

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SOVIET AND AMERICAN MILITARY
STRATEGIES IN AFGHANISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

There is a widespread opinion that the Soviet and American military operations in Afghanistan proceeded in the same way, and that the U.S. Army will be in the same situation as the Soviet Army in 1979-1989. This Master Essay makes a comparative analysis of the American and Russian military operations in Afghanistan, and, based on that comparison, determines some parallels, similarities and differences between these two military campaigns.

The paper briefly discusses the political objectives of both superpowers in Afghanistan, as well as the combination of political and military means to achieve these objectives. These questions are discussed in the context of intra-Afghani situation. However, the main body of the essay is a comparative analysis of military operations including the kinds of military detachments used by both countries in Afghanistan, the tactics and equipment of these detachments; how the tactics, force structure and equipment were accommodated to Afghani conditions, and to what extent military leadership took into consideration the specifics of warfare in high altitudes and preparedness of military personnel to such conditions.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of ~~my this master's~~ Master's essay is a comparative analysis of the Soviet and American military strategies in Afghanistan. This paper briefly discusses the political objectives of both superpowers in Afghanistan, as well as the combination of political and military means to achieve these objectives. These questions are discussed in the context of intra-Afghani situation. However, the main body of the essay is a comparative analysis of military operations including the kinds of military detachments used by both countries in Afghanistan, the tactics and equipment of these detachments; how the tactics, force structure and equipment were accommodated to Afghani conditions, and to what extent military leadership took into consideration the specifics of warfare in high altitudes and preparedness of military personnel to such conditions.

Before discussing military aspects of the Soviet and American general strategies in Afghanistan, first ~~of all~~ it is necessary to briefly introduce the history of Afghanistan, because many problems of contemporary Afghanistan date back to the 19th century.

Afghanistan, as a sovereign state, exists since 1747 when Ahmad-Shah Durani defeated his rival ~~ies~~ and established the state of Boorak. Even before these events Afghani tribes were military strong enough to occupy most of Iran in 1722-3 including capital Isfahan (Aivazian 1997). In the 19th century the most serious challenges that Afghanistan had were two wars with the British Empire in 1838-40 and 1878-79. They also were in the state of war with the Russian Empire in 1883-85 as a result of which there was an agreement over the borders between Russia and Afghanistan. In 1893 Britain signed a document with the Afghani King Abdul Rahman Khan referring to the borders between Afghanistan and British India, i.e. contemporary borders with Pakistan. The settlement of border issue was worked out by the British officer Durand and thus

became known as the Durand line (Roashan 2001). By this agreement, which expired in 1993, the Pashtun tribes were separated by the borderline.

In spite of myths about an invincibility of Afghan people, the creation of the Afghan state within its contemporary borders was due to by the necessity of buffer state between those two empires. The British predicted that Peter the Great's dream of expansion could endanger their possessions in India, therefore adopted an anti-expansionist policy against Russia at the mid of nineteenth century by making Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet a fence around any further Russian expansion; and thus began the so called "Great Game." The mutual deterrence of Russians and British, issues of security between them made the existence of Afghanistan possible rather than internal factors such as national identity, common language and religion, cultural heritage, which could serve as a basis for the consolidation of the nation. As Barnett Rubin noted Afghanistan is a "legally undivided territory of fragmented power" (Rubin 1996, 2).

Four major ethnic groups populate Afghanistan and the viability of the Afghan State is highly questionable. Pashtuns live mostly in the south and southeastern parts, Hazara Shia minority is located in the northwestern part (near Iranian border), and Uzbeks and Tajiks populate north Afghanistan. They are divided by the Hindu-Kush mountain chain and have never developed cohesive national identity, meanwhile ethnic and tribal allegiances are quite strong. Contemporary Afghanistan is a country where many controversies of the world are concentrated: ideological, political, economic, social, religious.

