citizens were probably more concerned with the fact that their boys were dying in Afghanistan than with the security that the Soviet leaders believed accrued to the state by virtue of the occupation.

²⁷ For a comprehensive look at the suffering endured by Afghan civilians at the hands of the Soviets see *Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity: 1978-2001* (The Afghan Justice Project, 2005), <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,OSI,,AFG,,46725c962,0.html>.

²⁸ Matt M. Matthews, "We Have Not Learned How to Wage War There': The Soviet Approach in Afghanistan 1979-1989" (Combat Studies Institute Press, 2011), 66, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/index.asp>.

Chapter Five:

Implications for ISAF

In this chapter we will provide a brief overview of the US-led overthrow of Afghanistan's Taliban regime in 2001 and how that operation evolved into today's ISAF-led counterinsurgency mission over the next 12 years. Next, we will review the principal incumbent and insurgent strategic objectives. We will then examine recent insurgent infiltrator behavior and how it supports the Taliban's overall strategic objectives. Finally, we will compare and contrast the driving forces between current infiltrator behavior and that exhibited the Mujahidin during the Soviet occupation of the 1980s.

Conflict Overview

The United States' offensive operations against the Taliban-led government of Afghanistan in 2001 were in response to its refusal to turn over Osama Bin Laden and other members of al-Qaeda who planned and funded the 11 September terrorist attacks against the US. The first phase was the insertion of approximately 100 CIA officers and 300 Special Forces operators from 26 September until early November.¹ Major combat operations under the auspices of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, directed by the US Central Command, began on 7 November with a series of airstrikes conducted by US and NATO allies.² Over the next 30 days, the anti-Taliban resistance group, the Northern Alliance, supported by US SOF and aircraft, took the Taliban strongholds of

¹ "Afghanistan," *Central Intelligence Agency*, December 30, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/additional-publications/devotion-to-duty/afghanistan.html>.

² Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp, 2005), xvi.

Mazar-I-Sharif, Kabul, and Kandahar.³ While a large number of Taliban and al-Qaeda personnel escaped into Pakistan, others defected to the Northern Alliance when they realized their situation was hopeless or when offered money by US agents.⁴ By the end of the year, Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun and one of the leaders of the Northern Alliance, was appointed the head of the Afghan provisional government.

From 2002-2004, US and allied forces continued hunt al-Qaeda and Taliban forces along the Pakistani border while the Taliban continued to build strength across the border. From 2005-2006, while the US was in the process of transferring responsibility for rebuilding Afghanistan to ISAF, the Taliban had gathered enough strength to begin offensive operations across the southern and eastern sections of the country.⁵ The character of the conflict changed dramatically beginning in 2009 when US General Stanley McChrystal took command of ISAF and implemented a three-pronged strategy, which was enhanced in 2010 by his replacement, General David Petraeus. First and foremost, ISAF sought to earn the support of the population.⁶ Second, following the addition of 33,000 additional troops in 2010 (see Figure 6), Petraeus worked to bring security to sections of the country so more effective rebuilding could occur. Third, he dramatically oversaw the disruption of insurgent networks by increasing the number of Special Operations raids throughout Afghanistan, targeting Taliban leaders and key enablers.⁷

³ "The United States Army in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom," *U.S. Army*, March 17, 2006, <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Afghanistan/Operation%20Enduring%20Freedom.htm>.

⁴ Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror*, 132-133.

⁵ Paul T. Seitz, *The Future of the Afghan Insurgency* (DTIC Document, 2007), 3, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA469624>.

⁶ Gerry J. Gilmore, "McChrystal: Conventional Strategy Won't Win in Afghanistan," *U.S. Department of Defense*, September 27, 2009, <http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=55990>.

⁷ Eric Schmitt, *Counterstrike: The Untold Story of America's Secret Campaign Against Al Qaeda*, 1st ed (New York: Times Books, 2011), 259.

By September 2012, the US had withdrawn all 33,000 surge troops, making way for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to take increased responsibility for their own security.⁸ By the end of 2012, over three quarters of all Afghan citizens were living in areas under the protection of ANSF.⁹ As of May 2013, ANSF are expected to assume full responsibility for security operations throughout the country by the end of 2014, as the US and ISAF continue to withdraw virtually all of their combat forces, leaving behind trainers, Special Operations Forces, and support personnel.¹⁰

