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INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS AND IRREGULAR WARFARE:
A CASE STUDY OF THE SOVIET RED ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN (1979-1989)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the behaviours of the Soviet Red Army as an organization during the war in Afghanistan using the *Institutional Analysis* model proposed by organizations research professor W. Richard Scott. There were powerful institutional forces that prevented an effective adaptation, and it was only when the pressures, from both the internal and external environment become strong enough that the Soviet military institution adapted to irregular warfare. *Regulative* forces included; legal sanctions justifying operations in the country, the protocols and SOPs of the Red Army and the political direction from the Kremlin. *Normative* forces included; the moral justification for the invasion, the view of the coup in 1978 as a people's revolution, the archetype of the Red Army leadership, and the belief that the Red Army was an appropriate political tool of the CPSU. *Cultural-cognitive* forces included; an underestimation of the Afghan Army as a credible branch of the government and of the Mujahedeen as a fighting force, a skewed view of the central government relating to the mobilization of the people following the coup in 1978, and Soviet symbolic artefacts such as the Soviet Mi-24 Hind helicopter. These powerful institutional forces all had constraining effects on the behaviour of the Red Army. For the most part, the Soviets failed to effectively adapt to the asymmetric warfare, yet few adaptations did occur. It was only when the pressures upon the these institutional forces intensified, such as Gorbachev's decree for an early end in Afghanistan, that the Red Army changed its behaviour and adapted appropriate methods to fight the war.

INTRODUCTION

As Canada, along with much of the Western world engages in counter-insurgency (COIN) operation, victory often appears illusive regardless of the resources and force brought to bear. In the last decade, the most prominent conflicts in which coalition and NATO forces have engaged include the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both of these conflicts have deteriorated into asymmetrical warfare with an element of insurgency within the population. The challenges of COIN operations continue to prove enigmatic and decisive victory often appears illusive. In order to effectively combat the non-conventional forces of the insurgents, conventional military forces need to adapt their military tactics, yet change does not come easily to conventional forces. History has shown that COIN operations have tended to be protracted as a result of this resistance to adapt and lethargic adoption of effective approaches to irregular warfare.

Examples of failed conventional military conflicts against insurgencies include the French in Algeria (1954 – 1962), the United States in Vietnam (1958 – 1975), and the Sandinista government fighting the Contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s. In each of these conflicts, the blue force failed to easily and timely adapt to the irregular warfare resulting in loss of lives as well as military objectives. As Western militaries struggle to recast military tactics accordingly, it is useful to examine the case-studies of past COIN operations with similar complexities to remodel asymmetrical warfare strategy. For the purpose of this paper, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s in which the Red Army faced a counter insurgency from the Mujahedeen freedom fighters will be examined in depth.

Simplistically, the failure of the Soviets in Afghanistan has been attributed to the foreign aid, primarily from American and Saudi money, that provided the Mujahedeen with the weapons necessary to gain the upper hand over the Soviets.[1] However, the Soviets were in jeopardy of losing the battle long before the Mujahedeen attained a weaponry advantage due greatly in part to a lack of adapting military strategy to compensate for the asymmetrical warfare that often accompanies COIN Operations. This paper will focus on a comprehensive analysis within a case study of the Soviet-Afghan war. To this point, military scholars and historians have concentrated on the causes for war, the foreign policies involved, the leadership of the nations as well as the military units, strategy, and tactics. Rather, this case study will be analysed through the focal point of the blue force, the Soviet Red Army, as an institution or organization and its behaviours as they pertain to the war in Afghanistan. The lens through which the analysis will be achieved is the Institutional Analysis model proposed by organizations research professor W. Richard Scott.

The Institutional Analysis model will be overlaid on to the case study of the Soviet war in Afghanistan in order to deduce the failure of the blue force in the COIN operation. More specifically, the model will be implemented to identify the reasons for how the Soviet forces adapted or failed to adapt to irregular warfare in spite of the obvious flaws of their approach. Moreover, it will be shown that there were powerful institutional forces that prevented an effective adaptation, and it was only when the pressures, from both internal and external environments become strong enough that the Soviet military institution adapted to irregular warfare.

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[1] ***The True Story of Charlie Wilson***, DVD, directed by David Keane A&E Home Video, 2008)

To provide a framework for this investigation, an understanding of the Institutional Analysis model is critical in this study, therefore chapter one of this paper will focus on explaining the three pillars of Scott's model. These pillars; the *regulative* (formal and informal social predictability based on rules and regulations), the *normative* (values and norms collectively shared), and the *cultural-cognitive* (shared pre-conceived notions and thought pattern etc.); will be applied to the Soviet Red Army case study. Chapter two will provide a historical account of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and offer examples of occasions that required decision or action on the part of the Soviets throughout the campaign and how the Soviets responded. The remaining three chapters will analyze the Soviet war in Afghanistan through the lens of the three pillars of the institutional model, one for each chapter respectively. This will provide examples of the powerful institutional forces which prevented the Red Army from adapting to the asymmetric warfare of the COIN operation. This analysis has been derived from a combination of sources including books, contemporary military journal articles, accounts from military personnel from both Red Army and Mujahedeen, transcripts from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Politburo, and various articles from the Cold War International History Project from the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars.

CHAPTER 1: Institutional Analysis as a Model

The Red Army's failure to establish a victory in Afghanistan was due to a failure to adapt to the asymmetrical warfare used by the Afghans during the 1980 occupation. The complexities behind this failure to adapt can be analysed by examining the Red Army as an institution and the crippling effect an institution can have on changing a conventional military strategy to adapting to a counter insurgency. The factors that categorize the Red Army as an institution will be examined through a 3 pillar model by W. Richard Scott from his book titled, "*Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Ideology*." In his writings, Scott describes the historical path to contemporary institutional analysis by breaking up the studies into rules, norms and cultural beliefs. *Institutions and Organizations* serves as a historical account of the contribution from economics, political science and sociology as each discipline has contributed to the understanding of a model for institutions. Although none of these disciplines have provided a concise, all-encompassing portrayal of institutional behaviour, it is by combining the perspectives from each discipline that a useable model can be extracted. These three elements are "the elastic fibres that resist change and the building blocks of institutional structures." As such, in relation to past events, these elements can be examined individually in order to explain the change, or lack there of, within an organization.[2]

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[2] *Ibid.,* 49

Within this chapter, there will be an analysis of the three pillars that constitute the characteristics of an institution. Each pillar will be examined according to: 1) their basis for compliance, 2) their mechanism of diffusion, 3) their type of logic, 4) their cluster of indicators and 5) their foundation for legitimacy. Legitimacy will be discussed in terms of its importance to institutions as well as an explanation on how the model will be used to analyse the case-study. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary and transition to the case-study itself.

Scott outlines 3 pillars that come together to build an institution. In order to create a framework for the 3 pillar model, Scott describes what he calls the, "omnibus conception of institutions," listed in *Table 2.1*.

Table 2.1: Omnibus Conception of Institutions

• Institutions are social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience.
• Institutions are composed of cultured-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life.
• Institutions are transmitted by various types of carriers including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines, and artefacts.
• Institutions operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction, from the world system to localized interpersonal relationships.
• Institutions by definition connote stability but are to change processes both incremental and discontinuous

Source: Scott, "Institutions and Organizations," 48.

As stated above, the three elements – regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive – are collaborative as well as distinct. Herein are their distinct properties.[3]

The regulative pillar is the constraints within an organization. That is, the rules and regulations which are engendered within an organization that dictate what an organization can or cannot do. Rules and regulations serve an organization to move it forward by dictating appropriate behaviour. There is an expedience gained by following a pre-stated regulative rule that serves to legitimize the organization when these legally sanctioned rules are followed. These regulations are followed often because of human nature to follow said rules. The foundation for legitimacy is further reinforced by the

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[3] *Ibid.,* 47

legally sanctioned nature of the regulations. In order to determine how regulative forces act on organization, the rules, laws, sanctions of the organization and its associated behaviours must be examined.

The normative pillar is the way things should be within an organization in contrast to the way things actually are within organization. Values describe *what ought to be* whereas norms describe *how things ought to be done*. Subsequently, normative forces act not only to influence what is to be done but the manner in which it is accomplished. The basis for compliance to these forces is prescriptive in nature to the point of social obligation to do, 'what is right,' while the basis of order is derived from a binding expectation within the organization that those principles will be followed. These serve to produce an expected behaviour pattern for the institution based on the logic of appropriateness of that behaviour in relation to the activity in which the organisation is engaged. The normative legitimacy of an organization is morally governed by common values shared by the group. In searching for normative factors, certification or accreditation mechanisms should be examined to present its norms, values and standards.

The cultural-cognitive pillar is the social discernment or a common mental model of a given situation and connotes individual application in the form of behaviour to an organizationally created perception. The basis for compliance to the organization within the cultural-cognitive pillar is that of a shared understanding of how to behave within a specific situation. This understanding is almost taken for granted in that it is subconsciously applied to the given situation. The resulting, "shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality," is a common mental outline of the world which in

turn dictates behaviour.[4] This constitutive schema is perpetuated within the institution

through mimetic conduct of individuals repeatedly within the organization. This

conformity is realized based on a common mental model of a situation that is strictly

adhered to and as such, the basis for legitimacy becomes scripted behaviour that is

comprehensible, recognizable and culturally supported within the organization. In

mining for the influence of the cultural-cognitive pillar within an institution, it is the

common beliefs and shared logics of action that are examined.

The three pillars act on each other, sometimes reinforcing one another while other

times undermining the other's forces. It is when an institution is challenged, be it by an

internal conflict or an external pressure, that there evolves a strong resistance to change.

It is through this resistance to change that an organisation derives its legitimacy. For a

complete summary of the characteristics of each pillar please see *Table 2.2: The Three*

Pillars of Institutions.[5]

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[4] *Ibid.,* 57

[5] *Ibid.,* 53

Table 2.2: The Three Pillars of Institutions

	REGULATIVE	NORMATIVE	CULTURAL-COGNITIVE
Basis of Compliance	Expedience	Social Obligation	Taken-for-grantedness Shared Understanding
Basis of Order	Regulative Rules	Binding Expectations	Constitutive Schema
Mechanisms	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
Logic	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
Indicators	Rules Laws Sanctions	Certification Accreditation	Common Beliefs Shared Logics of Action
Basis of Legitimacy	Legally Sanctioned	Morally Governed	Comprehensible Recognizable Culturally Supported

Source: Scott, "Institutions and Organizations," 53.

The three pillars serve to explain how an organization is seen as legitimate via justification or legitimization of the organization itself.[6] Within each of the pillars, the legitimacy of the institution is derived in different ways, yet the need for legitimacy is a universal need of all institutions. Scott writes, *"As organizations become infused with value, they are no longer regarded as expandable tools; participants want to see that they are preserved."*[7] The pillar that out-weighs the others is decided by the perception from which the situation is being examined. If the focus of the examination of an organisation centres on the regulative pillar, the regulative forces will give more legitimacy to the organization.[8] This holds true of the normative and cultural-cognitive

[6] *Ibid.,* 58

[7] *Ibid.,* 24

[8] *Ibid.,* 63-64

pillars as well. Legitimacy justification can therefore be at conflict.[9] Take for example,

soldiers who are to obey orders from the legitimate chain of command. If an order is

issued from the chain of command that is unlawful, the soldier's regulative and normative

biases are in conflict. If the order is followed, the institution is legitimized from a

regulative point of view however; the action undermines the legitimacy of the

organization from a normative point of view. Conversely, if the order is disobeyed, the

institution is legitimized from a normative point of view, yet undermined from a

regulative point of view.

Regulative legitimacy is derived from the conformity to rules by individuals

within an organization. Hence, legitimate organizations are those established by and

operating in accordance with relevant legal or quasi-legal requirements. Normative

legitimacy comes from a deep moral basis. Normative controls are much more likely to

be internalized than are regulative controls; and the incentives for conformity are,

therefore, likely to include intrinsic as well as extrinsic rewards. Cultural-Cognitive

legitimacy occurs when individuals within an organization adopt that organization's

common frame of reference to a given situation. In other words, to adopt an orthodox

structure or identity to relate to a specific situation is to seek the legitimacy that comes

from cognitive consistency. The cultural-cognitive mode is the "deepest" level as it rests

on preconscious, assumed understandings.[10]

As mentioned above, the characteristics of institutions are perpetuated through

various types of carriers including: "symbolic systems, relational systems, routines, and

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[9] *Ibid.,* 61

[10] *Ibid.,* 60-61

artefacts."[11] These carriers differ from pillar-to-pillar and thus can be used as guides to determine what influences dominate an organisation. For instance, a country's flag holds symbolic value to its citizens. When the flag is flown, it represents sovereignty of that country, which signals to its population that the characteristics of the country are to be continued to follow and thus perpetuates the culture within. A summary of these carriers as they pertain to each pillar is outlined below in Table 2.3: *Institutional Pillars and Carriers*

Table 2.3: Institutional Pillars and Carriers.

CARRIERS	REGULATIVE	NORMATIVE	CULTURAL-COGNITIVE
Symbolic Symbols	Rules Laws	Values Expectations	Categories Typifications Schema
Relational Systems	Governance Systems Power Systems	Regimes Authority Systems	Structural Isomorphism Identities
Routines	Protocols Standard Operating Procedures	Jobs Roles Obedience to Duty	Scripts
Artefacts	Objects Complying with Mandated Specifications	Objects Meeting Conventions Standards	Objects Possessing Symbolic Value

Source: Scott, "Institutions and Organizations," 77.