While making a comparative analysis of the Soviet and American military strategies in Afghanistan it is necessary to accentuate how both the United States and Soviet Union have been engaged in intra-Afghani regulations, because the success or failure of military operations was also determined by the patterns and scales of co-operation with numerous Afghani ethnic and

tribal groups. Therefore it has been a difficult issue facing both superpowers in Afghanistan. Both toppled the existing governments and brought to power their client regimes. The difference is that, the communist regime of Babrak Karmal was imposed by direct military intervention and was at the outset very unpopular, while, Hamid Karzai became a president elected by Loya Jirga (Entekhabi-Fard 2002). But it is necessary to mention that the Loya Jirga was the Pashtun tribal practice transformed during monarchy period into a state one and never had been used for election of country's leader. The Hamid Karzai's government as in the cases of the other foreign projects can very easily lose legitimacy and become unpopular.

Both the Soviets and Americans more or less have had a capacity to pacify Afghanistan and to suppress points of resistance. If one looks at the Soviet position at the early 1980s, the Soviets seemed to be in full control. But very soon the mujahedins took a strategic initiative and intruded guerrilla war upon the Soviets and puppet Afghani government. This was not only reflection of mujahedin mobilisation but also the failure of communist regime to gain support of large segments of Afghani society. The Soviets and their local client also failed to establish sustainable Afghani army at the initial stage of occupation. Therefore the Soviets instead of pushing Afghan military forces into the countryside to battle resistance were themselves engaged in such operations. The Soviets have never lost any battle in Afghanistan. Nobody from mujahedin commanders took any city from their enemy. However, the Soviets' defeat was strategic. The causes of this defeat were not in the course of military operations, but interrelated with the internal ethnic and social structures of Afghanistan and its geographic location. Today ethno-regional coalitions, which are organized around elites, can be characterized as the agents of political and military action in Afghanistan. These agents are coexisting in territorial units, which have access to external resources for patronage. The settlements in these mountainous and arid

zones have gathered around river systems, which form the basis for irrigation. Cities are market centers and stations along long-distance trade routes. The entities that have clustered around these river systems and towns constituted the political-social units and they were amalgamated via conquest and alliance into the state of Afghanistan. The original state consisted of some large provinces that coincided with these regions: Kabul, Jalalabad, Qataghan-Badakhshan, Turkestan, Heart, Hazarajat, and Qandahar (Rubin 1996). During the process of state building these units were divided into 30 smaller provinces, which helped to fragment the broad coalitions in such socially coherent areas that could challenge state power. The struggle against Soviet occupation, which resulted in the collapse of Afghani State, destroyed administrative structure of state power. When the Soviet troops withdrew, the contacts over the roads that linked these regions weakened. The regional coalitions began to coalesce within these historical units once more though at different rates, with distinct types of leadership and economic bases. So these coalitions that are based on regional units, form the basis for the new ethno-regional politics of Afghanistan. Each coalition was marked with the core of group of men that were linked by some network. In each case the leadership is uniform ethnically and socially: the essence of social solidarity in a fragmented society. Consequently, it is due to this phenomenon that the Taleban and other groups aimed to take central state power are so directed to the fragmenting coalitions and dispersing local centers of power.

While making a comparative analysis of the Soviet and American military operations and strategies in Afghanistan, first, it is necessary to emphasize the quantity of ground forces deployed by both countries in the Afghani theater. From December of 1979 to May of 1988, the Soviet Union permanently kept 84-120000 troops in Afghanistan (Soviet propaganda called this huge number of troops as a Limited Contingent of Soviet Troops in the Democratic Republic of

Afghanistan), meanwhile the United States of America and its allies deployed around 8000 ground military forces in the same country (they called it as an International Security Assistance Force provided by nineteen countries to support new Afghani government). But despite this, there are obvious parallels in strategic planning. Like the Soviet Army, International Assistance Force bases its activity on the following:

1. Controlling the country by garrisoning the major cities, airbases and logistic sites;
2. Providing logistic, air, artillery and intelligence support to the ally Afghani forces;
3. Supporting client government to build strong military forces.