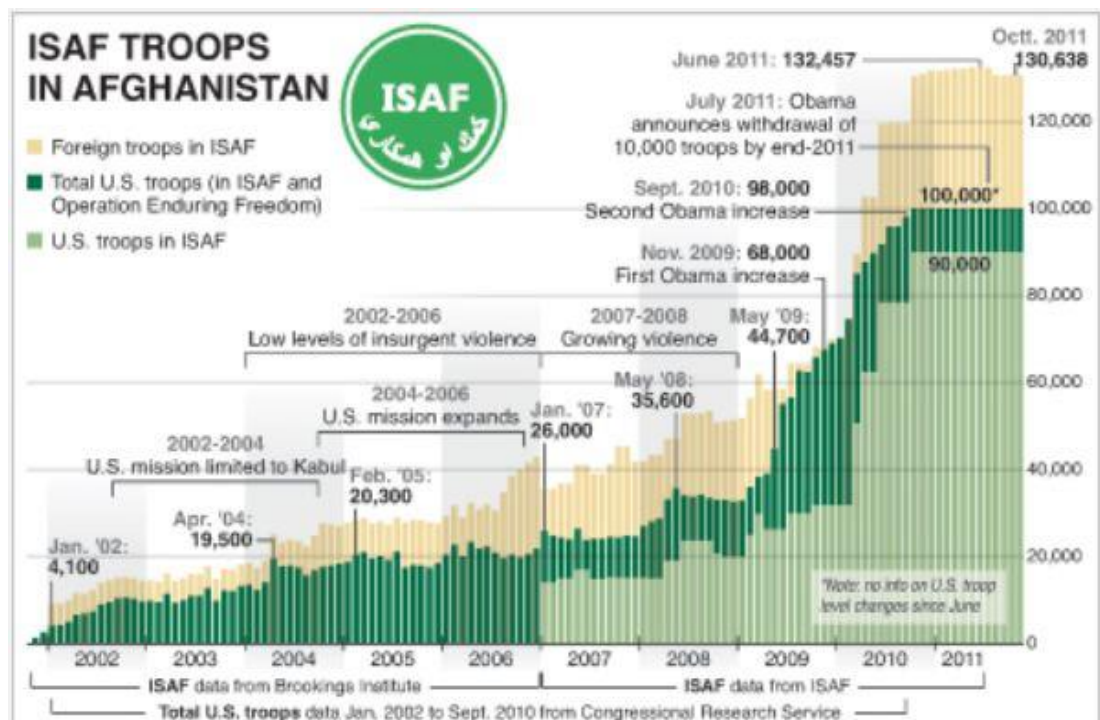


Figure 6. ISAF Troop Strength 2002-2011

Source: Reprinted from *ISAF Troops in Afghanistan*, 5 Dec 2011, Thompson Reuters, <http://blog.thomsonreuters.com/index.php/isaf-troops-in-afghanistan-graphic-of-the-day>

⁸ Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, December 2012), http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/1230_Report_final.pdf. 2.

⁹ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 1.

¹⁰ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 45.

Incumbent Strategic Goals

In Chapter Three we highlighted four key COIN objectives, 1) gaining popular support, 2) denying popular support to the insurgency, 3) creating legitimate security and government institutions, and 4) collecting intelligence, i.e. information superiority. It is not surprising that after 2009 ISAF was much more effective in achieving these objectives. This is due to the direction of leaders such as Generals McChrystal and Petraeus, both of whom had previous experience with COIN operations in Iraq and significantly contributed to the contents of the both Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual and Joint Publication 3-24.

We previously noted that the Soviets made no attempt to win the hearts and minds of the Afghans. In fact they kept the bulk of their forces in large urban areas, limiting their contact with the rural population. In the early stages of operations, primarily before 2008, ISAF did not spend extended time in small rural areas. Instead, they would conduct sweeps through areas to drive out insurgents but would not stay to consolidate their gains or provide security for the building of local construction projects.¹¹ Two programs led by Special Operations Forces (SOF), Village Stability Operations (VSO) and the Afghan Local Police (ALP), have been crucial to earning the trust and support of the rural population. In essence:

VSO/ALP is about community mobilization. While training the local security element (the ALP) and supporting the startup of economic development projects is the responsibility of the VSO team, selecting the ALP and what village projects will be undertaken are decisions made by the

¹¹ Matt M. Matthews, "We Have Not Learned How to Wage War There: The Soviet Approach in Afghanistan 1979-1989" (Combat Studies Institute Press, 2011), 66, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/index.asp>.

local shuras. By supporting and facilitating the community shura, the village begins to support itself and, with the involvement of the embedded teams, begins to build relationships with its district government.¹²

In addition to denying the Taliban key territory, the VSO/ALP solves two important issues for ISAF and GIRoA. First, it solves the lack of manpower problem that the Soviets could not overcome with similar numbers of troops. Whereas Soviet SOF were relegated to conducting offensive operations, the use of ISAF SOF to win hearts and minds and build indigenous security forces - a classic SOF mission - allows ISAF and GIRoA to control more territory than could their Soviet/DRA predecessors. Second, these programs seek to connect the disparate and fiercely independent Districts and villages with the central government.¹³ Previous capacity-building programs were mainly attached to higher-echelon government organizations at the provincial level.

Another way ISAF has improved its ability to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan civilian population is through minimizing civilian casualties, especially in relation to the Taliban. As late as 2006 ISAF was believed to have killed over 200 civilians as a result of collateral damage.¹⁴ Figure 7 shows that since the adoption of the COIN strategy in 2009, these numbers have come down precipitously. These numbers are even more impressive when we compare them with the scale of atrocities the Soviets conducted against the rural Afghan population during their occupation.

¹² Robert Hulslander and Jake Spivey, "Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police," *Prism* 3, no. 3 (June 2012).

¹³ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 77; for another classic vignette on this topic also see David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 109.

¹⁴ "Afghanistan The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan," *Human Rights Watch* 19, no. 6 (April 2007): 3.

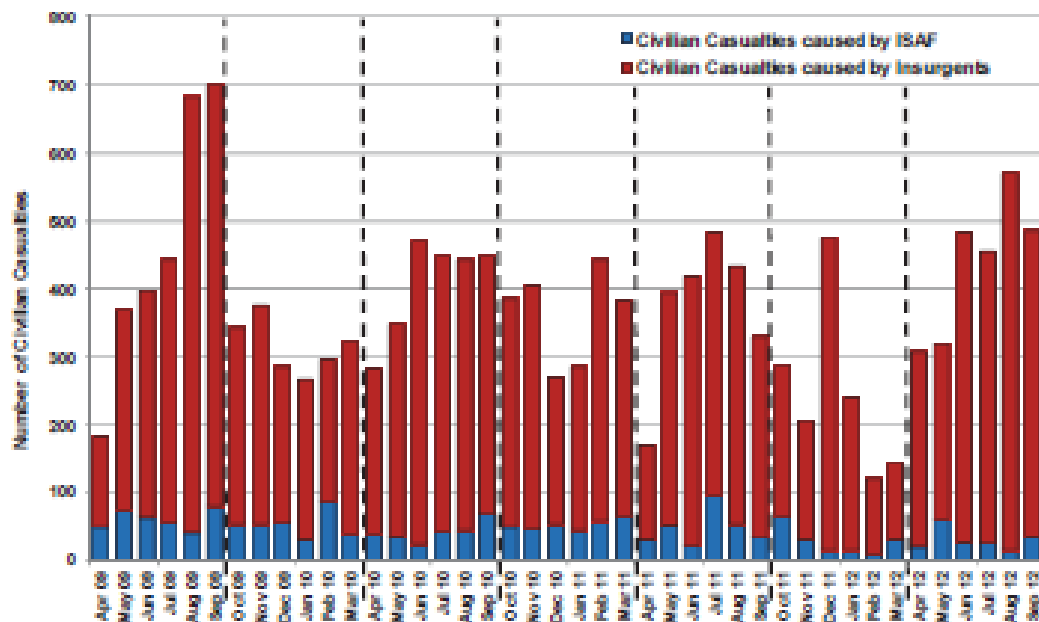


Figure 7. Civilian Casualties 2009-2012

Source: Reprinted from Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012, 33.