According to Scott there are also varying levels through which institutions can be examined: "Institutions operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction, from the world system to localized interpersonal relationships."[12] The level at which the system is analysed is

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[11] *Ibid.,* 48

[12] *Ibid.,* 48

relevant as it determines how pervasive a given phenomenon is within an organization and henceforth provides a focused effort in determining its institutional pressures. Scott describes six levels through which an institution can be examined: organizational sub-system, organization, organization population, organization field, societal, and world-system. Though Scott identifies these six levels for the scope of the analysis herein, for the purpose of this argument the analysis will be limited to the examination of Soviet society (societal), the Red Army (organization) and sub-groups within the Red Army (organizational subsystem) such as the officer corps.

To date, institutional analysis has been used primarily to study the behaviour of private and public organizations within the professional community such as banks and corporations.[13] These analyses have focused on productivity or profitability increases. Recently, however, institutional analysis has been applied to the military context for the purpose of explaining the behaviour of armed forces as organizations. Recent work by Dr. Eric Ouellet from the Department of Defence Studies at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto, Ontario has pioneered a series of papers that examine conventional military forces involved in counter-insurgency operations.[14] The purpose of the present analyses will explain why adaptation to irregular warfare by conventional military forces meets strong resistance by implementing Scott's institutional analysis model. The three pillars of Scott's model will be used in subsequent chapters to explain the Soviet Red Army's

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[13] *Ibid.*, ix

[14] Both Algeria, Sri Lanka, and La « Petite Guerre » en Nouvelle-France

resistance to change in adopting effective strategies in the COIN operation of the Afghan war.

The Soviet Red army will be examined at varying levels to identify strong institutional forces within the organization that perpetuate the behaviours. As described earlier, institutional forces act to influence the behaviour of an organization. Pressures, both internal and external, act upon an organization by threatening its legitimacy. It is only when this pressure reaches great proportions that an organization is forced to change. For the purpose of this argument, institutional forces will be identified within the Red Army and the internal and external influences will be established so that one may understand how these pressures acted on the Red Army's behaviour and threatened its legitimacy. These forces will be revealed by examining the symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artefacts that served as the carriers for the Red Army's institutional identity. More specifically, decisions concerning the war will be closely investigated to uncover these carriers and accordingly, reveal the underlying motivations of the institution. As such, it will be the decisions of the leadership of the Red Army that will be primarily examined to uncover how this resistance to change affected military decisions, strategy and ultimately the outcome of the war.

In summary, W. Richard Scott's three pillar model will be applied to the institutional nature of the Red Army to explain their resistance to change their conventional military strategy into effective asymmetrical warfare tactics which ultimately cost them the war in Afghanistan. The application of Scott's model will examine the behaviour of organizations and how the three pillars – regulative, normative,

and cultural-cognitive – are distinct one from the other by their own unique basis of compliance, basis of order, mechanism of diffusion, type of logic, cluster of indicators, and foundation for legitimacy. The model will work synergistically in that all three pillars contribute to the biases and the institutional lethargy of an organization when faced with an influence to change. The importance of legitimacy to an institution will also be illustrated. In consideration of the aggregation of the effects of the three pillars, each will also contribute to decisions that resist this influence, again, resulting in the institution changing slowly over time. Through the examination of the internal and external stressors of the institution, this model becomes a useful tool for analysing the blue force within a COIN operation. By examining the changes to the approach to the operation and the decisions behind these changes, the strong institutional forces will become apparent.

CHAPTER 2: The Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan as a Case Study

The Soviet-Afghanistan Conflict of 1979 to 1989 will set the stage to illustrate the difficulties encountered by conventional military strategy, regardless of size of army, weaponry, or sheer will of its leader, to defeat insurgents engaged in asymmetric warfare. This conflict will be examined in depth to review how the Soviet's inability or perhaps unwillingness to adapt their tactics to fight a counter insurgency ultimately brought about their defeat against their disadvantaged enemy, the Afghans. The 1978 coup against Afghani president Mohammed Daoud Khan by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by the 40th Army on December of 1979.[15] This Christmas Eve invasion marks the official start to the Soviet war in Afghanistan, however, to understand the context, it is necessary to reflect upon the long history of Soviet, and before that, Russian involvement in South West and Central Asia. This chapter will serve as a historical account of the events leading up to the war as well as investigate what brought about the asymmetry of COIN operation against the Mujahedeen.

The Russians' pursuit of Afghanistan traces back to the 18th century as they presented themselves as liberators and friends of the Afghan people, but were thought of by many of the native people as foreign occupiers. The oral history of Afghanistan remembers the warning of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan from his deathbed, "My last words

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[15] Alam Payind, "Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 1989, 1989), 117, http://www.jstor.org/stable/163642 (accessed January 25, 2011).

to you, my son and successor, are: Never trust the Russians."[16] The expansion of the

Russian empire into central Asia dates back to the 18th century and their interest in

Afghanistan became evident in 1837 as Russian advisors joined Prussian forces in an

attempt to seize the city of Herat in 1837.[17] Russian imperialism had progressively

moved south, including absorption of Caucasus, Georgia, Khirgiz, Turkmens, Khiva and

Bukhara and eventually met head to head with the contending British Empire to gain

control over Afghanistan.[18] The first Anglo-Afghan war began in 1839 signifying the

start of '*The Great Game*', the name given to the period of time when the Russian and

British empires engaged in a strategic power struggle in central Asia.[19] The first Anglo-

Afghan War ended in 1842 but was quickly followed by the Second and Third Anglo-

Afghan wars in1878 and 1919 respectively as Great Game politics continued to compete

for power. The Great Game eventually came to an end with Russia and the UK serving

as allies in WWII but not before the Russians gave aid to Afghanistan supporting British

defeat in the Third Anglo-Afghan war thereby establishing a new era of Soviet-Afghan

relations.[20] Afghans who had fought three wars with the British welcomed the end of

British colonialism in South Asia and the 1921 treaty was signed with the Afghan King

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[16] *Ibid.,* 108

[17] David M. Glantz and Lester W. Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* London ; Frank Cass, 1998., xxv.

[18] *Ibid.,* xxvi

[19] *Ibid.,* xxv-xxvi

[20] *Ibid.,* xxvi

Amanullah Khan.[21] This was to mark the first treaty that Soviet entered into after

assuming power in Russia.[22]

While the Soviet Union emerged from WWII as a superpower, the British Empire,

wounded and weakened in the war, was transformed into the Common Wealth which

would mark the end of occupation in the countries of central Asia.[23] The partition of

India, the creation of Pakistan, and the challenge of re-absorption of Pashtunistan into

Afghanistan, resulted in a power vacuum in the region.[24] This vacuum provided the

platform the Soviet Union needed to gain influence in Afghanistan. The Soviets began

making alliances with the Afghan government by committing vast amounts of aid money

and pledged to support the Afghan government on the Pashtunistan question.[25] Aid

continued in the 1950's with the building of infrastructure including hospitals, roads, and

hydroelectric dams.[26] Progress was made in the areas of education, agriculture, health,

public works, and of course, military organizations.

In 1956, then Afghan Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud Kahn accepted Soviet

military aid in the amount of $32.4 million. Subsequently, an increasing reliance on the

Soviet Red Army began influencing Afghan military strategy, religious beliefs and

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[21] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 109.

[22] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xxvii.

[23] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 109.

[24] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xxvii.

[25] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 110.

political doctrine.[27] Soviet influence and dominance in the region continued to have

"occupation" undertones. Afghan military officers began to study in the Soviet Union

and conversely, Soviet advisors and teachers became embedded within Afghan military

units. In the 1960's, the Afghan reliance on the Soviet Union increased to greater heights

when the Pakistani border was closed resulting in an economic crisis for the territory. By

the time of the 1978 coup, it is estimated that over 4,000 Soviet-trained military and

paramilitary officers were operating in Afghanistan.[28] Furthermore, the roads and

infrastructure were actually built such that Soviet military could easily be transported in

the event of war with Iran or Pakistan.[29]

Throughout the 1960's and early 1970's, Soviet interest in Afghanistan grew, as

indicated by the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of aid, yet the Soviets struggled to

gain political power over the Afghan people. Rather, the Afghanistan government moved

from a dictatorship to a parliamentary monarch under King Zahir Shah who improved

relations with its neighbours in Pakistan and Iran.[30] Under King Zahir, many Western

democratic principles were introduced into Afghanistan. The new government's

separation of powers, election by secret ballot, presumption of innocence by the court,

and freedom of the press were ideas that ran not only contrary to Soviet ideology but also

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[26] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xxvii.

[27] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 111.

[28] *Ibid.,* 112

[29] *Ibid.,* 113

[30] Leadership was attempting to settle the differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the issue of Pashtunistan on the one hand and between Afghanistan and Iran over the issue of the Hilmand Tiver on the other. *Ibid.,* 113

against Shari'a, the supreme law in Afghanistan whereby religion and the state were held

to be inseparable.[31] The government's suppression of the Islamic Party and Muslim

clergy further stiffened the resolve of the Islamic movement and increased the latter's

popularity.[32] Afghanistan was becoming a boiling pot of a people divided by ideology

and it was these undercurrent differences that would play a role in the future politics of

the country.

Under King Zahir's democratic system, new political parties began to form. Of

the newly formed political parties, the Marxist PDPA was most closely linked to the

Soviet Union:

> The PDPA's strength did not lie in its membership or in its appeal to the religious
> and rural people of Afghanistan, but in its link to the Soviet Union and in its well-
> organized disinformation and intimidation tactics.[33]

By 1967, the PDPA had split into two factions. The Khalq faction, whose members were

Pashtun and had originally come from the provinces, was named for its newspaper, "The

Masses," and was led by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin. The Parcham

faction, which was also named for its newspaper - "The Banner" - was led by Barak

Karmal. These three leaders would all become Presidents and play a major role in the

1978 coup.[34]

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[31] In 1965 the PDPA called for the centralization of all power to the working class of
Afghanistan. Since there was no working class because it was predominantly rural therefore
ideologist message never took hold. Shari'a is a principle common to many Muslim countries
whereby religion and the state were held to be inseparable. *Ibid*

[32] *Ibid.,* 114

[33] *Ibid.,* 114

[34] *Ibid.,* 114

On July 17, 1973, Daoud assumed power from the King Zahir Shah and became the President of Afghanistan. Soviet advisors and Soviet-trained officers were instrumental to Daoud being returned to power because he had some credentials for legitimacy as the former prime minister and cousin to Zahir.[35] Daoud did not, however, become the figurehead that the Soviets had expected. Instead, he formed his own political party, the National Revolutionary Party in which his political support became strongly nationalistic and suppressed all other ideologies and parties including the Soviet-supported Khalq and Parcham factions. Instead, Daoud reintroduced the mediation with the Shah of Iran and engaged Pakistan for the purpose of defusing the Pashtunistan problem both of which served to undermine Soviet influence over Afghanistan.[36] As Daoud continued to work to separate himself from the Soviets who helped him to power, the Parcham and Khalq factions began to reconcile their differences in an effort to re-establish Soviet influence in Afghanistan.[37]

By 1978, Daoud had all but disassociated himself from the Soviets who helped him into power. In an attempt to further separate the Afghan Government from reliance on the Soviet Union, Daoud sought to diversify aid to Afghanistan, and to build closer relationships with neighbouring countries.[38] On April 26, 1978, Daoud ordered a purging of those government officials that opposed his rule and arrested PDPA leaders Taraki,

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[35] *Ibid.,* 115

[36] *Ibid.,* 116

[37] *Ibid.,* 117

[38] Daoud visited Saudi Arabia and in a joint communiqué, criticized the Soviet actions in the Horn of Africa. Daoud was planning a visit to Washington in June 1978 to meet with Carter to build closer relationship with other countries and reduce reliance upon the Soviets. *Ibid*

Amin and Karmal.[39] Ultimately, Daoud could not rid the country of Soviet influence he

had invited in 1956 during his role as Prime Minister. In response to the arrest of the

PDPA leaders, the Communist PDPA launched a bloody military coup in Kabul to

overthrow the Daoud regime and regain control of Afghanistan.[40] Armoured units

attacked the presidential palace with the support of precision air bombing of government

units on April 27th.[41] After the coup, PDPA prisoners were released and became the

leaders of the new soviet backed democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA).[42] In

speaking of, "anyone who believed that Soviets were not involved in the 1978 coup," an

Afghan journalist stated that these people,

> [were] either uninformed about the role of Soviets in the Afghan military or
> [were] confirming Lenin's assessment that there will always be useful idiots who
> would inadvertently support the communist cause.[43]

Initially, the leadership of the new regime was enjoying their relatively easy success in

taking over of the capital city, Kabul. This unexpected success, coupled with Soviet

guarantees, may have contributed to the PDPA's sense of superiority. It wasn't long

before it was apparent that the PDPA had little respect for Afghanistan's history, religion,

and tradition causing significant resentment among the Islamic people in Afghanistan.

Trouble between the Islamic people and the PDPA continued to increase as the Party

invited large numbers of Soviet advisors into the region and began ambitions reforms.

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[39] *Ibid.,* 117

[40] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* ,
xvii.

[41] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation,* 117.

[42] *Ibid.,* 118

[43] *Ibid.,* 118

These included changing the Islamic flag, creating new land reforms and forming

socialist indoctrination classes.[44] President Taraki, is remembered for leading an era of

social destruction of the traditional ways in Afghanistan including social structure,

women's roles and land distribution. These transformations were met with increasing

contempt among the Afghan people.[45] Dissention among the Afghans was not only

limited to the rural and Islamic people but would also include the PDPA government.