Like mujahedins, the fighters of Taleban and Al-Qaeda organized small assaults and ambushes. Time does not play a role for them. Like the special forces of the Soviet Army, similar detachments of Americans and their allies are able to deal with dangerous missions behind the enemy only at a limited period of time. There has been a lack of the military forces for both of them to organize the system of strong bastions in the countryside. The limited quantity of US troops makes such a task impossible and non-expedient because the supply of military forces goes through air transportation. The Soviet 40th Army organized a system of these fortes (zastava) allocated along major roads at a distance of 2-3 kms. There were small parts in heights, which gave an opportunity to control neighbourhood and road. The platoons of infantry strengthened by tanks, mortars and self-propelled "Shilka" vehicles were allocated there (Liakhovsky 1999). But these posts were vulnerable and subject to constant attacks of mujahedins. The porous border with Pakistan is/was another problem for Russians and Americans which is/was impossible to control. But, in this case, the Americans have had an advantage over the Soviets. They can pursue the Taleban and Al Qaeda fighters within the

Pakistan, sometimes small battles take place between Pakistani and Al Qaeda forces in the borderline provinces of Pakistan.

The beginning of military operations by both the Soviets and Americans and the tactics of ground forces deployment in Afghanistan were rather different. The Soviet Union commenced invasion with the coup accomplished by its special forces, which were allocated in Afghanistan long before these events. So-called "Muslim" battalion of the General Intelligence Agency of the USSR Defence Ministry with 700 soldiers was launched in Afghanistan in 18 of November 1979. It was formed several months earlier from the soldiers of Asian ethnicity, or those resembling them, serving in Special Forces of the Red Army. They were equipped as Afghani military units. Their official mission was to guard Afghani dictator Amin in his palace of Taj-Bek in the south-eastern part of Kabul (Rodin 2002). There were several attempts to assassinate Amin and he thought that the Soviet Special Forces could be more loyal to him than Afghans. But the command of the "Muslim" battalion received a secret instruction from Moscow to be prepared to seize important governmental buildings and suppress possible resistance of Afghani Army and police during the coup. On the 27th of December 1979 the Soviet "Muslim" battalion seized the buildings of the General Staff and Ministry of Internal Affairs, the prison of Pyli-Charkhi, a radio station and telephone communications. At the same time, the special groups of the KGB USSR "Zenit" and "Grom" captured the presidential palace and executed dictator Amin (Rodin 2002). Meantime the Soviets launched two airborne divisions in the Bagram airbase (major airbase of the Afghan air forces), which not only took control of the airbase but also sent several units to help "Muslim" battalion in Kabul. At 3.00pm, 25 of December 1979 the military units of the Soviet 40th Army passed the Soviet-Afghani border near Termez city and began further advancement via Sallang tunnel towards Kabul under the command of the General-

Lieutenant Tookharinov. During the January of 1980 the detachments of the 40th Army seized key positions in the country without any serious resistance and with the Afghani Army took under control administrative centers, airports and major roads. They also began to guard enterprises where Soviet specialists and advisors worked, such as gas industries, power stations, factories, and Sallang tunnel.

The Soviet war in Afghanistan can be divided into four phases. In the first phase (from the date of invasion to the February of 1980), the Soviet Army guarded roads, airports, power stations and car caravans without engaging in combat activities with the opposition forces. In the January of 1980 the units of 40th Army took key districts in Afghanistan and forced the Afghani insurgent units to surrender. In the second phase of the war, (March 1980-April 1985), the Soviet army participated in large-scale military operations. The most severe years of military confrontation were 1980, 81 and partly 82. The third phase of war (April 1985-January 1987) was characterized by changing military tactics from the direct military involvement to the support of Afghani Army by aviation and artillery. Meantime the Soviet Special Forces implemented operations for the annihilation of warlords and caravans with weaponry. In the fourth phase of the war (January 1987-15th February of 1989) the Soviet military command prepared and implemented the full withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. Since May 1988, the Soviet Army began to leave the garrisons in Afghanistan.