In a complementary effort, ISAF has also become considerably more effective in highlighting Taliban-inflicted casualties through strategic communications. In 2008 the National Security Council and DOD highlighted the need for US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan to undermine insurgent credibility by providing summaries of insurgent and terrorist attacks the resulted in Muslim deaths to the media and think-tanks. "The main goal was to create a constant drumbeat of anti-Al Qaeda [and Taliban] information that was factual, directly quoted, and heavily sourced with credible, direct links to verify."¹⁵ This information operations campaign, coupled with minimizing collateral damage and gaining the support of the rural population through VSO/ALP, highlights the superiority of ISAF/GIRoA's ability to win the hearts and minds of

¹⁵ Schmitt, *Counterstrike*, 166–167.

the Afghan people compared to that of the Soviets and DRA. The success of VSO/ALP also helps satisfy another COIN objective, building legitimate institutions.

As noted previously, the Soviets did an adequate job of building the DRAs security forces as indicated by the fact that they were able to hold the Mujahidin for three years following the Soviet withdrawal. The Soviets did not, however, create a viable economy that would keep the military supplied with weapons. At this time, ISAF is undergoing similar challenges with the GIRoA. Today, ANSF are leading almost 90 percent of all military operations in Afghanistan.¹⁶ These operations are doing more than defending urban areas. For example, Afghan Ktah Khas (National-level SOF) have also been integrated into night raids. Having ANSF at the lead of these high-risk missions not only shows exemplary competence, but also reduces the negative effects such invasive operations have on public opinion.¹⁷ While the Afghan armed forces made considerable strides, there are considerable hurdles to overcome with regard to the rest of the government and the economy.

In 2011, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, reported to Congress that ISAF's tactical successes were being stifled by the "Pervasive corruption, by criminal patronage networks that include government officials—at both national and local levels."¹⁸ Even President Karzai and members of the Afghan judiciary are often portrayed as being corrupt. Recent efforts to stem the negative effect these scandals have yet to bear long-term results. Removing the

¹⁶ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Uncertain Role of the ANSF in Transition: Establishing Real World Criteria and Metrics* (CSIS, 2013), 15, www.csis.org/burke/reports.

¹⁷ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 60; Alissa J. Rubin, "U.S. Transfers Control of Special Operations to Afghans," *The New York Times*, April 8, 2012, sec. World / Asia Pacific, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/09/world/asia/deal-reached-on-controversial-afghan-night-raids.html>.

¹⁸ Michael Mullen, *Statement of Admiral Michael Mullen, U.S. Navy, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Afghanistan and Iraq*, 2011, 5.

corruption from the Afghan government is critical, not only for maintaining the legitimacy of the government, but also for ensuring it remains financially solvent in the future. GIRoA's economy is currently driven by external donations from partner nations; much as the DRA was dependent on Soviet support. While ISAF nations have pledged \$3.6 billion to maintain the ANSF for three years starting in 2015, both they and other contributors have tied their potential donations to improved and legitimate Afghan governance.¹⁹ While a number of government institutions need reform, one that has made excellent progress in the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the follow-on to KHAD. NDS highlights the success of the final COIN objective, intelligence collection.

In a 2012 Congressional report, NDS was described as “capable intelligence organization, with a multi-intelligence function capability and an extensive source network. It routinely operates independently and has succeeded in preventing numerous planned attacks.”²⁰ One point of contention that currently exists is that NDS, much like KHAD, is often accused of using heavy-handed methods to extract intelligence from detainees, i.e. torture. In 2012, allegations from the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan caused ISAF to stop transferring detainees to 16 Afghan facilities until they could be recertified.²¹ This put two COIN objectives in direct conflict with each other. While the suspension of transfers won the hearts and minds of the international community, including the governments of the ISAF nations, as well as a number of Afghan civil-rights crusaders, it offended a number of Afghans by implying that one of their most prestigious government institutions was not legitimate. This incident highlights another factor with which

¹⁹ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 1, 9–10.

²⁰ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 82.

²¹ *Treatment of Conflict-Related Detainees in Afghan Custody: One Year On* (Kabul, Afghanistan: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, January 2013), 36, 63.

the Soviets/DRA did not have to deal. The Soviets had little desire to prove the legitimacy of the DRA to the international community nor did they care that KHAD-perpetrated torture incensed the Afghan people. Nevertheless, it appears that NDS is an effective partner in collecting intelligence and providing security for the GIRoA.

While NDS has made great strides in capability, so has ISAF intelligence. Although ISAF was able to exploit the technical collection capabilities of the US and its allies, in the early parts of the campaign operations were hamstrung by a lack of effective analysis. In “Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan,” US Army Major General Michael Flynn argued that ISAF analysts were focused on the wrong target. He stated that they were overly focused on targeting individual insurgents and not studying intelligence that was applicable to the COIN fight, such as Afghan culture, economic indicators, and government legitimacy.²² When strategic-level analysts began to address this deficiency, intelligence was able to support both sides of the General McChrystal’s COIN strategy. SOF supporting VSO/ALP used intelligence to augment their understanding of district and village dynamics and the supporting “hunter-killer” teams were supported by analysts from CIA, DIA, NSA, and FBI.²³

In summary, it appears that the US and GIRoA performed much better in satisfying the common COIN objectives than the USSR and DRA. However, we shall see that there were fissures in their strategy that the Taliban could attack and that some of these opportunities could only be exploited by infiltrators.

²² Michael T. Flynn, Matthew F. Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (DTIC Document, 2010), 21

²³ Schmitt, *Counterstrike*, 259.