Old faction rivalries began to appear between the Taraki and the Kghalqi factions

of the PDPA. A great number of Parchamis were purged within three months of Taraki's

reign. Some of the top leaders of the Pacham were shipped to Soviet Block countries as

ambassadors while some less influential leaders were imprisoned or executed. The

purges proved to further weaken the legitimacy of the Soviet-supported new regime.[46]

The lack of internal support along with growing anti-communist sentiments among

Afghans eventually resulted in an anti-communist movement leading to the revolt of

March 1979 against the government in the city of Herat where approximately 200 Soviet

civilians and advisors were killed.[47] The Afghan Army's 17th division was sent in to

quell the uprising yet many of its sub-units revolted and joined the revolution.[48] Other

units soon followed suit and it became clear that the Kremlin was losing influence on

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[44] *Ibid.*, 119

[45] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xvii.

[46] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 119.

[47] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xvii.

[48] *Ibid.*, xvii

Afghanistan and Afghanistan began to look less and less like a satellite of the Soviet Union.[49]

In the summer of 1979, General Ivan G. Pavlovshiy, commanding general of all Soviet ground forces, arrived in Kabul with a team of sixty-three officers for the purpose of planning reconnaissance throughout Afghanistan. What they found confirmed there had been a mass defection with soldiers who often took their weapons and equipment with them to the Mujahedeen clearly indicating the Soviets were, "engaged in serious and complex matters."[50] These complex matters were indicative of the internal government struggle the Soviets tried to overcome. In September of 1979, Taraki was removed from power and killed by his right hand man, Amin, and his faction. In November of 1979, the Soviets supported the Afghan 3rd army in a major anti-guerrilla offensive with fighter bombers, helicopter support and 1000 ground troops. Following the engagement, the victorious Soviet troops returned to Bagram base. Afghan troops disbanded shortly thereafter relinquishing any advantages gained through the offensive. History had shown the Afghan army could support offensives and attacks but could not maintain the occupation of areas which allowed potential new insurgent attacks. Soviets had to rely on their own troops to occupy and maintain the communist regime.[51]

As Afghanistan continued to degenerate, the Kremlin believed that without intervention by the Red Army, the pro-Soviet regime would collapse, and Amin's regime

[49] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation,* 118.

[50] *Ibid.,* 120

would seek support and aid elsewhere like Daoud did a decade earlier.[52] In seizing

power, Amin became the second communist-backed president of Afghanistan, and as a

result of the turmoil would become, the third president killed for the installation of

another Soviet-supported communist leader.[53] Up until the invasion in December of

1979, the Soviet's involvement was a comprehensive effort of foreign aid, diplomatic

dialogue, government advisors, and military liaison thus demonstrating that the Soviets

were involved in Whole of Government work early on in the campaign.[54] The request for

Soviet troops by the Afghan government and the subsequent invasion by the Red Army

changed the Soviet approach in Afghanistan. In an effort to regain pro-Soviet power in

Afghanistan, Taraki was replaced as president by Amin who was later replaced by

Karmal. However, all three Soviet-supported communist leaders eventually were killed

resulting in the Soviet Red Army taking on a new strategy to regain power in the area-

invasion.

The Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan culminated on December 24th, 1979, when

Soviet airborne division landed in Kabul. The invasion expanded across the Uzbekistan

border on December 27, 1979 and advanced south along the parallel highways in effort to

secure the lines of communication (LOC) between Termez and Kushka in Uzbekistan and

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[51] Yossef Bodansky, "The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan," *World Affairs* 145, no. 3 (Winter) (1983), 275, http://web.ebscohost.com (accessed January 25, 2011).

[52] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 120.

[53] Barbak Karmal was declared the new president in December of the newly named Democratic Republic of Afghanistan following the invasion of Soviet troops on Christmas Eve day of 1979. *Ibid.*, 120

[54] At the time, 8,000 Soviet troops and 1,500 Soviet advisors were active in Afghanistan. *Ibid.*, 120

Kabul.[55] In all, five and a half Soviet divisions were involved.[56] However, just as

Imperial Britain was defeated by the Afghan tribesmen 150 years ago so would be the

Red Army of the Soviet Union.[57]

Although the Soviets were a greater military force in terms of size, organization

and firepower, as history had shown these elements were not what were required to fight

the Afghan Tribesmen. The Soviets did not heed the lessons learned in Central Asia over

the past 150 years by British forces. They failed to call upon their own experiences in the

region, such as the Basmachi movement of the early 20th century.[58] Rather, the invasion

resembled more recent Soviet invasions of annexed Eastern Bloc countries. More

specifically, this particular operation was modelled after the invasion of Czechoslovakia

where large amounts of Soviet troops crossed the border with the intent of rapidly

overthrowing the contrary government and reinstating the local communist party – in this

case the PDPA.

Soviet military strategy included overthrowing major cities by isolating radio

stations and centers of power.[59] Government leaders were murdered by the Spetsnaz

(Soviet Special Forces) and Babrak Karmal was placed as the new president of the now

Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA).[60] The purpose of the invasion was to

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[55] Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 278.

[56] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 121.

[57] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xi.

[58] The Basmachi Revolt was a Muslim uprising against the Russian in Central Asia in the early part of the 20th century. *Ibid.,* Foreword

[59] *Ibid.,* xviii

[60] *Ibid.,* xxx

expand the borders of the Soviet Union and, "if possible annex border areas as it did in

the Baltic States, the Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia.[61] General Valenin

Varennikov was accurate when he stated that the Soviets were naïve to think they would

achieve victory within six months followed by the stabilization of the pro-communist

government and removal of strategic targets.[62] In fact, quite the opposite occurred.

Instead, of re-establishing a pro-Soviet doctrine in the country, the invasion resulted in a

widespread support for the uprising leading to an insurgency resulting in the need for

85,000 Soviet Troops to resist the fierce resistance by the Mujahidin and unexpected

mass desertions from previous state supported army personnel.[63]

By January of 1980, the Soviets appeared to have succeeded in re-establishing the

pro-communist government as they controlled key country infrastructure including road

systems and major cities. However, there was an intensifying insurrection among the

Islamic people including members of the armed forces. As written by Afghan journalist,

Mohammad Sharif, "An average Afghan view[ed] the Soviet Union as an expansionist

empire committed to the destruction of Islam."[64] To manage the unrest, the Soviets

required a constant garrison of troops at each centre. The watered-down, spread out, ad-

hoc occupation was unsupportable logistically and required increasing numbers of Soviet

soldiers until Red Army forces reached their height of 105,000. However, adding troops

was proving ineffective in achieving a victory and establishing a Soviet government.

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[61] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 123.

[62] Keane, ***the True Story of Charlie Wilson***

[63] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 121.

Instead, the Soviets found themselves entrenched in a counter-insurgency with little strategy on how to fight it. Victory for the Soviets would begin falling further out of reach as the Afghan insurgency began to receive support from other nations.

The Soviet Union had a history of impunity to Western influence. After-all, there had been no significant backlash from the West during the Soviet expansion within Europe. The Soviets had not considered that the campaign could significantly worsen major East-West relations but rather that Soviet, "conventional superiority," would preclude significant intrusion from the West.[65] However in 1982, the General Assembly of the United Nations called for Soviet withdrawal. Moreover, funding from United States and Pakistan to the Mujahedeen started to improve Afghan weaponry and provided them with new tactics to fight their enemy. LCol Alexander Pikunov discusses the tactics adopted by the freedom fighters once the weapons were supplied by foreigners. "The armed gangs mostly attacked convoys. As a rule the convoys were attacked as they were passing hard-to-reach areas such as gorges and rocks."[66] These increases in weapons capabilities and changes in strategy began to diminish Red Army effectiveness and costing Soviet soldiers' lives. As of 1983, the Soviets were loosing about 1000 casualties per year.[67]

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[64] *Ibid.,* 108

[65] *Ibid.,* 121

[66] Keane, ***the True Story of Charlie Wilson***

[67] Includes; enemy fire, suicides, diseases, food and moonshine poisoning, training and traffic accidents. Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 279.

Major offensives into the Panjshir Valley were launched between 1980 and 1985, each meeting with little strategic effect.[68] These offensives involved combat on a large scale using primarily Red Army forces with minimal combined operations with the DRA. As the Mujahedeen were unable to compete with the superior firepower, they adopted guerrilla tactics. These tactics consisted of:

> ...avoiding combat with superior Soviet forces; conducting surprise action against small groups; and refusing to fight conventional, positional warfare while conducting widespread manoeuvre using autonomous groups and detachments.[69]

Further complicating issues for Red Army was that of the terrain. The Mujahedeen used the cover of terrain to exercise freedom of manoeuvre to engage in close combat with the Soviets thereby nullifying the use of supporting artillery and airstrikes.(Grau and Gress 2002) In spite of the changes in the Afghan weaponry and tactics, the Red Army continued to follow conventional Soviet tactics that assumes to overwhelm the enemy one needs superior numbers and equipment.[70] The inability or perhaps unwillingness to change tactics for the Soviets would bring about their defeat.

In 1980, in discussing modern warfare outside the context of nuclear weapons, Colonel Konstantin A. Vorob'yev states an important (cultural-cognitive) common belief from the Soviet Union about warfare: "There cannot be complete victory over the enemy without the use of tanks, artillery and other types of weapons." This strategy however did not bring decisive victory to the Red Army. Political leadership experienced a high turn over during the Afghan campaign. In 1986, Karmal was replaced by Mohammed

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[68] Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 364.

[69] *Ibid.*

Najibullah who was succeeded by Yuri Andropov, then Konstantin Cherenkov and finally Mikhail Gorbachev. Although political leaders changed, the military tactics did not.

Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1985 and with him came a change toward the view of Afghanistan. Gorbachev calls for timely Soviet victory in Afghanistan and gives his generals one year [at the most two years] to achieve victory.[71] The Red Army continues to respond by increasing military operations in Afghanistan leading to the bloodiest year of the war and ultimately a realization by the Soviets that military victory in Afghanistan is not possible. By February 1988 Gorbachev declares the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.[72]

As the Soviets prepared to withdrawal from Afghanistan, major combat operations diminished and were replaced an increased Afghan Army role and limited Red Army combat operations favouring instead, defence of Soviet forces from Mujahedeen raids and attacks.[73] Part of this diminished military operation was due in part to the

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[70] Harriet Fast Scott and William R. Scott, *The Soviet Art of War: Doctrine, Strategy, and Tactics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982), 241.

[71] ***CPSU CC Politburo Meeting Minutes, 13 November 1986 (Excerpt)*** ,[1986]), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034 DF42-96B6-175C-94B37A1064349E42&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed Marc 10, 2011).

[72] Tom Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Analysis and Chronology* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992), 33.

[73] Dr Anton Minkov and Dr Gregory Smolynec, ***3-D Soviet Style:*** *A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan* DRDC Centre for Operational Research & Analysis,[2007]), http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/showRecord.php?RecordId=25367 (accessed February 25, 2011).

introduction of the Stinger Missile System which had been provided by the U.S. to the

Mujahedeen in order to neutralize Soviet air power. The exception to this diminished

carrying out of operations, was 'Operation Magistral' in which, combined Red Army and

DRA troops launched an offensive into the Panjshir region in November 1987 to January

1988 to destroy the Mujahedeen forces who were blocking the main route, called

Majistral, between Gardez and Khost. This endeavour was a major operation which

involved the 108th and 201rst Motorized Rifle Divisions, the 103rd Airborne division, 56th

Separate Air Assault Brigade, the 345th Separate Airborne Regiment, with support from

Spetsnaz units as well as the 8th, 11th, 12th, 14th and 35th infantry divisions, 15th Tank

Brigade from the DRA forces.[74] [Red Star on 30 December 1993 article by General

Gromov] Operation Majistral was an operational success in that the forces drove the

Mujahedeen from control and established outpost along the road. The strategic failure of

the operation is that once the Soviets withdrew from the outpost and the area, the

Mujahedeen moved back in and controlled the lines of communication. In April of 1988,

the DRA and Pakistan signed the Geneva Accords with USSR and the U.S. serving as

guarantors of the peace treaties. The UN negotiated accords were to serve as a basis for

interrelationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly as it related to conflict

along the border between the two countries and the resettlement of the almost 5 million

Afghan refugees in Pakistan.[75] The accords also provided the Soviets with an

opportunity to withdrawal from Afghanistan while maintaining dignity on the

international stage.

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[74] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, 60-61.

[75] *Ibid.*, xxix

The Red Army Forces began to leave Afghanistan on begin to pull out in April of 1988 and by October, half of the Soviet force had withdrawn. On February 15 of 1989, the last of Soviet troops left Afghanistan. The Soviets efforts toward successful counterinsurgency were never realized. The Civil war in Afghanistan continued with the Mujahedeen eventually succeeding in toppling the Soviet backed Najibullah regime in 1992.

The Soviets, and the Russians before them, have a long history of foreign interest in Central Asia and in particular Afghanistan. In the counterinsurgency operations of the Soviet-Afghan war of the 1980s, the Soviets could not reach the people of Afghanistan and a fierce civil war ensued consisting of primarily asymmetric warfare. Soviet forces employed tactics devised in the Cold War to fight in Europe against guerrilla tactics of the Mujahedeen with little positive effect. The rebel force in Afghanistan continued to fight against the Soviets despite their enemy's upper hand and significant number of Afghan casualties; approximately 1.3 million killed and approximately 5.5 million (1 third pre-war population) displaced refugees.[76] The personal loss to the Soviets was substantial as well with out of the 642,000 total troops served in Afghanistan; there were 15,000 killed, 54,000 wounded and 416,000 who suffered from serious illnesses. There

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[76] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan,* 26.

was also an expense of upwards of $25 billion dollars spent by 1986.[77] These measures were unsuccessful in the Soviet Army ever attaining complete victory over Afghanistan.