Unlike the Soviets, the Americans have resisted the temptation of committing large numbers of ground forces to the Afghani battlefields. The US and its allies have deployed only 8000 troops in Afghanistan compared to 120000 Soviet military forces in the same area more than a decade earlier. One of the reasons of keeping US ground force levels low was to avoid presenting lucrative targets to the Al Qaeda and Taleban fighters.

The US military success came as a result of well-organized cooperation among all enemies of Taleban, the American military and intelligence played an important role in this consolidation. Actually the US has prepared and carried out two military operations in Afghanistan; air and ground-coalitional. In the ground operation Americans used the forces of the Northern Alliance (the latter at the beginning of operations controlled only 5% of Afghanistan) thus avoiding to push their ground forces in the large scale bloody battles. There was no doubt about military victory of Americans in Afghanistan. Northern Alliance with the help of American air forces mass bombardments of the Talebani positions swept away preponderant military forces of Taleban. Northern Alliance took control of Kabul and Qandahar (the stronghold of Taleban) without any serious resistance. During this fast campaign or *blitzkrieg*, the country was "liberated" from Taleban and the military-technological advantage of US was completely ~~realized~~realised in "asymmetric warfare." Precautions about the repetition of Soviet experience were void because at the first glance Americans and their Afghan allies were in full control of situation. Besides, the objectives of American foreign policy in Afghanistan are rather different from Soviet's. Contrary to the Soviets efforts in building socialism in medieval country, the Americans have pursued less ambitious goals such as toppling shaky political regime and preventing Afghanistan to become a base for Al Qaeda and other Islamic groups. Americans taking into consideration the lessons of the Vietnam and Soviet-Afghani wars, where they and Soviets committed huge numbers of troops to fight a conventional war against unconventional enemy, engage highly trained and mobile units of special forces in military operations in the Afghani theater.

The US began air assaults of different targets on the territory of Afghanistan on the 7 October 2001 but since the 2d of November they had concentrated 80% of air strikes to the frontline

positions of Taleban with the Northern Alliance (Global Security org. 2002). Simultaneously [the](#) Americans continued targeting military techniques and transports of Taleban on the whole territory of Afghanistan. As a result, the Taleban virtually was deprived of an opportunity to maneuver its troops, to supplement reserves and to supply frontline detachments. The air defenses available to the Taleban and Al Qaeda were so limited that the Afghan air force actually did not exist, and they could not make effective use of their few remaining surface-to-air missile units. This allowed the US to win near total air supremacy early in the war, and allowed US combat and support aircraft to operate freely over the battlefield (like Soviet air forces at the initial stages of war) with only minimal suppression of enemy air defence activity. The US also had freedom of action in using transport aircraft and helicopters, and they took advantage of relatively vulnerable strike platforms like the AC-130. The Pentagon succeeded to solve another difficult problem: they organized cooperation with the Northern Alliance in tactical level. The groups of special operational forces and later the soldiers of the 10 infantry division acted in combat rows of ally forces to communicate targeting data to US bombers and strike fighters.

The Afghan [campaign](#) has demonstrated US ability of rapid projection land and air power at very long distances. It has demonstrated the importance of strategic airlift and long-range strike capability and the ability of US military forces to operate with limited forward basing. At the same time, the Afghani theater of military actions (like in case of Soviets) has confirmed the value of light forces of special operational character prepared to carry out asymmetric warfare.