Insurgent Strategic Goals

The current insurgency in Afghanistan, much like the Mujahidin uprising, is composed of a myriad of smaller groups. While the groups share the overarching goal of expelling ISAF from the country, their ultimate goals vary. While the Taliban and Hizb-I-Islami Gulbuddin both seek to gain control of the entire country, other groups, such as the Haqqani Network merely seek control over small regions. The exact size of the insurgency has been unclear throughout the conflict, though estimates have suggested a growth in numbers over the last six years, including an increase from 25,000 in 2009 to as many as 36,000 in 2010.²⁴ Despite this growth, the Taliban and their allies are still significantly smaller than 200,000 warriors the Mujahidin could draw upon at their peak strength. The much smaller force has forced the current insurgency to take great care in attempting to achieve the common insurgent objectives of information superiority, popular support, and survivability.

The insurgency relies on two main tactics to gain intelligence as well as to deny intelligence to ISAF/GIRoA. Intelligence is obtained by planting spies on ISAF bases as well as within ANSF and GIRoA agencies and is usually used to enable attacks against key targets. Colonel Richard Kemp, a former commander of British troops in Afghanistan, has assessed the Taliban spy network as “extensive.”²⁵ Obviously, the true magnitude of the intelligence network is hard to determine, as successful

²⁴ “The Taliban: Mapping Militant Organizations,” Stanford University, August 1, 2012, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/367>.

²⁵ Heidi Blake, “Taliban Spies in British Army Bases,” *Telegraph.co.uk*, August 28, 2010, sec. worldnews, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/7969123/Taliban-spies-in-British-Army-bases.html>.

informants are rarely if ever caught. However, press reporting of discovered agents is in agreement with Kemp's assessment.²⁶

The Taliban also go to great lengths to discourage individuals from providing information to their adversary. Insurgents routinely round up and execute their own members as well as members of the local population they suspect of being spies. There have even been examples of the Taliban executing a seven-year-old boy in 2010 and a 70-year-old woman in 2007.²⁷ It is important to note that some Islamic legal scholars have opined that executing spies conforms with Islamic law.²⁸ However, these acts cause both fear and hate from within the local populace and bring condemnation from the international community. While these acts appear to indicate the insurgents show a blatant disregard for winning the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan, such a conclusion is not totally accurate. Over the last 12 years, the Taliban has become increasingly aware of the need to gain the support of the people; however, this support does not come at the cost of diverging from their fundamentalist Muslim beliefs. Additionally, the decentralized nature of the insurgency makes it difficult for insurgent leaders to ensure all groups follow their guidance.

From 2002-2006 when the insurgency was attempting to gain support in the eastern and southern sections of the country, it aggressively attempted to gain the support of the people through fear and intimidation. The Taliban would leave "night letters" in villages that threatened villagers if they supported the GIRoA. They would

²⁶ For example see David Ariosto, "Suspected Taliban Spy Arrested in Kabul, Officials Say," *CNN*, July 31, 2011,

<http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/07/31/afghanistan.attack/index.html>.

²⁷ Matiullah Mati, "Officials: Taliban Executes Boy, 7, for Spying," *CNN*, June 10, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/06/10/afghanistan.child.execution/index.html>.

²⁸ Muhammad Munir, "The Layha for the Mujahideen: An Analysis of the Code of Conduct for the Taliban Fighters Under Islamic Law," *International Review of the Red Cross* 93, no. 881 (May 5, 2011), 97.

assassinate local officials who spoke out against the insurgency.²⁹ This form of “armed propaganda” was initially effective in compelling a large numbers of farmers to grow poppies, from which the insurgents could financially benefit.³⁰ As ISAF/GIRoA strategic communications began to highlight the Taliban’s heavy-handed tactics, the Taliban’s Supreme Commander, Mullah Muhammad Omar, issued a series of directives, or *Layeha*, which provided a code of conduct for Taliban field commanders to follow. The need to change approaches once again highlights the difficulty the Taliban faced in winning the hearts and minds of the rural Afghan populace compared to the Mujahidin in the 1980s.

The first *Layeha*, issued in 2006, stated that insurgents should not harass innocent people and that searching houses was not allowed without the permission of a field commander.³¹ It also provided religious justification for attacking individuals known to be supporting ISAF/GIRoA reconstruction projects.³² Additional *Layeha* were published in May 2009 and again in May 2010, in the midst of ISAF’s movement to a population-centric COIN operation. Both these *Layeha* underlined the importance of the insurgents establishing parallel legal and government services for the local population, commonly known by ISAF as shadow governments or shadow courts.³³ These parallel institutions continue to be successful in areas where GIRoA corruption is evident. The 2010 *Layeha* also included the provision for a “complaints commission” that allowed villagers to take grievances regarding Taliban commanders to their superiors. It also offered rewards for GIRoA

²⁹ Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 101–102.

³⁰ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 59.

³¹ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 84.

³² “Afghanistan The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan,” 95.

³³ Thomas H. Johnson and Matthew C. DuPee, “Analysing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (Layeha): An Assessment of Changing Perspectives and Strategies of the Afghan Taliban,” *Central Asian Survey* 31, no. 1 (March 2012): 84, doi:10.1080/02634937.2012.647844.

personnel to defect or undermine the government; this was probably in response to increasingly successful ISAF reintegration policies.³⁴ The care that the Taliban senior leaders have taken to ensure that the rural population was not alienated is a clear indicator that they understood and strove to achieve the insurgent strategic objective of gaining popular support. Remarkably, they could not duplicate this achievement in urban areas or in the realm of international.

General David Richards, Commander of ISAF from 2006-2008, remarked, that he have never encountered “a more sophisticated propaganda machine” than the Taliban’s.³⁵ A 2010 DOD report echoed this thought: “the insurgency has a number of strengths, the most significant strength and main effort being the speed and decisiveness of their information operations and media campaign.”³⁶ The two most common sources of propaganda-spawning events can be divided into incumbent-created and those that are insurgent-created.

Incumbent-created events, often referred to in Western sources using sports metaphors such as “fumble” or “own goal,” occur when the incumbent commits an action that decreases his own legitimacy. The insurgent can then highlight these actions for his gain. ISAF/GIRoA-created events have been exploited by Taliban propaganda to undermine the legitimacy of ISAF/GIRoA institutions in the minds of the urban and rural populations of Afghanistan as well as throughout the world. The Taliban have been quite effective at focusing attention on ISAF airstrikes that cause civilian casualties. Such airstrikes themselves and the Taliban’s skillful propaganda brings condemnation from all sectors, creates a divide between ISAF and GIRoA, and often force ISAF to restrict the use of aircraft, which is a key advantage they hold over the less

³⁴ Johnson and DuPee, “Analysing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (Layeha),” 78–81.