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[77] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xviii.

CHAPTER 3: The Regulative Pillar

Throughout the Soviet war in Afghanistan, there were powerful regulative forces within the Red Army organization that prevented an effective adaptation to the asymmetrical warfare presented them in Afghanistan.   As outlined in the institutional analysis model, regulative forces affected the Red Army's behaviour and when internal and external pressures reached a sufficient level the Soviet military institution began to change, in this case adapt to irregular warfare.   Considerable regulative forces resonated throughout the Red Army whilst in conflict with the rebels. Firstly, the battle with Afghanistan was a Proxy war, thereby restricting how far the Red Army could move without provoking the US. Secondly, the treaty provided the Red Army's with the "right" to be present in Afghanistan and with it more internal and external pressures to contend with. Thirdly, political policies limited the Red Army's scope of operation and finally, the Red Army's protocols and standard operating procedures (SOP)s dictated behaviour counter productive to the asymmetric warfare of this conflict.

During the Cold War, the idea of mutually assured destruction (MAD) between the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, served as a stabilizing force in the world. Together with the notion of détente throughout the 1970s, these two dominating militaries would not engage in affairs that would lead to direct confrontation with each other. This bi-polarity acted differently on each country. The interests of the Soviet Union, the spread of socialism, and the interests of the United States, the spread of capitalism and democracy, would instead be accomplished by means of a series of proxy

wars whereby each country's interests were espoused through conflict in a third nation without directly engaging the other hegemony. Such was the Afghanistan war and, accordingly, the Soviets were restricted by the fear that too much aggression against the Afghans would be perceived by the West as hostile expansionism. This ideal is exemplified in K.U. Chemenko's comment during a Politburo meeting in March of 1979 where he remarks, "If we introduce troops and beat down the Afghan people then we will be accused of aggression for sure. There's no getting around it here."[78]

Nine months following Chemenko's statement, on December 27th, 1979 the Soviet's upped the ante president Amin was assassinated forcing the Soviets to commit the Red Army to Afghanistan. This act would be the first territorial expansion by direct use of military power since World War II, and an instrument by which the Soviets had frequently exercised their foreign policy in the past.[79] This act of aggression threatened to jeopardize the principles of proxy war and the Red Army had to tread lightly to avoid engaging the Americans. Proxy War politics further constrained the Red Army during the Afghanistan Campaign by limiting the area of operation to Afghanistan borders. This limited the Red Army's effectiveness at attacking the enemy centre-of-gravity for recruitment and foreign aid which laid beyond the borders. Subsequently, diplomacy and

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[78] Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko was Chief of the General Department and was a full member fo the Central Committee. Chernenko was a close associate of Brezhnev. CPSU CC, *Excerpt from Politburo Meeting,* 1979, , http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034D0BB-96B6-175C-9DD1B7A96574D8BE&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March 11, 2011).

[79] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation,* 107.

espionage were the only effective means used in relation to dealing with Western led interference with the war.[80]

Proxy war constraint continued to inhibit Red Army's military strategy as noted by the CPSU CC politburo:

> …we of course think that both in the West and the East [China] there will be found people who will raise a propaganda campaign against the aid and support which the Soviet Union is legally giving to revolutionary Afghanistan. But, as has happened in the past, the sudden attacks of our class and ideological enemies should not stop us from being equal to defending the broad interest of our security, and the security of our allies and friends, including such countries as Afghanistan.[81]

Although the members of the Red Army were fully aware of the fight that laid beyond the border, Soviet military action never left the boundaries of Afghanistan thereby never crossing the border into Pakistan and interfering with the supplies, the support and the training bases associated with Mujahedeen 'safe havens'. Proxy war had a significant impact on the Red Army's ability to act. This immovability to change military tactics was further impacted by regulations that outlined Soviet presence in the country.

There were international regulations that permitted Soviet involvement in the war in Afghanistan. By 1978, it was becoming increasingly clear that the Kremlin was loosing its grip of the Afghan situation. Loosing diplomatic control of the government meant Soviet foreign policy could not be executed, hence the rational for military

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[80] *CPSU CC Politburo Decisions on Afghanistan* CC Secretary,[1979]), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034 DBC7-96B6-175C-95984A10F00D9D18&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March 11, 2011).

[81] *Politburo Decree P177/151,*[1979]), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034

intervention in domestic affairs in Afghanistan.[82] The legal basis to place the Red Army

in Afghanistan was based on 1978 'friendship' treaty between the Soviets and the

Afghans, and Article 51 of the UN Charter. With the December signing of the 1978

Soviet-Afghan 'friendship' treaty, the Soviets were legally obligated to aid security in

Afghanistan based on Article 8 of the treaty which called on the two countries to

facilitate "the creation of an effective security system in Asia."[83] With this justification,

the Soviets continued to send vast amounts of military equipment and large numbers of

advisors to Afghanistan to support the Government throughout 1979. As stated by

Politburo member, Victor V. Grishin, "socialist internationalism obliged us to help the

Afghan people defend the April Revolution's gains."[84] As such it was clear by this

definition that an invasion would be justified using the treaty. The Soviets defended their

invasion into Afghanistan on the grounds that it was legally sanctioned based on Article 4

of the treaty, 'to repel outside armed intervention' (meaning the rebel Mujahedeen) and

that the Kremlin was responding to the request of the DRA's government under that

treaty.[85]

Article 51 of the UN Charter was also cited by Soviet government as basis for

engaging in Afghanistan.[86] On the 27th of December of 1979 the Politburo justified the

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(accessed March 11, 2011).

[82] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 117.

[83] *Ibid.*, 119

[84] *Ibid.*, 122

[85] *Ibid.*, 122

[86] *Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has*

commitment of troops to Afghanistan for self-defence alleging that the Amin regime

sought to de-stabilize the nation through violence. What ensued that day was the murder

of President Hafizullah Amin and his supporters by Red Army forces. The strategic

regulations established the Red Army as a force employed by the Soviet Union, using

them to achieve their political agenda. These regulative forces did not serve to influence

how the Red Army conducted asymmetric warfare, but rather served to establish the Red

Army in the COIN operation. Prior to the signing of the friendship-treaty, there had

already been a plan in place for the Red Army to get involved in Marxist governed states

which were at risk of collapse known as Brezhnev-era politics.[87] To this end, provided a

regulative force upon the Red Army:

> When forces that are hostile to socialism try to turn the development of some
> socialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem of the country
> concerned, but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries.[88]

The use of military force employed a coercive approach to maintain a Marxist control

over the government and hence the country of Afghanistan. Though the Brezhnev

doctrine of foreign policy explicitly lists the pressure of capitalism, of which the policy

opposes, the true application was to maintain influence of the socialist governments of

the countries themselves. Furthermore, the Soviets intelligence had confirmed that the

capitalist U.S. was supplying the rebels with financial aid, military equipment and

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taken measures necessary to maintain inter- national peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security. Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, (1945): , http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/bt-un51.htm (accessed March 13, 2011).

[87] Kurt M. Cambell, "Iron Gnome," *The New Republic* 204, no. 9 (April 3, 1991, 1991), 18 (accessed January 25, 2011).

training.[89] As stated above, however, the Red Army was restricted in lashing out against the West.

These conventions provided the legally sanctioned authority for the Red Army to invade Afghanistan but also provided a regulative force to the Red army constraining its behaviour. The conventions – the Treaty, the Brezhnev doctrine and chapter VI of the UN Charter - were laid out to justify externally to the world the regulations dictating actions taken by the Soviet Union. Internally to the Red Army, these functions provided normative function which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Political direction often dictates the behaviour of an institution, particularly a military one. These can come in the form of mandated specifications, laws or written and verbal direction. The political mandates from the Kremlin had a regulative effect on the behaviour of the Red Army. The Kremlin dictated that the Red Army was to minimal casualties during the campaign.[90] This had a restrictive effect on the tactics employed by the units on the ground as this policy was in stark contrast to historical tactics of the Red Army. Traditionally, the military doctrine of the Red Army dictated casualties were to be expected if victory was to be achieved.   Consider WWII. The Soviet Union expended the lives of approximately 10 million soldiers, and almost 25 million Soviets total

[88] Graeme P. Herd and Jennifer D. P. Moroney, *Security Dynamics in the Former Soviet Bloc* London ; RoutledgeCurzon, 2003., 5.

[89] A. Lyakhovskiy, *Intelligence Note Concerning Actions by the U.S. in Aiding Afghanistan* (Moscow: ,[1980]), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034E0A9-96B6-175C-9C62DB3513DEE3A5&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March11,2011).

[90] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, 6.

population to help liberate Europe from the Nazis. The Red Army in Afghanistan
however could not allow a high number of casualties to achieve their objectives. Rather,
Red Army unit behaviour characteristically transitioned to the defence and then called for
fire support after sustaining even moderate levels of casualties.[91] This regulative bias
was a stressor on the legitimacy of the Red Army and as evidenced from the failure to
press attacks, limiting the effectiveness of their assaults. An example of this is reported
by Major V.M. Bogdashkin, a company commander who was involved in one such
incident. His company, along with the remainder of the operations group was to block
part of the Southern edge of Heart city in late 1984 in an attempt to disrupt the training,
reinforcement and supply operations of the guerrilla forces. In this example, Bogdashkin
reports that in an October raid by the Mujahedeen, his unit was ordered to break contact
and withdrawal after only one soldier was wounded by small arms fire from the enemy.[92]
This regulation served to undermine the capability of the Red Army as it was contrary to
the norms of the institution and it biased the commanders from making tactically correct
decisions due to strategic regulation. Further perversion of the Red Army's behaviour as
a result of the State's direction to minimize casualties came in the form of disguising the
casualties that were incurred. "Soviet soldiers killed in action were brought home in
unmarked coffins."[93] This act was an attempt to seem legitimate by appearing to comply
with the policy of minimal casualties. This behaviour was in fact reinforced by the

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[91] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* ,
52.

[92] *Ibid.*, 48-52

[93] Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash, " the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the
Soviet Union," *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999), 705,
http://faculty.washington.edu/aseem/afganwar.pdf (accessed February 25, 2011).

Kremlin. Early in the war, as the bodies of dead soldiers were returning home, the

politicians waffled about how to properly deal with the situation. "The matter is not the

money, of course, but whether if we perpetuate the memory of soldiers who died in

Afghanistan."[94] The consensus in 1981 was that the bodies should be buried with

honours but that no inscription would be written on the headstone such to perpetuate the

memory because that would undermine the legitimacy of the war hence isolating the

Soviet public from the war. The change in Red Army behaviour came late in the war

when Gorbachev demanded an early end to the war. This resulted in an increase in

operations and was preceded by a year of the highest casualty rates of the war, the

cultural-cognitive consequences of which will be discussed in chapter 5. Thus far, this

paper has explored the immovability affects of proxy wars, treaties and regulations, and

political policies. Another significant force resulting in the Red Army poorly adapting to

asymmetrical warfare comes from protocols and standard operating procedures.

The protocols of the Red Army, such as the tenets dictating force structure and

standard operating procedures, had a regulative effect on guiding its behaviour and thus

steering outcomes. One of the overriding protocols of the Red Army deals with its force

structure. During the Cold War, the Red Army was built to fight a large theatre-scale,

high-intensity, and possibly nuclear battle against NATO on the plains of Europe and/or

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[94] Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov was considered second only to Brezhnev in the CPSU and was the chair of the referenced meeting of the Politburo. M. Suslov, *CC CPSU Politburo Meeting*,[1981]), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034E0B9-96B6-175C-9F4E47C68458A730&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March 11, 2011).

to fight the Chinese on the Asian Steppe.[95] To conduct such a war, the formations of the Red Army in the late 70s could be characterized by large, unwieldy formations with massive motorized rifle brigades (*bronegruppa*), which relied on superior numbers and superior firepower (the change to this was that of smaller formations). Colonel K.A. Vorob'yev wrote in his book [translated] *Armed Forces of a Developed Socialist Society*: "There cannot be complete victory over the enemy without the use of tanks, artillery and other types of weapons."[96] The command structure could be characterized as centrally controlled with little mission command designated to the smaller subordinate formations because the large formations were to act as one giant element.[97] (The change to this is that mission command was starting to get designated to the lower levels to make them more autonomous). As a result, these regulating protocols burdened the Red Army in Afghanistan as this was not the same type of conflict the Red Army had been designed to fight. However, the attempt to use tank driven battles on Afghan soil proved to be less than effective.

Afghanistan is a desert region characterized by rugged terrain where modern travel is primarily restricted to thin highway networks connecting the cities. The country is also surrounded by high mountains with long valleys.[98] The Soviets did not fully appreciate the challenge the terrain would offer on the conflict, whereas the Mujahedeen knew the terrain and used it to their tactical advantage. Both the terrain of Afghanistan

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[95] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xiii.

[96] Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War: Doctrine, Strategy, and Tactics* , 254.

[97] Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 280.

and the tactics of the Mujahedeen proved to be problematic for the Red Army who relied

heavily on tanks and artillery to gain ground in battle. For instance, fire support from

artillery was based on pre-planned fire destruction instead of more-accurate, adjusted

artillery fires. This code of behaviour was so engrained in Soviet doctrine that artillery

officers were hesitant to adjust this pre-planned course of action, especially if they did

not have their own forward observer on the ground.[99] The force structures were

eventually overhauled allowing for the autonomy of smaller units to operate

independently in the mountain passes utilized by the Mujahedeen.[100]

Just as the adjustment was made to artillery to accommodate to the non-linearity

of the Afghan war, a streamlining of the structure of soviet military to units was also

adjusted to become more flexible and therefore survivable.[101] The concept of the

reinforced battalion, created in 1982 was an outcome representing these changes but the

advantages of which were never fully realized in the war.[102] In the preface to, *The Bear

Went Over the Mountain*, Lt. Col. (US Army) Lester W. Grau describes the relationship

between the forces necessitating the change and the ensuing favourable results of these

changes: "Tactics had to be overhauled in the new conflict. Units that adapted enjoyed

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[98] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xxv.