The Soviet Union waged the war in Afghanistan with the tactics and strategy assumed for European theater of military actions and political objectives of military [campaign](#) were impossible to achieve with conventional forces of the 40th Army, meanwhile, the United States

carried out well-planned operation, staffed by the best trained military in the world, equipped with a technology advantage unparalleled in the warfare history. Americans considered the specifics of the Afghani realms and in case of well-formulated political objectives could avoid the sad experience of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Literature Review

First of all it is important to mention that to attempt to provide a more or less complete overview of the literature in this field is impossible in this short essay and concerning the scope of time available for the study. However, this study attempts to review descriptive and analytical works available, as well as a dozen of Internet sources, which are providing if not an in-depth look into the problem but as a useful and interesting source of information.

Concerning the Soviet Military Operations one of the authors Liakhovsky (1999) gives a profound inside look into the picture. He assures that the Soviets had been skilful in executed invasion and achieved their objectives such as the change of regime, capture of Kabul, and control of the most important lines of communication. Liakhovsky (1999) has also touched the further developments in military operations.

Drozdov (1996) has thoroughly described the first major offensive operations conducted by 40th Army in the Kunar and Panjir valleys. Further Drozdov analyses the operations by an in-depth look and gives an overall picture of the operations. Here the author assures that all Soviet operations with an involvement of huge military personnel and techniques had gained tactical successes that did not add up to tangible, strategic gains. Additionally concerning the Soviet military's concepts of the theater-strategic offensive in the early and mid-1980s Drozdov (1996) states that Soviets had developed new approaches for shallower echelonment at all levels,

developed the schemes of the air echelon, and applied new force structures and employed such innovative tactical techniques as the use of the armoured group.

Markovsky (1994) examines the air war. He gives some details of the Soviet air operations and notes that the initial injuries of the Soviet aircraft were mainly from the bullets of calibre 5,45, 7,62 and 12,7. Markovsky also assures that by the midpoint of the war, if not sooner, guerrillas employed Soviet-made Strela missiles, Swiss-made Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns, British blowpipe and American Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, which forced the Soviets to operate with far more caution and in higher altitudes. The Soviet MIG-21, Su-17, Su-24, and Su-25 attack aircraft, largely abandoned low-altitude bombing and had to release their ordnance from above 10,000 feet, with a significant corresponding loss of accuracy. In turn Mi-24 and Mi-25 helicopter pilots could no longer without punishment linger over target areas but had to engage in quick runs and rely on nap-of-the-earth flying to avoid premature detection and destruction.

Yootov (1998) presents the issue of organization of the “Kaskad” squads of the KGB USSR. For the counter reconnaissance and the assistance of Afghani secret police (XAD), Soviets organized the special “Kaskad” squads of the KGB USSR. Yootov (1998) assures that counter reconnaissance forces often failed to acquire usable intelligence and operative information.

The information concerning the statistics of American air strikes is mainly given from the PBS Frontlines at Campaign Against Terror (2000). Additionally Mark Herold in Bombing of Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Accounting gives a comprehensive overview of the relevant topic. Here it is crucial to mention Michael O’Hanlon with A Flawed Masterpiece who provides statistical base of PGM used in Afghanistan. The Associated Press and PBS Frontlines appear to be of great significance for providing valuable information about ground operations of Northern Alliance and American Commandos. The information provided by Denyer (2002) about Taleban

military retreat has served as a useful base for analysis of the Taleban strategic planning. Regarding the information about the equipment used by Americans it provided by Associated Press and Bellis (2002).

Methodology

Being a Master's Essay, this study can be viewed as both explanatory and descriptive aimed at revealing the topic under study. The methodology used in this study is the historical/comparative analysis. It is a secondary analysis based on the review of various sources through a historical/comparative method. It is mainly a qualitative method. This essay uses accounts and analyses of political scientists, military experts, and the memories relevant to the topic. The sources are virtually including academic books, articles, reports, and studies by different authors. The positions of different authors and specialists on the problem are considered in a comparative perspective to have a more or less complete understanding of the topic, presented in the extensive and diverse literature.

CHAPTER 1.