³⁵ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 119.

³⁶ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan November 2010* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, November 2010), 43.

technologically sophisticated insurgents. The Taliban have also highlighted cultural missteps by ISAF. In 2012, American soldiers working at the Detention Facility in Parwan (DFIP), mistakenly burned a number of Korans, which was not a Muslim-sanctioned method of destruction. When this story was discovered by the press, locals rioted for days.³⁷ It also brought condemnation from Muslims around the world. This incident also decreased the level of trust between ISAF and GIRoA in relation to the legitimacy of detention facility, probably playing a role in the Afghan's demanding to take control of the DFIP before they were adequately prepared to.

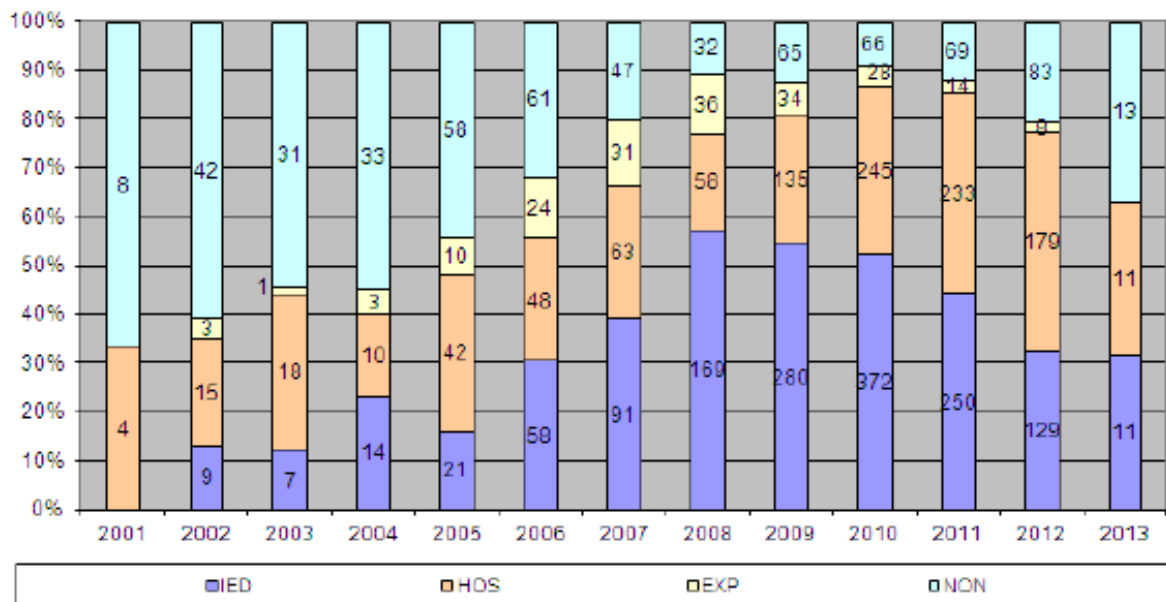
The second type of propaganda event is insurgent-driven. Such events occur when insurgents conduct attacks against incumbent targets, highlighting the ineffectiveness of the incumbent security forces. They also bring attention to the organizations that conducted the attack, usually increasing the funding they receive from their superiors or international donors. For example, in 2008 the Taliban staged an attack in Kabul during the National Day parade, commemorating the overthrow of Najibullah's government in 1992. The importance of the event guaranteed that television crews from multiple news outlets would be able to transmit "the rout of be-medaled parade soldiers scampering across the parade square before the Taliban fire. They also emphasized a loss of authority showing rows of dignitaries diving for cover" around the world.³⁸ The success of large-scale attacks such as this have begun to wane as NDS increases its capability to hunt down large, unwieldy urban insurgent networks. This shift demonstrates the Taliban's need to focus on the final insurgent strategic objective, survival.

We previously noted the relatively small size of the Taliban insurgency compared to the Mujahidin. Therefore, maintaining Taliban

³⁷ David E. Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (Broadway, 2012), 113.

³⁸ Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 133.

manpower is a key goal. This was a hard-learned lesson. In 2006, during their initial offensive surge, the Taliban would mass hundreds of fighters in attempts to intimidate provincial-level government and military officials. These large formations were soon decimated by ISAF ground forces supported by coalition aircraft with some insurgent groups suffering up to 75 percent casualties.³⁹ As a result, the insurgents implemented two new tactics to decrease their casualties, while still disrupting ISAF/GIRoA security and institution-building efforts. These were the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and suicide bombers (Figure 8).



³⁹ Seitz, *The Future of the Afghan Insurgency*, 14.

Year	Improvised Explosive Device	Suicide Bombs	Mortars/RPG's/Rockets	Landmine	Helicopter Losses*	Aircraft Losses*	Other Hostile Fire	Non-Hostile Causes*	Total
2001	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	4 (33.3%)	6 (50.0%)	12
2002	5 (10.2%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.0%)	4 (8.2%)	18 (36.7%)	12 (24.5%)	8 (16.3%)	49
2003	1 (2.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19 (39.6%)	0 (0%)	12 (25.0%)	16 (33.3%)	48
2004	12 (23.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.8%)	3 (5.8%)	10 (19.2%)	23 (44.2%)	52
2005	18 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.0%)	5 (5.1%)	36 (36.4%)	1 (1.0%)	20 (20.2%)	17 (17.2%)	99
2006	27 (27.6%)	3 (3.1%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	21 (21.4%)	0 (0%)	33 (33.7%)	12 (12.2%)	98
2007	33 (28.2%)	1 (0.9%)	9 (7.7%)	1 (0.9%)	13 (11.1%)	0 (0%)	35 (29.9%)	25 (21.4%)	117
2008	84 (54.2%)	4 (2.6%)	7 (4.5%)	2 (1.3%)	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	36 (23.2%)	20 (12.9%)	155
2009	142 (45.5%)	8 (2.6%)	21 (6.7%)	0 (0%)	13 (4.2%)	2 (0.6%)	91 (29.1%)	35 (11.2%)	312*
2010	257 (51.5%)	8 (1.6%)	16 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	20 (4.0%)	0 (0%)	164 (32.9%)	34 (6.8%)	499
2011	183 (43.8%)	9 (2.2%)	12 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	35 (8.4%)	0 (0%)	132 (31.6%)	47 (11.2%)	418
2012	104 (33.5%)	12 (3.9%)	5 (1.6%)	0 (0%)	21 (6.8%)	1 (0.3%)	116 (37.4%)	51 (16.5%)	310
2013	8 (29.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (29.6%)	1 (3.7%)	6 (22.2%)	4 (14.8%)	27
Total	874 (39.8%)	45 (2.0%)	75 (3.4%)	11 (0.5%)	196 (8.9%)	26 (1.2%)	671 (30.6%)	298 (13.6%)	2196