[99] *Ibid.*, 18

[100] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, iii.

[101] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xii.

[102] The reinforced battalion was the first real combined arms unit in which the core unit (rear service and command functions) was reinforced by a tank company and fire support such as artillery and air support, a tank company. The reinforced battalion can be characterized by

relative success while units that did not paid the price in blood."[103] Operation 'Majistral',

which lasted from late November 1987 and until early January 1988, was a turning point

in the Soviet military tactics regarding counterinsurgency warfare. A plan devised by,

Colonel General Boris Vsevolodovich Gromov, to acquire the city of Khost from the

Mujahedeen by opening up the road between Gardez and Khost that the insurgents had

controlled late in the war. Rather than following the binding expectations of classic

Soviet doctrine, Gromov used reconnaissance to gain intelligence, leveraged Spetsnaz to

achieve surprise, and ran a joint operation that employed closely coordinated land and air

assets effectively.[104] Unfortunately, the understanding of the effectiveness of these

changes came to late to turn the war towards victory for the Soviets.

The failures to adjust quickly to warfare in Afghanistan were not due solely to

misjudging the most appropriate military tactics but also due to the regulative carriers

mentioned in chapter one. These forces constrained the Red Army in its

manoeuvrability. This rigidity translated to ineffectual battle tactics such providing many

opportunities for the Mujahedeen to gain the upper hand. Due to the specified force

structures dictated by classic Soviet doctrine, the Red Army was, "not trained at the small

section or small unit level to fight an enemy that would only engage when advantage of

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autonomy, mobility and flexibility. Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 283.

[103] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xx.

[104] Cambell, *Iron Gnome*, 20.

numbers and terrain were in their favour.[105] Although small changes were made over the course of the war, the changes were too small and too slow to occur.

History had provided the Soviets with experience in mountain warfare, such as the campaigns in the Caucasus during the Russian Civil war in 1918 and when the Soviets controlled the region spanning the first and second quarter of the 20th century. Further to that, the Red Army gained valuable experience in the Caucasus republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan which were mountainous states contained within the Soviets Union not to mention the long history of Soviet presence in Afghanistan that included and soldiers and advisors at various times. However, despite what history had taught them, .the Red Army adhered to old Cold War protocols. This adherence to the Cold War code of behaviour acted at the lowest levels of the Red Army with seemingly mundane protocols resulting in dire consequences. Take for example the practice of the *stroevoy smotr*. Early in the campaign, Soviet officers continued to conduct these detailed peace-time ceremonial inspections on their troops before an operational mission thereby telegraphing the intent to conduct an operation and rendering themselves ineffectual or worse yet, vulnerable to ambush or counter-attack. This mind-set change, from that of peace-time garrison activity to that of warfare, should have happened upon commencement of the campaign.[106] This mind-set change was resisted because of the strong regulative forces within the organization.

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[105] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xxviii.

[106] This vignette, *An airborne battalion searches Sherkhankhel village*, supports this in that the officer conducted the *stroevoy smotr* prior to going out on a search and destroy operation and the

In summary, there were powerful regulative forces acting on the Soviets throughout the Afghanistan campaign. These regulative forces included legal sanctions justifying operations in the country, the protocols and SOPs of the Red Army (i.e., the force structure and tactics) and the political direction from the Kremlin all had constraining effects on the behaviour of the Red Army. It was only when the pressures upon the these tenets intensified, such as Gorbachev's decree for an early end in Afghanistan, that the Red Army changed its behaviour and adopted appropriate methods to fight the war.

Mujahedeen most certainly were forewarned. The ensuing ambush led to unnecessary loss of life and the undesired escape of the insurgents indicating utter failure of the operation. *Ibid*

CHAPTER 4: The Normative Pillar

The second pillar of the Scott model represents the normative forces on institutions. Throughout the Soviet war in Afghanistan, normative forces had a significant impact on the Soviet Red Army contributing to the organizational lethargy of the organization and prevention of effectively adapting to irregular warfare. These normative forces were derived from the moral justification of the Red Army's invasion, their view of the coup as a people's revolution, the predetermined roles of the Red Army leadership, and the view of the Red Army as an appropriate political tool. In many ways, the Soviets were never able to overcome these forces. The changes that did occur were made only under considerable internal and external pressures and were often too late in coming to make a significant difference.

The motivation behind the Red Army's participation in Afghanistan was morally justified at the onset as a way to support the Afghan army and the socialist beliefs of the PDPA they supported. The ideal of moral obligation was reinforced in several ways including political statements made to the world by the CPSU and through messaging to the Soviet population through the media.   This moral justification for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had normative effects on the Red Army and its effectiveness in Afghanistan. The CPSU CC responded quickly when gains made by the Afghan Government following the April coup of 1978, were threatened by declaring their support for the socialist government of Taraki to the world:

> The Soviet Union thereby is proceeding from a commonality of interests of
> Afghanistan and our country in issues of security recorded in the 1978 Treaty of

> Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Cooperation and the interest of maintaining peace in this region.[107]

This message resounded within the Red Army and was further reinforced by the added justification based on, "international duty."[108] The direction given to the Soviet UN representative in December of 1979 was:

> …that in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan has the internationally recognized right to turn to the Soviet Union with a request for aid and assistance in repelling aggression and the Soviet Union [has the right] to grant such aid and assistance.[109]

This message on the world stage not only legitimized the Red Army's service in Afghanistan, but connoted the moral justification for the occupation of the Red Army in any of the republics which were struggling with civil unrest. Essentially, the occupation of Afghanistan by the Red Army was legitimized by its altruistic nature. This morality served to strengthen the resolve of the Red Army. The war was repeatedly justified by Soviet political and Red Army leaders who maintained that the military could and should be employed to hold together the assortment of Soviet states. The success of this policy was reflected in the 10 years the Red Army maintained its course despite the number of casualties, and time and resources it took. The pressure that resulted from the loss of 118 jets, 333 helicopters, 147 tanks, 1314 APCs, 433 artillery pieces, 1138 radio sets, 51 engineering vehicles and 11369 trucks, not to mention the human cost, was never enough

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[107] *Politburo Decree P177/151*

[108] Reuveny and Prakash, *the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, 699.

[109] ***Cable to the Soviet Representative at the UN Re: The Development of the Situation Around Afghanistan***,[1979]),
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034D261-96B6-175C-9421D5DF8F08B8AD&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March 10, 2011).

to overcome the Red Army's duty to continue their fight in Afghanistan.[110] The Red

Army persevered because of their resolve entrenched in their moral obligation to subdue

the rebels and support their fellow socialists.

During their undertaking of the Afghanistan war, the Soviets remained devoted to

their ideal of the external function of the Army. This justification for war would include

prevention of imperialists carrying out aggressive plans against socialist countries and in

the form of rendering aid to people of countries liberated from imperialist dependence, in

building up their national armies.[111] As such, the Afghanistan mission was to support a

nominal Marxist-Leninist government of Afghanistan.[112] The Brezhnev Doctrine, though

regulative in nature and described in the previous chapter, was encased in the ideal that

all socialist countries had a moral obligation to stick together. Military intervention was

seen as the only way to exercise influence over the country and thus preserve the

communist rule and Soviet influence and interest in the region.[113] In a front page

editorial, while speaking of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, Russian journalist Krasnaya

Zvezda described the nobility of the Red Army in Afghanistan.

> One cannot fail to be proud today of our comrades in the limited contingent of
> Soviet troops in Afghanistan. In helping the people of that country to defend
> themselves against aggression and to build a new life they are acting as selfless
> and courageous patriots and internationalists.[114]

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[110] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xiv.

[111] Scott and Scott, *The Soviet Art of War: Doctrine, Strategy, and Tactics* , 256.

[112] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xvii.

[113] *Ibid*., xxviii

[114] Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 297.

The author went on to link the morality of the expeditionary work of the Red Army with the strength of the Soviet Union saying, "Soviet patriotism and internationalism are the powerful sources of the strength of our state and our army."[115] The Soviet Union was persuaded to believe in the philanthropic perception of the role of the Red Army under the pretence that the Red Army would not be fighting a war but rather would be sent to Afghanistan in a support role to the noble DRA army.[116] It was argued that the Afghans themselves were, "doing a good job" of putting down the resistance.[117] However, without Soviet Military intervention, the Afghans could not hold back the rebels supplied foreign support.

> The Afghan people and their armed forces are actively repelling these aggressive acts and giving a rebuff to assaults on the democratic achievements, sovereignty, and national dignity of the new Afghanistan. However, the acts of external aggression continue in ever wider scale; armed formations and weapons are being sent from abroad to this day.[118]

In a memo to all Soviet Ambassadors titled, "*Ogranichenyy Kontingent*" [*Limited Contingent*], Boris Gromov wrote, "In these conditions the leaders of the government of Afghanistan have turned to the Soviet Union for aid and assistance in the struggle against foreign aggression."[119] This moral justification could not persuade the world of an

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[115] *Ibid.*, 297

[116] Reuveny and Prakash, *the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, 705.

[117] *Politburo Decree P177/151*

[118] **Tass Announcement**,[1979]),
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034 D918-96B6-175C-931B480DEA3D9D5B&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March 11, 2011).

[119] **our Steps in Connection with the Development of the Situation Around Afghanistan**,[1979]),
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034

altruistic intention and over time, pressure from external and internal forces began to

undermine this act of Soviet patriotism.

In spite of the messaging, there were pressures that attacked the legitimacy of the

Red Army from the point of view that it was acting in the best interest of their fellow

man. These pressures came in the form of external, such as the U.S. stance of the Soviets

in Afghanistan and internal such as the decent from the wounded soldiers themselves,

returning Afghanistan. These pressures were so strong that the Red Army was forced to

take a stance. In response to the external pressure from the Americans, the soviets

drafted a letter to President Carter. In the letter Brezhnev states:

> They [Afghanistan], like any other UN member, have the right not only of
> individual but also of the collective self defence stipulated in Article 51 of the UN
> Charter which the USSR and US themselves formulated. And this has been
> approved by all UN members.[120]

As will be shown in chapter 5, the change in the Red Army's behaviour comes when

internal pressures continued to act upon them.

As the war continued, the moral legitimacy of the Red Army was further called

into question. As the war persisted and the body count increased, little gain on the war

front was actually being made. Gorbachev changed the official position of the CPSU

toward the war in his February 1986 address to the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the

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D223-96B6-175C-9BD300411941F041&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
(accessed March 10, 2011).

[120] *Reply to an Appeal of President Carter about the Issue of Afghanistan through the
Direct Communications Channel. (Excerpt from the Minutes of the CC CPSU Politburo Meeting, 29
Dec. 1979)*,[1979]),
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034
CB0E-96B6-175C-98DDEE2A2567A7D6&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan
(accessed March 10, 2011).

CPSU in describing the war as, "a bleeding wound."[121] This erased any normative belief that the war was morally justified as good neighbours doing their duty to bring socialism to Afghanistan. In a paper discussing how the Afghan war contributed to the breakdown of the Soviet Union and specifically how the war separated the Red Army as a source of power from the Political party and thus the people, Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash pointed out: "The atrocities committed by Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan undermined the legitimacy of the army as a moral institution that safeguarded the oppressed."[122] Internal pressure that undermined the moral legitimacy of the Red Army began to manifest as the war advanced. One soldier, in a 1991 interview with the Moscow News, expressed his view of the legitimacy of the moral justification for the war by comparing the Red Army to the Nazis in saying, "We were supposedly equated with the participants in the Great Patriotic War, but they defended their homeland, while what did we do? We played the role of the Germans."[123]

The Soviet's view of the world was skewed by Marxist principles appertaining to the role of the people to take control of their government and implement reforms to ameliorate their fellow man. Due to a 60-year long cultivated socialist viewpoint, the Soviets and hence the Red Army perceived the political events of April 1978 as a revolution of the people, rather than the true political nature of this event, a coup. Taraki's murder of Daoud and the elimination of the monarchy was in fact a move by

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[121] Reuveny and Prakash, *the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union,* 699.

[122] *Ibid.,* 703-704

[123] *Ibid.,* 702

Taraki to establish his own regime. Peter Marsden, former coordinator for the British

Aid Agency in Afghanistan, explains:

> It was the growing tensions between President Daoud and the socialist groups
> which led to the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan coup of April 1978.
> Fearing that Daoud would arrest them, the PDPA leaders brought forward the
> planned date of the coup and benefitted from a significant body of support from
> within the Afghan army which had, by this stage, built up a reasonable level of
> strength.[124]

The Soviets believed, instead, that it was the beginning of a revolution and the people

would continue to rise-up which would empower the central socialist government. The

political disconnect between the people to the centralized government will be discussed

further in Chapter 5: The Cultural-cognitive Pillar. The normative effect of this

misinterpretation played out in two important ways. Firstly, the message to the world by

the CC and secondly how the Red Army conducted operations within Afghanistan. A

circular cable was transmitted to the communist parties around the world concerning the

developments of the situation in Afghanistan on the day of the invasion in 1979. This

cable, in which the struggles that faced the war ahead are revealed, the CPSU CC

instructed the Soviet Ambassadors to advocate the political messaging of a people's

revolution.

> A new progressive national [political] system was created in Afghanistan as a
> result of the April 1978 Revolution. Much work was done in the country to
> eliminate the despotic monarchy by enlisting the broad popular masses on the side
> of the revolution…reforms have been carried out in the interests of the people.[125]

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[124] Peter Marsden, *Afghanistan - Aid, Armies and Empires* I. B. Tauris, 34-35.