THE SOVIET MILITARY OPERATIONS

The Soviet Union intended to carry out invasion to stabilize a client regime on which it had lavished years of attention and aid. The immediate military objectives were to secure the capital, Kabul, and the major lines of communication, especially those leading back to the Soviet southern border. According to the initial plan, the small intervention force would complete its mission without engaging in countryside battles, while the army of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, which strengthened by the logistic, artillery, air and intelligence support of the Soviet Army, restored government authority in the outlying provinces. The past Soviet Union experiences of counterinsurgency operations in the Western Ukraine, Baltic Republics, the suppressing of the Hungarian revolt in 1956 and invasion in Czechoslovakia 1968 did not let any doubt for the successful Soviet mission in Afghanistan and hardly a political or military expert in the world doubted that Afghanistan was now incorporated as a part of the socialist camp and nothing could change the status quo. Some Westerners recalled the British experiences in Afghanistan and waited for the Soviet “Vietnam” to emerge but most believed that the Soviets would ultimately prevail. Some even predicted that the Soviet Union could thrust from Afghanistan to the shores of the Persian Gulf, to challenge Western strategic interests and impede Western access to critical oil resources of the region.

At first glance, the Soviets’ skilfully executed invasion and achieved its objectives: a change of regime, capture of Kabul, and control of the most important lines of communication. Forces inserted by air (103 and 104 airborne divisions) seized the capital, while a conventional column of the 40th Army about 17,000 men approached the country along the road from the Soviet border. (Liakhovsky 1999). The strike was performed within hours. However, a hostile reaction

began immediately, both within and outside of Afghanistan. By February 1980, Soviet forces left their garrisons to battle mushrooming opposition. Soviet calculations, shaped by a preoccupation with conventional war, failed to account for the possibility that the resistance might resort to the tactics and strategy of unconventional war. From the moment of invasion to the June of 1980 opposition organized military actions involving big groups (from 100 to 3000 fighters) but since the June no more than 30 mujahedins had participated in assaults. This miscalculation of the tactics of opposition occurred in spite of the extensive historical experience of Russian and Soviet forces in waging unconventional wars in the North Caucasus and Central Asia against tribes similar to those in Afghanistan. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan aimed to change a deteriorating political situation as evidenced by strong popular resistance to the DRA (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan) regime in Kabul. Having invested political and financial capital in Afghanistan for several decades, the Soviet Union could not allow collapsing a client state on its southern frontier. Since a 1956 treaty by which Russians had become the main suppliers of the Afghan Army, USSR had systematically inserted its influence into Afghan politics. Subsequent military co-operation included the education of Afghan cadets and officers in the Soviet military schools and the arrival of Soviet officers as military advisers. Besides, the Soviets completed numerous economic programs and construction projects. However, the relationship reached a new turning point with Afghanistan's 1978 "April Revolution" when the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan came to power. The proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and signing of a friendship pact with the Soviet Union fixed the incorporation of the country into Moscow's bloc of "socialist" states.

In reality, this apparent achievement in Soviet foreign policy was undermined by internal weakness of the regime in Kabul. In the first place, no central authorities had ever effectively

controlled the independent-minded clans and around ten thousand villages of rural Afghanistan. The construction of Soviet-style socialism was incompatible to the cultural, social and religious values of Afghans, whose outlook was based on strong village traditions and social customs, accentuated by religion and a historic xenophobia. In the country where everything is ordered by Islamic dogmas nobody could succeed without support of Islamic clergy. Thus, such realm was totally ignored by Soviets and now Americans and their allies must take this into consideration, because despite a military success nobody can prevail in Afghanistan without an agreement with the influential religious clergy.