Figure 8. Causes of Coalition Casualties 2001-2013

Source: Reprinted from an Livingston and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Afghanistan Index: Also Including Selected Data on Pakistan* (Brookings Institute, April 26, 2013), 11,13, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/programs/foreign-policy/afghanistan-index>. Key: Improvised Explosive Device (IED), Hostile Fire (HOS), Indirect Fire (EXP), Non-hostile Incident (NON).

As the statistics in Figure 8 indicate, IEDs became a significant source of ISAF casualties beginning in 2012. This result was important because the risk imposed to insurgents emplacing IEDs was significantly less than those that attacked coalition forces in direct attacks. The propaganda value of these attacks was high, as the mounting casualties caused ISAF governments and civilian populations to question their commitment to the conflict. The propaganda value has been recently reduced as ISAF has become more successful at countering these devices. As a result, more civilians are becoming casualties of these insurgent weapons. In the latter half of 2012, almost 60 percent of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan were caused by IEDs, providing ISAF and GIROA with new ammunition in the never-ending propaganda war.⁴⁰ The evolution of an insurgent tactic that increased their survivability but

⁴⁰ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 32.

backfired on the strategic communications front continued with suicide bombers.

In 2006 there were 136 suicide attacks in Afghanistan, in contrast to the period of 2003-2005 when there were only 29.⁴¹ These attacks, primarily conducted in urban areas, had many advantages for the insurgents. The tactic would supposedly allow an individual, aided by a small group of friendly agents avoid detection, to conduct high-profile attacks in heavily guarded cities. Furthermore, a single suicide bomber could kill a significantly larger number of adversaries than he could on the battlefield. These attacks, however, also had unintended, negative consequences. Many suicide bombers, unfamiliar with the urban environment or who had merely become nervous, would detonate prematurely, causing many civilian casualties.⁴² ISAF exploited the civilian casualties caused by these attacks in its strategic communication campaign in 2008. Additionally, even small suicide-bomber cells are becoming vulnerable to NDS sweep operations. In the latter half of 2012, 11 of 14 potential suicide bombers were captured before reaching their targets.⁴³

The propaganda failures of IEDs and suicide bombings have presented a significant challenge for the insurgency. The character of the current fight has caused a conflict between their fundamental strategic goals. There are conflicting requirements between discrediting ISAF/GIRoA through insurgent-caused propaganda while avoiding civilian casualties and maintaining the survivability of the insurgents. It is this nexus of contradictions that has resulted in infiltrators perpetrating Insider Attacks.

⁴¹ "Afghanistan The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan," 72.

⁴² "Afghanistan The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan," 73-74.

⁴³ Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012*, 25.

Infiltrator Behavior, Why Insider Attacks?

During the Soviet occupation, Mujahidin infiltrators conducted three key functions: collecting intelligence, obtaining arms and supplies for their groups, and attacking the legitimacy of security forces and the support of the Soviet population by enabling insurgent attacks. As we have seen, the ISAF/GIRoA focus on winning the hearts and minds of the entire population of Afghanistan, as well as the Taliban's necessary response to win the hearts and minds of not only the Afghan population, but also of the international community, has resulted in a significantly different means to achieve their strategic objectives.

We previously noted the insurgent's use of infiltrators to provide intelligence with which to enable attacks against ISAF/GIRoA important targets.⁴⁴ Much as in the Soviet era, this has caused some mistrust between the two sides. At least one official working with the Afghan army has reported that he was restricted from sharing intelligence with his counterparts because it was believed it would eventually reach to the hands of the Taliban.⁴⁵ This negative operational effect of this mistrust, which plagued the Soviets, has begun to wane. ISAF is currently assuming more of an advisory and training role, leaving ANSF to conduct independent operations across the country. This has resulted in less potential friction points between operational units but has created an opportunity to create rifts between ISAF training units and their Afghan trainees. The ability Taliban's ability to exploit this growing vulnerability was demonstrated when ISAF training of ANSF was suspended in reaction to Insider Attacks..

⁴⁴ For example, see Thomas Harding, "Attack on Leon Panetta's Plane' at Camp Bastion," *Telegraph.co.uk*, March 14, 2012, sec. worldnews, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9143784/Attack-on-Leon-Panettas-plane-at-Camp-Bastion.html>; Blake, "Taliban Spies in British Army Bases."

⁴⁵ Byman, "Friends Like These," 97.

There is no convincing evidence that Taliban are currently using infiltrators to obtain arms and ammunition as their Mujahidin predecessors did. This is probably due to the abundance of such supplies in the region. On the Pakistani side of the border, to which the Taliban enjoy unrestricted access, there is a thriving black-market economy specializing in the sale of weapons. In one village alone, there are reported to be over 1,200 stores selling weapons and over 6,000 gunsmiths. Additionally there are still numerous weapons caches secreted across the Afghan countryside from the previous civil wars.⁴⁶ With such a surplus of weaponry available, it is logical to conclude that the current insurgency would not risk using well-placed infiltrators to smuggle supplies.