[125] ***Circular Cable to Soviet Amassadors in Non-Fraternal Countries with Official Soviet Position regarding Developments of the Situation Around Afghanistan***, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034D252-96B6-175C-966E7046CC862EE4&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March 10, 2011).

A coup connotes malevolence of the overthrowing regime, a measure that no government would want to be characterised with at the UN. In viewing this as a people's revolution, the Soviets were engaged in a principled process by which the people of Afghanistan would come out the other side better off then they were. The belief that these events were the beginning of a social revolution was inaccurate and would undermine the legitimacy of Red Army and result in negative repercussions for the Red Army and eventually the Soviets.

It has been suggested that the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan can be partially attributed to the acts of the Cold War generation of generals thereby suggesting powerful normative forces influenced the behaviour of the generals.[126] This contributed to the military tactical decisions that were made. A number of these decisions have already been discussed such as guiding the battles to minimize casualties and the directed use of *bronegruppa*. In commanding these orders, the generals represented the role of "Typical Soviet Officer" – that being overly solicitous to authority and merciless to their subordinates.[127] In obedience to their duty, they carried out their missions as strictly as it had been specified. As stated by Grau:

> [The] Soviets ran Afghanistan as classical large scale campaign where battles supported operations which supported the campaign. In Afghanistan, the small battles did little to support the operations planned by the Red Army, yet in spite of this, the soviets continued to plan operations.[128]

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[126] Cambell, *Iron Gnome*, 18.

[127] *Ibid.*, 20

[128] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xxix.

Further supporting evidence of the pressure on the generals occurred when Gorbachev issued orders to end the war quickly. The leaders of the Red Army responded in kind. As described earlier, this year became the bloodiest year of the war. Thus began public decent for the leadership of the Red Army as well as distancing of the politicians. Blame was projected on to the Red Army for failure to achieve victory in Afghanistan as a result of "the geriatric leadership of the previous regime."[129] The Generalship often gave little credence to the junior leadership resulting in lack of mission command.[130] This resulted in the higher headquarters often directing tactical missions without allowing the junior commanders to lead their own operations. The lack of trust within leadership resulted in an absence of timely tactical decisions which are paramount in asymmetrical warfare.

As example of poor leadership flow can be seen in a Spetsnaz lead assault on a weapon's and ammunition cache in Xadighar Canyon in 1987. The overall command of the mission was directed by Lieutenant Yu. G. Gusev, the Chief of Staff of the Turkestan Military District, who was not in the chain of command and not on the battlefield.[131] By 1986, the time period of the aforementioned example, there was, however, a realisation of the importance for reconnaissance to compensate for the unfamiliar and difficult territory in which the fighting was being conducted. Spetsnaz were found to be the most effective tool in reconnaissance as well as other roles conducive to guerrilla warfare and

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[129] Reuveny and Prakash, *the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, 699.

[130] Mission command is a decentralized military command structure that empowers decision making at the lowest level for the purpose of tactical advantage through speed of action and initiative.

[131] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,* 57-59.

subsequently made them essential for fighting asymmetrical warfare.[132] To this end, the

Red Army began introducing Spetsnaz experienced generals into its leadership.

Throughout the Cold War, the Red Army was instrumental in enforcing Soviet

policy within its satellite republics. Therefore, they acted with relatively little resistance

from a moral point of view.

> Due to its heroic role in World War II the Soviet army was a cherished institution. It was a microcosm of the Soviet society, drawing soldiers from diverse nationalities. The army was viewed as the main defender of communism, a key function in an ideologically-charged society. Importantly, it was the glue that held together diverse ethnic groups, primarily because it was perceived as being invincible. [133]

This was to change in the war with Afghanistan. Here, the belief that the occupation of

the Red Army was morally acceptable was challenged. Victims and veterans of the war

added to the pressure on the Red Army which attacked their moral legitimacy.

Pressure to re-examine the "justified morality" of the acts of the Red Army

resulted from of a number of different factors. Firstly, the unmarked body bags of the

dead began to be noted by the Soviet population. This had a negative impact on the

population's view of the situation which subsequently undermined the legitimacy of the

Red Army. Furthermore, the cost of human lives did not appear to be aiding the Red

Army in achieving its goal.

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[132] Spetsnaz were designed with a dual diversionary-reconnaissance role and were found to be most effective in Afghanistan due to their special training such as airborne assault from helicopters as this took advantage of speed of manoeuvre, surprise, and freedom of manoeuvre in the hostile terrain of Afghanistan.

[133] Reuveny and Prakash, *the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, 700-701.

Secondly, as the victim soldiers returned to their home countries within the Soviet Union, the reality that the war was not being won began to permeate throughout the republics. These veteran soldiers became known as the *Afghansty* and weakened the communist party by speaking out against the war which they had so strongly supported.[134] To further weaken the Red Army's righteous persona was that many of its soldiers were returning home corrupted by drug abuse.[135]

Finally, the effects of the soldiers of the Central Asian republics fighting against their tribal kinsmen eroded the legitimacy of the Red Army in Afghanistan. This became particularly evident with the Tajiks from the Asian republics such as Uzbekistan who disliked the idea of fighting other Tajiks within Afghanistan.[136] These three pressures; the returning dead, the *Afghansty*, and the distain from the ethnic soldiers, chipped away at the ethical character image within the war in that the Red Army could no longer be presented as an authority system for the CPSU that could stabilize uprisings within the Soviet states.

In summary, there were powerful normative forces that prevented the Soviet Red Army from adapting to the asymmetric warfare in Afghanistan. These factors included: the moral justification for the invasion, the view of the coup in 1978 as a people's revolution, the archetype of the Red Army leadership, and the belief that the Red Army was an appropriate political tool of the CPSU.

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[134] *Ibid.,* 693

[135] *Ibid.,* 700

[136] *Ibid.,* 705

It was only when the pressure became strong enough that the Red Army was able to adapt. These influences occurred when the Soviet people became disillusioned by the high number of dead soldiers returning from Afghanistan, the *Afghansty* political activists, and the ethnic Asians discontent at fighting ethnic brethren. However, even though the disillusionment of the Soviet people brought about an increase in pressure for the Red Army to change, the Red Army continued in grossly habitual military tactics.

For the most part, the Soviets failed to effectively adapt to the asymmetric warfare, yet the few adaptations that did occur came only when pressures became too strong to ignore culminating in the overwhelming pressure to end the war quickly from Gorbachev. This normative belief that the Red Army was the appropriate tool to keep the unstable republics in-line was an incredible force to overcome – a force that perhaps was never overcome by the Soviets while they were in power.   Years later, the Soviets, now Russians, would be still be making the same errors as seen in the forcing, a military solution to Chechnya by Yeltsin's government.[137]

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[137] *Ibid.,* 708 (end note)

CHAPTER 5: The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar

The cultural-cognitive pillar is the final pillar within the Scott's institutional model that will be applied to the Red Army in Afghanistan. Throughout the Soviet war in Afghanistan, there were a number of powerful cultural-cognitive forces within the Red Army organization that prevented an effective adaptation, and, as witnessed throughout the Soviet-Afghan war, it was only when the pressures from both the internal and external environment become strong enough that the Soviet military institution adapted to irregular warfare. The instrumental cultural-cognitive forces that affected Soviet military action included; an underestimation of the Afghan Army as a credible branch of the government and of the Mujahedeen as a fighting force, a skewed view of the central government and the mobilization of the people following the coup in 1978, and Soviet symbolic artefacts such as the Soviet Mi-24 Hind helicopter. This chapter will examine how these cultural-cognitive forces all played significant roles in shaping the Soviet viewpoint and subsequently had a crippling affect on the Red Army's ability to effectively adapt to the true asymmetric nature of the war.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there were normative forces that acted on the Red Army in regards to the appropriateness of combined operations with the DRA military. This reticence to work with the DRA army was further reinforced by cultural-cognitive biases notwithstanding that the platform for the Red Army's presence in Afghanistan was based on the ideal of supporting of the DRA and propping up of the Afghan army as a legitimate branch of the state. Instead, the propping up of the army did

not occur immediately despite of the DRA army's obvious need for help. By December

of 1979, the time of the invasion, the Afghan army had dropped to half of its 100,000

allocated strength.[138] This drop was consistent across all the forces throughout

Afghanistan due in great part to the Soviets not building a strong, unified Afghan Army.

In deed, the Soviets did not trust the Afghan army due in part to the heavy

desertion rates. The Soviets had witnessed Afghan desertion prior to the war in the

March 1979 invasion of Herat, whereby nearly all of the 17th Infantry Division deserted

and took their weapons and equipment with them to fight with the resistance.[139] In some

cases throughout the early parts of the war, entire government brigades went over to the

Mujahidin, taking their equipment with them.[140]

> Between 1979 and 1989, the duration of the Soviet operation in Afghanistan, the
> number of troops that deserted from the Afghan Army to either ranged from 25,
> 000 to about 35,000 annually representing 25% at its highest and 9% at its lowest
> rate per total force per year.[141]

These desertions significantly contributed to the Red Army's view that the DRA army

was incapable of functioning in combat leading to not working together.

The above mentioned Herat incident was the first time that CPSU advisors and

Soviet-backed government soldiers were killed in significant numbers. This history

further affected the Red Army's perception of the DRA army as an incompetent force

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[138] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 120.

[139] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,*
xvii.

[140] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 120.

[141] Minkov and Smolynec, **3-D Soviet Style:** *A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the
Soviet Experience in Afghanistan,* 7.

that could not be relied upon to deal with the security issues within Afghanistan.[142] In reaction to the 1000 Soviets killed in the March uprising, the Soviets sent a contingent to Afghanistan to assess the situation led by General Aleksey A. Yepishev. Following his team's report, it was determined that, "all subsequent military decisions were [to be] made by Soviet Advisors."[143] This view, that the DRA army could not be trusted to carry out military operations and that they were a sub-standard fighting force resulted in poor treatment of the DRA army and significantly limited combined operations. It wasn't until the decision was made to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1987 that the Red Army started to work with the DRA army in sincerity. It was the pressure from Gorbachev that finally forced the Red Army to change their strategy and work in combined operations with the DRA army. In essence, the Red Army undertook training the Afghan army to take over the security duties of the country as party of their exit strategy and in pursuance of maintaining the Red Army's dignity.[144] As such, the propping up the Afghan Government, as they initially intended, and building up the strength of DRA Forces became viable options for withdrawal.[145]

In order for the Afghan army to take over from the Soviets in security operations, a closer, more involved coordination during operations was necessary. This accomplished the adaptation to asymmetric warfare that was long overdue. As such, the numerical size of the DRA Forces had been built up by 1988. The Government Forces,

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[142] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 119.

[143] General Aleksey A. Yepishev played a major role in the 1968 Soviet occupation of the Czechoslovakia Ibid., 119

[144] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, 28.

of which 90,000 were army regulars had grown to levels totalling 308,900 personnel while the Militia, which included 62,000 tribal members, further increased to total 458,900 personnel on the side of the DRA.[146] It was only when the Red Army were forced to work with the local Army as part of a dignified exit strategy did the Red Army fully realize the value of the local military in a counter-insurgency role.

There was a long history between the Soviets and the Afghan people. Throughout their tumultuous history, government forces began to haemorrhage with desertions and the resistance to the socialist government was gathering momentum, "as a general uprising spread from the remote and mountainous province of Nuristan in the extreme east to all 28 of Afghanistan's provinces."[147] In spite of the vast pockets of resistance, the soldiers of the Red Army underestimated the ability of the freedom fighters acting within Afghanistan and viewed them as a '*bandits*.' rather than a threat.[148] The Red Army's tactics to eliminate the Mujahedeen was having the opposite effect. Instead of their numbers diminishing as expected the number of freedom fighters multiplied throughout the war.[149] This misperception of the Mujahedeen being bandits rather than the fierce resistance to foreign invaders they actually were came at a great cost to Red Army effectiveness. The underestimation of the Mujahedeen often led to the Soviets

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[145] *Ibid.*

[146] *Ibid.*

[147] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 119.

[148] Perhaps this is a throw-back reference to the Basmachi who the Russians fought in Central Asia in the early 20th century.

[149] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,* xi.

being ambushed, being unprepared for coordinated attacks, and not assigning sufficient forces to eliminate the threat from the rebels. Finally, this misconception contributed to the organizational lethargy.

Another underestimation the Soviets made toward the Mujahedeen was that of their attaining support from the West. Although there was evidence of U.S. aid supporting the Mujahedeen, the Soviets believed that in the era of bi-polarity, this proxy war would prevent the U.S. from getting heavily involved and such there would be no great risk of a confrontation between the major powers themselves.[150] Without U.S. involvement, the mighty Red Army believed that it would be able to easily destroy the primitive Afghans.[151] Historically, this notion of minimal foreign involvement was accurate. The Soviets had suppressed Eastern Europe and Central Asia with little, external resistance and they believed the same would be so regarding their campaign in Afghanistan. Based on this misinterpretation, the Soviet army planned their military tactics against that only of the Afghan freedom fighters. Furthermore, the resistance pressure that the Red Army felt in the form of military action was misinterpreted as simply the tough and unexpected resistance by the Afghans.[152] Years later, it would be noted that the Afghans "…are people who are third generation warriors. Part through growing narcotics and war they do not know anything else."[153] LCol Alexander Pikunov's comments spoke of the true capability of the Mujahedeen that was not realized

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[150] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 126.