In terms of doctrine, tactics and training, the Russians entered ~~the war~~ [Afghanistan](#) unprepared ~~to-for~~ [wage](#) unconventional war [fare](#). To improve their increasingly apparent tactical deficiencies, the head of the staff of the 40th Army General Norat Ter-Grigoryants, almost from the start of the war, reflected a new emphasis on physical conditioning for mountain warfare and stressed the importance of combination of corps and brigades for maneuver war instead of divisions and regiments. This initiative could be paralleled with ancient Roman military experience. In the fourth century B.C. waging the Second Samnite War on mountainous Samnium (327-298) eminent general Appius Clavdius Caecus subdivided legion into maniples, which varied from 120 to 200 legionnaires. Each maniple comprised two centuries (100 legionnaires) being commanded by a senior centurion. Consisted of thirty maniples and sixty centuries, legion became much more mobile and flexible bringing the war to victorious end (Davies 1997). -

[The](#) Mujahedins' [hit-and-run](#) ambush tactics, reconnaissance, and communications in severe terrain at high altitudes enforced Soviets to abandon traditional code of their ground forces. Soviet adaptations included more focusing and heavy employment of specially trained air assault

and special operation forces. However, the initial strategic doctrine, tactic-operational plans and methods used by the Soviet Army in Afghanistan did not substantially differ from what any contemporary strong, army would have use anywhere else in the world. Massive firepower delivered from aircraft, helicopters, artillery, rocket launchers and tanks to the defense positions of enemy preceded all advances. Tanks and armoured vehicles would start advancing only after their commanders were sure that no enemy able to seriously resist remained in the area of attack. The military units would then overrun the devastated zone, opening indiscriminately fire at any moving object until they were satisfied that task was completed. At the beginning, the Soviets considered close combat by light infantry and mopping up actions superfluous since they thought that the huge expenditure of heavy artillery and rocket shells combined with the bombing and strafing by their fighter bombers had either destroyed naive and miserably-equipped mujahedins or forced them to escape in Pakistan or Iran. In reality, the Soviets opponents came from a traditional warrior society and proved highly resourceful in fighting the Russians. They set up the well-elaborated system of total surveillance and intelligence agents, thus anticipating the Soviets actions evaded from the Soviet strike areas and then returning in hours, days or weeks to hit the enemy where he was exposed.

After more than the month of the seizure of Kabul, 40th Army conducted its first major offensive operation of the [campaign](#) in the Kunar Valley in February-March 1980 (Drozdov 1996). This operation was classical in terms that this and all other Soviet operations with an involvement of huge military personnel and techniques had gained tactical successes that did not add up to tangible, strategic gains. They deployed about 5,000 ground soldiers in the area of assault, with air and artillery support. A pattern immediately emerged would in large measure define the war in Afghanistan. The Soviet force did not face strong guerrilla resistance, and

superior firepower had devastated villages controlled by the opposition. However, the result was deceptive. The mujahedins withdrew to avoid the carpet bombardment and suffered only modest losses. Furthermore, massive air and artillery attacks enforced thousands of villagers to flee transforming them into refugees, and increasing hostility to the new regime. Usually after such operations, Soviet forces were replaced by Afghan Army who after short stay left positions and mujahedins again took the control of contested area.

The realities of the Soviet-Afghan war had their uniqueness in some aspects. Despite the violence and destruction, there was limited employment of conventional military forces as a result of absent positioned targets and war was protracted. Its tempo and decisiveness did not match that of the short American air strikes and Northern Alliance blitzkrieg during the operation “Enduring Freedom.” In another parameter, it lacked the well-defined, large-scale military cooperation between the Americans and their Afghani highly motivated allies. The Soviets ceded Americans in their efforts of political arrangements that can stabilise situation and terminate the war. The Americans (8000 troops) never pretended directly to control country, while the Soviets through their military contingent (84-120,000 troops) tried to provide security for the 29 provincial centers and few industrial and economic installations and were hard-pressed to extend this security to the thousands of villages, hundred of miles of communications routes, and key terrain features that punctuated and spanned that vast region.