The other significant, and more compelling, difference between Taliban and Mujahidin infiltrators is the way violence was used to influence the populations and governments of the intervening powers assisting the Afghan government, i.e., The Soviet Union and ISAF. The Mujahidin influenced the Soviet population through the quantity of casualties, i.e. the more the better. Because the Mujahidin were not very concerned by causing collateral damage, it stands to reason that they would lower their potential cost by not putting an infiltrator at risk by conducting an attack when the same effect could be achieved through a stand-off rocket attack or by having the infiltrator merely facilitate the attack and avoid notice. In contrast, it appears that at this stage of the current conflict, the Taliban can affect the populations of ISAF nations, not by the quantity, but by the quality, of the casualties. In a world where the cause of every ISAF casualty is available on the Internet, the cause of the injury matters more than it did during the Soviet occupation. The Insider Attack also causes a breach of trust between ISAF and ANSF individuals and creates a level of mistrust between the

⁴⁶ Seitz, *The Future of the Afghan Insurgency*, 9–10.

populations of ISAF nations and the Afghan people. If the voting publics in ISAF nations come to believe that the ANSF are unreliable allies, it will be harder for ISAF governments to support GIRoA. This benefit to the Taliban is enhanced by the other benefits indigenous to Insider Attacks, e.g. minimal collateral damage. Therefore, in the cost/benefit equation, the cost of an Insider Attack is high because most infiltrators are either killed, captured, or forced to abandon the position they infiltrated. However the benefit offsets the cost by providing the best means available to affect all the relevant populations.

We must also grasp the reality that the positive propaganda effect toward the Afghan population for the Taliban that occurs as a result of these attacks is not damaged by any accusations of collateral damage. Kalyvas' theory of civil war violence highlights two key factors these Insider Attacks have adopted. First is the proposition that "indiscriminate violence is counterproductive."⁴⁷ Second, because discriminate violence requires a "complex and costly infrastructure," it is too difficult for insurgents to conduct discriminate violence in areas in which the incumbent is in control, e.g. Kabul.⁴⁸ This is not totally accurate in this conflict. Infiltration provides the attacker with sufficient information to choose the time and place of his operation, allowing him to maximize damage to the incumbent while minimizing collateral damage. Almost 90 percent of Insider Attacks occur on military bases or inside police stations, which limits the possibility of civilian casualties.⁴⁹ While attacks can result in as few as one incumbent death, the true value of the action is the propaganda value derived i.e., the propaganda of the deed.

⁴⁷ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 144.

⁴⁸ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 170.

⁴⁹ "Afghanistan - Insider Threat Training Briefing," 17.

One effect of the current increase of Insider Attacks frequently overstated is the negative effect on future ANSF capability due to disruptions in training. The DRA army, which was predicted to collapse as soon as the Soviets withdrew, was able to hold out as long as it received supplies. The US and other ISAF nations have pledged significant amounts of money to ensure the ANSF does not suffer this fate. Additionally, it is probable that many Western military analysts underestimate the ANSF because they are not equal to US standards. But the ANSF, currently number over 300,000; and even though they may not be able to eliminate every single insurgent, such a large force is, in all probability, adequate to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a failed state that can be used as a terrorist safe haven to launch attacks against the US and Europe. Denying such a sanctuary was the original purpose Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.⁵⁰ The probability of ANSF success will be significantly higher if ISAF follows through with its plan of keeping a small contingent SOF in Afghanistan to augment the ANSF.⁵¹

Finally, one overlooked aspect of the Insider Attacks often overlooked by the Western press is that the insurgents are prosecuting a similar campaign against the ANSF (Figure 9). These “green-on-green” attacks have a potential not only to lower the morale of the nascent security forces, but also may cause Afghans to question their own security when ISAF withdraws. Afghan history, however, suggests that the Afghan people are willing to side with the organization that appears

⁵⁰ Olikier, “What the Soviets Can Teach Us About Leaving Afghanistan”; Anthony H. Cordesman, “Time to Focus on ‘Afghan Good Enough,’” *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, May 1, 2012, <http://csis.org/publication/time-focus-afghan-good-enough>.

⁵¹ Thom Shanker, “U.S. Special Operations Step Up in Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 2013, sec. World / Asia Pacific, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/15/world/asia/us-special-operations-step-up-in-afghanistan.html>.

to have the best chance of success. At present, this appears to the constituted Afghan government, and not the Taliban.

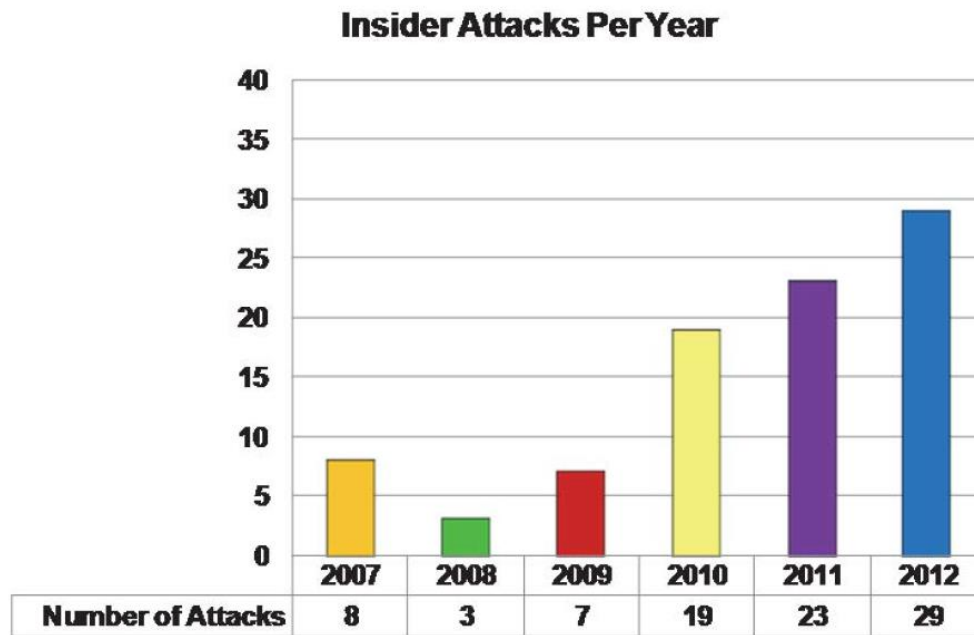


Figure 9. Green-on-Green Insider Attacks

Source: Reprinted from Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, December 2012), 34, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/1230_Report_final.pdf.