[151] Keane, **the True Story of Charlie Wilson**

[152] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 124.

by the Soviets. Unlike the Soviets, the Americans did not misjudge the capabilities of the

Mujahedeen. American statesmen Congressman Charlie Wilson commented that, "the

Red Army was no match for the Mujahedeen when it was man-to-man on the ground,"

regarding the types of adversary the freedom fighters were for the Red Army.[154]

Contemporary CIA analysts also ascertained what the Red Army failed to realize.

> Generally the Afghans didn't need to be trained. They needed to be tamed. You
> can give them a rock or a sling-shot or a knife or a rifle or a stinger and they will
> learn to manipulate it faster than any population that I've ever seen or heard of.[155]

A third manner in which the Red Army's mistakenly viewed the Mujahedeen was not

appreciating the true warrior nature of the Afghans and their tradition of *beyat* in which

these Afghan and Muslim resistance groups were willing to die rather than surrender.[156]

Instead, the Red Army misconstrued the Mujahedeen's fighting against an enemy that

was viewed as invading their country and imposing an unwanted way of life as a

population that was fatalistically waiting to be martyred.[157] The cultural silos and rigid

ideology of the Soviets prevented a deeper understanding of the true political

relationships and cultural dependencies of the Afghan people and local political dynamics

in Afghanistan.[158]

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[153] Keane, ***the True Story of Charlie Wilson***

[154] *Ibid*.

[155] Frank Anderson, who was assigned to CIA Afghan Task Force, in speaking of the warrior society and how great the Afghans were as fighters. Ibid.

[156] Be'yat is the Islamic word for allegiance. Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 126.

[157] Keane, ***the True Story of Charlie Wilson***

[158] Minkov and Smolynec, ***3-D Soviet Style:*** *A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, 29.

The true political dynamics of the Afghan countryside was never understood by the Soviets and, consequently, the centre of gravity to the situation in Afghanistan was never realized and the Red Army did not achieve victory. It should be noted that outside Kabul, the Afghan people remained hostile to the PDPA and in turn the Soviet Union which it represented. This resentment to their centralized government was played out against the Soviet Fifth Column as it was used to supposedly restore power in their country.[159] The Soviet's underestimation of the Afghan military and the Mujahedeen was a significant misrepresentation of reality caused by a Soviet cultural-cognitive bias. Cultural-cognitive bias would also misconstrue the Soviet's view of Afghanistan's centralized government.

The Soviet-Afghan War was generated by a struggle to restore power to the communist regime yet this regime was in truth never the controlling power within Afghanistan that the Soviet's had presumed. Much of the outlying cities were tribally controlled. To the tribesmen of Afghanistan, the PDPA was not only illegitimate as a government authority, but it was despised due to its intolerance to their traditional ways. The communist PDPA government was unable to achieve control while in power because of the socialist ideology, particularly concerning women, land distribution and destruction of traditional societal order did not resonate well with the majority of the population. Although the PDPA did not drive a socialist agenda in an overly excessive manner, the tribes were galvanized against the socialist government uniting the Afghan tribes against this foreign intrusion who attempted to occupy and exercise foreign

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[159] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 114.

ideology as it had throughout history.[160] This misinterpretation of PDPA power

presented a significant barrier to the Soviets achieving their objectives.[161]

A comprehensive understanding of these political dynamics would have been crucial to

developing effective strategy in a military campaign.

> Any foreign policy, peace initiative, or security calculation made without a
> careful evaluation of local, national, regional, and international realities in the
> area, can end in either failure or disaster. In Afghanistan, it ended in both.[162]

In exclusively supporting the centralized PDPA, the Red Army neglected the power

struggle in the rural parts of the country thus disenfranchising local and regional

authorities. The unbound collection of tribes ethnicities within Afghanistan have never

been effectively influenced or controlled by a centralized government.[163] Even strong

centrally run governments throughout history have not been able to overcome the

cultural, ethnic, tribal and customary life and hierarchy of the people of Afghanistan.

> Getting things done in Afghanistan requires local engagement....but runs the risk
> of perpetuating local power centers that challenge central authority. The Afghan
> government will be opposed by those left out of power/ not enfranchised.[164]

Past events have shown that engaging and enfranchising local populations and

power centres is of critical importance in the success of nation building. Instead of

empowering a region and moving on, the Soviets attempted to hold strategic centres

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[160] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,* xxvii.

[161] *Ibid.,* xxix

[162] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation,* 126.

[163] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan ,* xxv.

[164] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan,* 27.

while neglecting and marginalizing outlier regions. The Soviets did not realize that the

government did not hold power in the outskirts of the country and as a result, misplaced

trust in the government such that even if it was legitimate or supported within the cities,

the control of the country would not have reached the country side. Tribal and village

leaders who determine the local law were not incorporated. Eventually, the Red Army

failed to achieve political outcomes due to the almost universal resistance by the

population. This development stood in stark contrast with that of other successful

operations of the Red Army, such as the Manchurian campaign in which the population

had readily welcomed the liberation from the Japanese occupation.[165] The Soviets relied

on a model that the people were part of a revolution rather than a coup like that of April

of 1978.

The events of 27 April 1978 were not characteristic of a people's revolution as the

Soviets had interpreted. Rather than the Soviets supporting a people's revolution to

emancipate into a socialist way of life, they instead became involved in a civil war and

counter-insurgency. In his writings about these events and their true significance, Grau

writes:

> The Communist took power in Afghanistan on 27 April 1978 with a bloody
> military coup...The new government enjoyed little popular support. The wobbly
> new government was almost immediately met by armed resistance fighters who
> contested this new order.[166]

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[165] Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 280.

[166] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* ,
xvii.

What the Soviets expected with a people's revolution was instead an attempt to

overthrow the current government and establish Taraki as leader. Based on their

incorrect misinterpretation of events, the Soviets believed:

> …that the political leadership of the DRA create an effective system of local
> bodies of people's power in the form of revolutionary (people's) committees, and
> also considerably improve the ideological and political educational work among
> the population and the personnel of the armed forces.[167]

Before the invasion, the active Afghan resistance groups engaged against the Soviet-

advised Afghan army were sporadic and unorganized. The Soviets expected their arrival

in Afghanistan would produce a stabilizing force and pacify any unrest within the

country. Instead, the reaction of the population was not that of a revolution for people's

power but a revolt against socialism and the occupying Red Army. Almost immediately,

the small isolated pockets of resistance turned into a civil war. Afghans fought for

liberation from the socialist government and their supporting foreign occupiers, namely

the Red Army. By embracing such esteemed epithets as Mujahedeen, Shahid, and Ghazi,

the freedom fighters engendered the national movement to oust the occupying Soviet Red

Army.[168]

Traditionally, when the Soviets left an area, within Afghanistan those territories

usually fell to the freedom fighters, therefore the Red Army had to redistribute troops

across vast areas instead of providing a concentration of force needed to control certain

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[167] ***Gromyko-Andropov-Ustinov-Ponomarev Report to CPSU CC on the Situation in Afghanistan***,[1979]),
http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034D714-96B6-175C-9A356BA28915CAE5&sort=Collection&item=Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (accessed March 11, 2011).

[168] Mujahedeen literally means, "struggler" or "freedom-fighter." Shahid is a religious term in Islam, literally meaning "witness", yet often used as "martyr." Ghazi literally is translated as the verb "to raid," and connotes, "heroism." Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 124.

strategic regions. The Soviets had bases all across the country yet were not concentrated in sufficient force to control the entire country.[169] The most glaring example of over-extended military presence occurred at Kiber Pass. The Kiber Pass is the supply route from Pakistan to Afghanistan and the lifeline of the Mujahedeen allowing them to leave occupied Afghanistan to regroup and resupply when necessary.[170] It also served as an entry point into Afghanistan for newly recruited fighters to join the cause. The Soviets never had enough manpower to completely deny the rebels this border access. In the end the approximately 100, 000 troops of the Red Army were ineffectual in controlling the country without the support of the people of Afghanistan.

Even before the invasion in December 1979, the Soviets had troops and advisors, approximately 8,000 and 1,500 respectively, who were active in Afghanistan.[171] The effort of advisors coupled with military troop efforts demonstrated that the Soviets were involved in whole-of-government work early on in the campaign. The whole-of-government approach to nation building, of which modern COIN doctrine espouses, was not completely foreign to the Soviets. Prior to the invasion, and indeed through most of the second half of the 20th century, the Soviets had attempted to influence the Afghan government, including establishing two socialist political parties, the Parchamis and the Khalqi. Most recent to the invasion, the Soviets aided in the establishment of the of Daoud, Taraki, and Amin regimes. This communist approach of whole-of-government

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[169] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, 5.

[170] Keane, *the True Story of Charlie Wilson*

[171] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 120.

nation building is congruent with modern theory. There constantly existed a challenge of balancing military ops with civil affairs.[172] On one hand, the Red Army was seen as a guardian force in Afghanistan, while on the other hand, the Kremlin continued with political pressure on Daoud's regime, somewhat detached from military operations. Military presence needed to provide security to the new regime yet the fight for independence of Afghanistan was in the countryside, and not within the annals of Kabul's politics.[173] Even though Soviet advisors were embedded within government positions, the cooperation of the Afghan Army and the Red Army remained deficient and ineffective.

Frustrated by the unexpected effectiveness of the Afghan guerrilla attacks and the popularity of resistance groups among Afghans, the Soviets troops quickly abandoned the policy of "winning hearts-and-minds" and began to terrorize the population into submission.[174] Instead of coming along side the population to empower them into reform of the country, such as the doctrine of modern counter-insurgency, the Red Army engaged in saturation bombings and the use of anti-personnel mines which only strengthened the anti-Soviet uprising and hardened resistance groups, "whose Islamic faith and Afghan tradition [preach] salvation through Jihad."[175]

Some of these tactics were used to achieve operational objectives while some served no tactical purpose. Such terror techniques like that of gassing the population

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[172] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, 4.

[173] *Ibid.*

[174] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 121.

[175] *Ibid.,* 122

were used to terrorize civilian population for the purpose of mass dislocation. *Yellow*

rain for instance, was a deadly myotoxin that was used on Badakhshan province in the

North was used to eliminate the large population pockets quickly and securely to allow

room for a build-up of their military infrastructure.[176] Terror campaigns also involved

tactics ranging from using anti-personnel mines which booby-trapped household items to

terror bombing of the population and destroying infrastructure that was thought to

contribute to the insurgency. The army was especially brutal towards women and

children. In 1987, the *Helsinki Watch Reports* reported that the 'Russians systematically

entered all the houses, executing the inhabitants including women and children often by

shooting them in the head.'[177] The killing and terrorization of Afghan women and

children while in Afghanistan worked to the disadvantage of the Soviets. Most Afghans

viewed these acts as further proof of Soviet atheistic policies toward Muslims. This was

why Afghans believed that the Soviets were intent on their total destruction rather than

merely their subjugation. A Soviet soldier observed:

> We were struck by our own cruelty in Afghanistan. We executed innocent
> peasants. If one of ours was killed or wounded we would kill women, children
> and old people as revenge. We killed everything, even the animals.[178]

Isolating oneself from the indigenous population through terror is again contrary to

modern tactics against insurgencies but had proven successful for the Red Army in the

past.

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[176] Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 285.

[177] Payind, *Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation*, 124.

[178] Reuveny and Prakash, *the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, 702.

For a hundred years, the Red Army used these terror tactics in Central Asia. In 1881, General M.O. Skobelev, [Russian] conqueror of Turkestan explained this tactic in its simplest form. "I hold it a principle in Asia that the duration of peace is in direct proportion to the slaughter you inflict on your enemy."[179] It is necessary, in a COIN operation, for the local population to believe that the occupying force is there for the betterment of the population which aligns with the normative view held by the Soviets about the Red Army. As British Field Marshal Sir Gerald Walter Robert Templer, who defeated the rebels during the Malayan Emergency of the 1950s, said of counterinsurgency, "The shooting side of the business is only 25 percent of the trouble and the other 75 percent lies in getting the people of this country behind us"[180] The Red Army was unsuccessful in gaining the support of the Afghans. In order to gain the support of the population the occupier must be seen to offer a better life than that offered by the rebels. The Soviets abandoned this in favour of a terror campaign.

Soviet air power was symbolic of the Red Army's technological dominance over Afghanistan. The air power seemed to dominate the battlefield and with it the Red Army was undefeated in Afghanistan. The Soviets believed the rebels were helpless against Soviet air power.[181] Typifying air power, there was no icon more symbolic of the Red Army's supremacy than the Mi-24 Hind attack helicopter. Even the Mujahedeen saw this gunship as an indestructible Soviet emblem as reinforced by Afghan rebel Azizullah Din

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[179] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, 8.

[180] John Cloake, *Templer, Tiger of Malaya: The Life of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer* (London: Harrap, 1985), 508.

Muhammad: "The Mujahedeen believed that nothing could destroy the Russian gunship [Mi-24]. They were bullet proof, and after a while [we] did not even bother firing at them."[182] This lack of opposition served to reinforce the Soviet aircrew of the impunity of the Hind which further reinforced the reliance of the Red Army on soviet air power when conducting operations. The airpower represented by the Hind was used in abundance, which aligns to the Red Army's overall doctrine which emphasizes the overwhelming use of firepower to achieve military objectives.

> The Soviets chose to expend massive amounts of firepower in order to save Soviet lives and to compensate for their lack of infantry. It was expensive, indiscriminate and probably ineffective practice.[183]

Eventually, the Red Army was using air power indiscriminately bombing any village that was thought to be helping the resistance. The sense of invulnerability brought on by the view of the Mi-24 led to an overreliance on direct fire support from the Hind to the Red Army ground troops.[184] The Hind was used in every type of military action of the Red Army and the Soviet experience solidified the helicopter's use on the battlefield.

> By 1983, Soviets defined eight key uses for the helicopter on the battlefield. These include in order of importance: the destruction of the fighting force, destruction of equipment, intelligence gathering, correcting artillery fire, tactical desant (troops operating behind enemy lines), including all components of a vertical envelopment on the tactical level, transfer of weapons and equipment in untrafficable areas, delivery of supplies and last of all evacuating the wounded.[185]

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[181] Keane, **the True Story of Charlie Wilson**

[182] *Ibid.*

[183] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,* 52.

[184] Bodansky, *The Bear on the Chessboard: Soviet Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 288.

[185] *Ibid.,* 289

Armed helicopters were the most effective Soviet weapon in Afghanistan because they could overcome the terrain difficulties, compensating for the lack of manoeuvre the terrain provided and because of the psychological effect they had on the Mujahedeen.[186]

Up until the introduction of the FIM-92 Stinger missile system, the Mujahedeen were virtually defenceless against Mi-24.[187] Once the Mujahedeen were able to shoot down Soviet helicopters with the Stinger, the Soviets could no longer maintain a military advantage.[188] The Stinger arrived in Afghanistan in late 1986, but not too late to influence the war. September 26th, 1986 marks the first successful destruction of an Mi-24 with the use of Stinger in Afghanistan. This brought the end to the psychological and weaponry advantage the Mi-24 had over the Afghan rebel forces. That year 100 aircraft, including some fixed wing, had been shot down by the Mujahedeen using the Stinger and the symbolic value of the Mi-24 was nullified.[189] Without this symbol of power, all that remained was Soviet leadership, which was inadequate to win the war.

Soviet operational planners misdiagnosed the nature of the conflict within Afghanistan in 1978 as that of the *coup de main* model of Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968).[190] As such, the invasion and occupation of the country was

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[186] *Ibid.*, 286

[187] *Ibid.*, 283

[188] Keane, **the True Story of Charlie Wilson**

[189] *Ibid.*

[190] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* , xxviii.

doomed to failure in the asymmetric environment of Afghanistan where control of the central government did not translate into control of the country – especially the countryside which was ruled by insurgents. The Soviet leadership and that of the Red Army clung to traditional military tactics and were resistant to changing the structure. The politicians and military Generals followed the Soviet invasion script that they had successfully implemented many times to stabilize disorderly or unstable republics under Soviet influence. The Afghan invasion plan mimicked almost exactly the invasion plan of Czechoslovakia used a decade earlier.

The Czechoslovakia invasion plan followed the typical Soviet military strategy. The country was to be stabilized by garrisoning the main routes, major cities, airbases, and logistic sites. This in turn was to relieve the Afghan forces of garrison duties and advance them into the countryside to battle the resistance thus minimizing interface between the occupying Soviets and the local population. In Afghanistan, logistical, air, artillery, and intelligence support from the superior Soviet forces was to be used by the Afghan forces. The Afghan forces were to be fortified by the Red Army such that once the resistance was defeated the Soviet forces could be withdrawn.[191] As General Valenin Varennikov stated the expectation going into the conflict,

> …was to enter Afghanistan and take the nations strategic assets under control. Soviet forces were only intended to stay five, six months until the situation stabilized, but that was naive.[192]

The Soviets believed that the Red Army could achieve their military outcome swiftly. History had seen the Soviets gain victory using this military doctrine in East Germany

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[191] *Ibid.*, xviii-xix

[192] Keane, *the True Story of Charlie Wilson*

(1953), Hungary (1956), and Czechoslovakia (1968). These campaigns confirmed for the Soviets that military force could be used for the extension of political power.[193] The Red Army was a symbol of Soviet dominance. They did not doubt the Red Army would stabilize the Socialist ideology in Afghanistan.

> War failures weakened the military and conservative anti-reform forces and accelerated glasnost and perestroika. Importantly, these failures demonstrated that the Soviet army was not invincible, thereby encouraging non-Russian republics to push for independence with little fear of a military backlash.[194]

By late 1986, the Afghanistan war had significantly impacted on Soviet domestic politics. Anti-militarism became strong in the non-Russian Soviet republics. For non-Russians, the war became a unifying symbol of their opposition to Moscow's rule. The decision to withdraw from Afghanistan would have revealed Soviet military weakness and demonstrated that the army was vulnerable.[195] As such, the Red Army resisted change in order to justify its existence. Soviet Generals continued attempts to preserve the Red Army's symbolic power for the Soviet Union following the failed war in Afghanistan:

> The war impacted Soviet politics in the reinforcing way that it discredited the Red Army, created cleavage between the party and the military, and demonstrated that the Red Army was not invincible, which emboldened the non Russian republics to push for independence.[196]

An adaptation that was made was the realization of the importance of the Spetsnaz. Their importance in the mountainous terrain and political environment became

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[193] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,* xi.

[194] Reuveny and Prakash, *the Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, 694.

[195] *Ibid.,* 700

[196] *Ibid.,* 693

invaluable. Their use was demonstrated through reconnaissance and mobile manoeuvre

with helicopter forces. In the March to June time frame of 1987, Chief of the General

Staff of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Ogarkov conducted a purging of senior military

personnel in favour of placing, "his men" in these key appointments. From the General

Staff's First deputy chief, Sergei Fyodorovich Akhromeyev, to General Mayorov, chiefs

of the Soviet Ground Forces in Afghanistan, senior generals were purged and replaced by

leader's possessing, "considerable experience with spetsnaz forces."[197] This change

came late in the war and not without significant pressure from the higher chain of

command in response to the realization of the need for change. This, in turn, changed the

symbolic power of the Red Army and it was no longer seen as the embodiment of the

Kremlin's power over the subordinate states.

The Soviets had viewed the Red Army as a homogeneous entity that acted as one

like-minded entity – that being an extension of the Russian Republic. However, the

makeup of the Red Army was extremely diverse. There was representation of all

ethnicities throughout the union. Conscription served to further diversify the cultural

make-up of the Red Army and perhaps dilute its combat effectiveness.

> Many Soviet conscripts were sent directly to Afghanistan without basic training;
> their training was to be done at Soviet bases in Afghanistan.[198]

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[197] George Konstantin, "For the Soviet Military, it was a 'Red Banner' Year," *EIR International* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 1988, 1988), 44, http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/1988/eirv15n01-19880101/eirv15n01-19880101_043-for_the_soviet_military_it_was_a.pdf (accessed March 2, 2011).

[198] J. Bruce Amstutz, ed., ***Afghanistan**: The **First Five Years** of **Soviet Occupation***. (Washington, D.C.: National Defense U., 1986), 168.

Of particular complication were the soldiers from central Asia, who were conflicted about fighting a war against their ethnic brethren. Former Soviet KGB major Bladimir Kuzichkin explains:

> They [the Central Asian soldiers] were supposed to make our intervention go more smoothly. Instead, it was an error…They showed little interest in fighting their neighbours.[199]

Cultural tension within the Red Army and stagnant military tactics brought into question whether or not the Red Army was the appropriate tool for putting down uprisings within the Soviet states; a sentiment that was challenged by the war in Afghanistan.

In summary, there were powerful cultural-cognitive forces that prevented the proper adaptation of the Soviet Red Army from adapting to the asymmetric warfare in Afghanistan. These included; an underestimation of the Afghan Army as a credible branch of the government and of the Mujahedeen as a fighting force, a skewed view of the central government and the mobilization of the people following the coup in 1978, and Soviet symbolic artefacts such as the Soviet Mi-24 Hind helicopter. These forces led to behaviour such as the misinterpretation of the capabilities of the DRA and thus late to work together, the misinterpretation of the capabilities of the Mujahedeen and the extent to which they were supported by foreign aid, and which manifested in tactics of terrorizing the population, all which runs contrary to effective COIN operations. It was only when influence became strong enough that the Red Army adapted. These influences came in the form of necessity to withdrawal from the country and manifested in the Red Army training and building up the DRA Army. The effectiveness of the

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[199] *Ibid.,* 169

Mujahedeen at bringing down the Hind with the introduction of the Stinger also served as

a pressure which changed the Soviet's tactics in the war and diminished the effectiveness

of Soviet airpower in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

In summary, institutional analysis can be applied to understand some of the deep institutional forces that drive the behaviour of an organization. These institutional forces serve to justify the organization, both internally and externally, in that they lend credence by defining acceptability within, and credibility to the organization.[200] Although these forces make an institution strong and bind it as an organization, it is these very forces that can lead to institutional lethargy and create a powerful resistance to change. W. Richard Scott's model for institutional analysis describes three independent pillars into which these forces can be categorized for the purpose of examination. The regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pillars are independent in the method in which they act upon an organization yet they are interdependent at times in that they can be mutually reinforcing, thus creating strong forces that cause the organization to resist change. Change in an organization, however can take place when pressures from both internal and external sources become strong enough to overcome these resistant forces.

In the counterinsurgency operations of the Soviet-Afghan war of the 1980s, the Soviets could not reach the people of Afghanistan and a fierce civil war ensued consisting of primarily asymmetric warfare. Soviet forces employed tactics devised in the Cold War to fight in Europe against guerrilla tactics of the Mujahedeen with little positive effect. The rebel force in Afghanistan continued to fight against the Soviets despite their enemy's upper hand and significant number of Afghan casualties; approximately 1.3

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[200] Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interests,* 47.

million killed and approximately 5.5 million (1 third pre-war population) displaced

refugees.[201]   The personal loss to the Soviets was substantial as well with out of the

642,000 total troops served in Afghanistan; there were 15,000 killed, 54,000 wounded

and 416,000 who suffered from serious illnesses. There was also an expense of upwards

of $25 billion dollars spent by 1986.[202] These measures were unsuccessful in the Soviet

Army ever attaining complete victory over Afghanistan.

There were powerful institutional forces that prevented an effective adaptation of

the Soviet Red Army to the counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan. It was only

when the pressures, from both the internal and external environment become strong

enough that the Soviet military institution adapted to irregular warfare. These regulative

forces included; legal sanctions justifying operations in the country, the protocols and

SOPs of the Red Army (i.e., the force structure and tactics) and the political direction

from the Kremlin all had constraining effects on the behaviour of the Red Army. These

powerful normative forces included; the moral justification for the invasion, the view of

the coup in 1978 as a people's revolution, the archetype of the Red Army leadership, and

the belief that the Red Army was an appropriate political tool of the CPSU. These

powerful cultural-cognitive forces included; an underestimation of the Afghan Army as a

credible branch of the government and of the Mujahedeen as a fighting force, a skewed

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[201] Minkov and Smolynec, *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan*, 26.

[202] Glantz and Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,* xviii.

view of the central government and the mobilization of the people following the coup in 1978, and Soviet symbolic artefacts such as the Soviet Mi-24 Hind helicopter.

These forces led to behaviour such as the misinterpretation of the capabilities of the DRA and thus late to work together, the misinterpretation of the capabilities of the Mujahedeen and the extent to which they were supported by foreign aid, and which manifested in tactics of terrorizing the population, all which runs contrary to effective COIN operations.

For the most part, the Soviets failed to effectively adapt to the asymmetric warfare, yet few adaptations did occur. It was only when the pressures upon the these institutional forces intensified, such as Gorbachev's decree for an early end in Afghanistan, that the Red Army changed its behaviour and adapted appropriate methods to fight the war. Influences such as when the Soviet people became disillusioned by the high number of dead soldiers returning from Afghanistan, the *Afghansty* political activists, and the ethnic Asians discontent at fighting ethnic brethren served to overcome the regulative forces. However, even though the disillusionment of the Soviet people brought about an increase in pressure for the Red Army to change, the Red Army continued in grossly habitual military tactics. Influences such as the pressure to withdrawal from the country overcame the normative forces and manifested in such reformed strategy as the Red Army training and building up the DRA Army. Cultural-cognitive forces were also overcome by overwhelming pressure. For example, the effectiveness of the Mujahedeen at bringing down the Mi-24 Hind helicopter with the introduction of the Stinger served as a pressure which changed the Soviet's tactics in the war because of the diminished the effectiveness of Soviet airpower in Afghanistan.

These conclusions can provide insight into current military engagements, particularly conventional militaries engaged in counter-insurgency. A lot of what the Soviets saw in the 1980s is similar to what is seen in present day conflicts. These conflicts characterised by civil unrest in a failed or failing state with an occupying force fighting a civil war against guerrilla tactics with an insurgency challenge even the lone superpower of today in Iraq. Even more uncanny is how the events in Afghanistan with the coalition, including the U.S. and Canada, echo the campaign of the Soviets some 20-30 years earlier. Although each military organization retains its own set of characteristics that make it unique, and as such would need to be subjected to an independent analysis, this case study draws parallels to the current campaign in Afghanistan of Canadian Forces and its allies. The issues of fighting a technologically inferior insurgent, the integration of the whole of government, the challenges of overcoming dogmatic force structures, and the training of indigenous security forces as a viable withdrawal strategy are all reminiscent of the Soviet difficulties in the 1980s. While some of these institutional forces may be universal as contemporary militaries attempt to fight in asymmetric combat operations, it should be pointed out that an analysis of one military institution is not necessarily useful to understand another. Institutional forces are unique to an organization, and unique to time and space. As such, the resistance forces and stressors upon an organization may be unique to a specific conflict. As the Canadian combat mission draws to a close, the focus of Canada, its Government and indeed its CF component has shifted from fighting the Taliban to a nation-building approach. These efforts to prop-up the centralized government, and build-up the security and defence

forces of Afghanistan echo the efforts of the Soviet Red Army in the later years of the 1980s as a legitimate exit strategy for a conventional military force from an asymmetric counter-insurgency operation in a foreign country.

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