Conclusions

Summary, Recommendations, and Future Research

Carl von Clausewitz wrote that “everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.”¹ This thesis has demonstrated that the irregular warfare, especially counterinsurgency, is anything but simple, based on the large number of variables involved. This is particularly true when we try to discern the motivating factors behind the actions of our adversaries.

We began by understanding that the current wave of Insider Attacks in Afghanistan has been part of a larger insurgent tactic, infiltration. Next we highlighted the need to investigate infiltrator behavior from multiple levels of analysis. Much current analysis focuses on discerning the individual motivations for infiltrator behavior but does not paint a complete picture. Studies such as Waltz’s *Man The State and War*, Allison and Zelikow’s *Essence of Decision*, Pape’s *Dying to Win*, and Kalyvas’ *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* demonstrate the utility of looking at problems not only from the individual point of view, but also from other perspectives, including the strategic and organizational.

We next examined the works of a number of noted insurgent and counterinsurgent theorists in an attempt to discern key strategic objectives of both. This examination identified key insurgent objectives to be collecting intelligence, gaining popular support, and preserving resources. We also identified key counterinsurgent objects, to include, collecting intelligence, gaining popular support, denying popular support to the insurgency, and creating legitimate institutions. We then highlighted key infiltrator missions.

¹ Carl von Clausewitz et al., *On War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984). 119.

An in-depth analysis of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979-1989 reinforced the importance of the previously identified strategic objectives. The Mujahidin were able to extend the war until the eventual Soviet withdrawal by using infiltrators primarily to collect intelligence that enhanced their survivability. These infiltrators also helped stabilize the flow of supplies to a number of insurgent groups. In contrast, the Soviets and DRA were unable to prevent the Mujahidin from winning the hearts and minds of the population. This was largely due to the Soviet 40th Army's proclivity to cause huge amounts of collateral damage and to commit atrocities that alienated the rural population. We also assessed that the Mujahidin were capable of influencing the Soviet population and government without sacrificing their infiltrators. Stand-off weapons, to include rockets, created more casualties that led to greater popular unrest in the Soviet Union than Insider Attacks would have created.

Finally, we scrutinized how the strategic objectives of the current Taliban-led insurgency led to the use of Insider Attacks as a necessary infiltrator action. Throughout the conflict between ISAF and the Taliban, both sides have become much more adept at strategically communicating the other side's flaws in an attempt to undermine its credibility. This has forced the Taliban to produce a method with which they could delegitimize the GIRoA and ISAF while still minimizing collateral damage and increase the survivability of their urban-infiltrator networks. Infiltrators had enough knowledge and opportunity to conduct this mission through Insider Attacks.

In Chapter Two we surmised that history is an excellent way to augment one's experience. The examination of both Mujahidin and Taliban infiltrators and their effects on their adversaries can be distilled into three key lessons for future US and allied operations, from large-scale counterinsurgencies to smaller Foreign Internal Defense missions.

First is the need to look at the “whole picture” when trying to understand why specific tactics are being used. In today’s era of advanced intelligence collection techniques and networked databases, the amount of data available to analysts and operators is impressive. This “big data” tempts analysts to focus on the minutiae. While being able to ferret out the tactical motivations of individual adversaries, we must never forget to put all enemy and friendly actions into operational and strategic contexts. Only by aligning all three perspectives - tactical, operational, and strategic - can we truly understand the environment in which we are operating. Such understanding, however, will invariably involve some informed guesswork on the part of the analyst and strategist. Insurgent movements rarely provide specific roadmaps as to why they are using specific tactics, much less the strategic effects they wish to achieve. In this case, the strategist must use a mixture of theory and historical case studies to fill in the gaps and make an informed judgment. This is particularly important when creating an accurate narrative in strategic communications.

Second, when operating as an intervening power in another country, there is no substitute for highly proficient, well-resourced, indigenous intelligence services. Both KHAD and NDS were key cogs in the machinery of their respective counterinsurgent fights, particularly in identifying or interdicting insider threats. There are potential points of conflict, though, such as when host-nation officers use collection methods that are not consistent with US moral and legal standards, e.g., torture. Additionally, it is important for Embassy country teams to cooperate in this effort. Legal attaché access to host-nation law-enforcement investigators, coupled with military attaché access to host-nation military intelligence organizations, is the cornerstone of an integrated approach to discovering infiltrators.

Third, when training host-nation security forces it is important to realize the level of competency for which you are striving. During the Soviet era it was widely assumed by the Soviets, the Mujahidin, and the international community that the DRA army would not be able to stand against the Mujahidin. The fact that the DRA army conducted successful campaigns as long as it received material aid came as a surprise. While it lacked the training of the best Soviet troops, the DRA were not asked to conduct large-scale heliborne offensive operations. It was able to conduct their key mission to defend large urban population centers, but this fact was initially overlooked. ISAF has recently come to grips with this concept by embracing the concept of “Afghan good enough.”²

Finally, it is important to admit that this work represents a single contribution that should increase the level of understanding about Insider Attacks. There is much more work, academic as well as practical, to be done on this subject. Most obviously, there are a number of other historical insurgencies to analyze. A careful selection of additional case studies would certainly produce useful results. In addition, the methodology used in the case-studies can also be expanded. Insurgency, as we have seen, is extremely complicated; and this work has attempted to simplify that complexity into a usable tool. Examining more of the strategic objectives highlighted by past academic and practical counterinsurgent theorists and doctrinal works would also bring greater clarity to this issue. Nevertheless, there should be sufficient validity in the conclusion noted above to advance the dialogue about a small, but potentially important, aspect of the dynamics of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies.

² Anthony H. Cordesman, “Time to Focus on ‘Afghan Good Enough,’” Center for Strategic & International Studies, May 1, 2012, <http://csis.org/publication/time-focus-afghan-good-enough>.

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