Faced with the difficulties to implement the military doctrine, strategy, operational and tactical techniques suited to a European or Chinese theater of war, the Soviet Army was pressed to make innovations in military methodologies accommodated to deal with the Afghan guerrillas. The Soviets first set up new approaches for waging war in non-linear fashion, and began to use in their firepower more lethal high-precision weapons. In Afghanistan non-linear battlefield

required the restructuring of traditional operational and tactical detachments, a redefinition of conventional echelonment concepts, and a complete reorganisation of formations and units to increase combat flexibility and, hence, survivability. During the early and mid-1980s, the Soviet military reviewed its concepts of the theater-strategic offensive, developed new approaches for shallower echelonment at all levels, developed the schemes of the air echelon, applied new force structures such as the corps, brigade, and combined arms battalion, tested more appropriate to the Afghani conditions logistical support concepts, and employed such innovative tactical techniques as the use of the armoured group (Drozdov 1996). The latter consisted of four-five tanks, BMPs (tracked combat vehicles) or BTRs (wheeled combat vehicles) or any mix of such vehicles. They were employed without their normally assigned infantry squad on board and fought separately from their dismounted troops. The armoured group had a significant direct-fire capability and was used for several purposes such as enveloping detachments to attack the flanks, to close the ways of mujahedins withdrawal, to serve as a fire platform. The Soviets in Afghanistan introduced and developed many of these lower-level concepts by employing innovative combat techniques in high altitudes and difficult terrain. The brigade, the materiel support battalion, and the armoured group emerged on the Afghani theatre, Special Operation Forces sharpened their skills, and air assault techniques were improved as mujahedins gained anti-aircraft mobile rockets.

The failure of the Soviet military to win the war decisively condemned it to wage protracted middle intensity guerrilla war and suffer a slow bloodletting, that had its repercussions on the military forces as well as the Soviet political structure and society. The problems so obvious in the wartime army soon became a mirror of the latent problems afflicting Soviet society in general. The Armed Forces of the Soviet Union were structured, equipped and trained for

nuclear, total, and high-intensity war on the northern European plain. However, Kremlin political leadership thrust them into the middle of the Afghanistan civil war to support the government, which usurped and abused power in a very complex multiethnic country. The terrain, the climate and the enemy were entirely different from what they had expected and prepared. In these conditions, their equipment functioned less than optimally, force structure was obviously inappropriate and tactics didn't meet the standards imposed by enemy (Rodin 2002).

Another practical constraint was the Afghanistan's lines of communication, which are limited and geographically constrained, and off-road transport is difficult in many areas (railroads and waterways do not exist). Thus, Afghanistan's undeveloped road network could scarcely accommodate the traffic necessary to sustain around the 100,000-man force. In comparison, the Americans escaped such problem due to deployment of more modest quantity of ground forces and their apportionment via air. According to 40th Army commander Lieutenant General Boris Gromov, from 30 to 35 percent of that force was tied down defending those same lines of communication, guarding convoys, and carrying out other security missions (Liakhovsky 1999). Even the relatively close proximity of the Soviet air bases such as Hanabad in Uzbekistan and Kokayti in Turkmenistan that facilitated airlift, could not fundamentally solve this logistical equation. Necessary to mention that due to the Afghani landscape it is easier to sustain a force from Pakistan or Iran than from Central Asia. As a result cutting the 40th Army's lines of communication was relatively easy. Thus, the Soviets were dependent on the underdeveloped road network, which had given Mujahideen spectacular opportunities to cut the lines of communications, and enforced Russians to keep quite large number of troops to defend. Most valuable route was the Sallang highway, which passed through narrow mountain gorges and a tunnel connects Kabul with Termez on the Soviet border. Concern over the security of the

Sallang highway was a main reason for the waging of repeated offensives into the Panjshir Valley, the stronghold of guerrilla leader Ahmad Shah Masoud. Therefore, operations in 1981 focused heavily on the Panjshir Valley north-east of Kabul. About 70km in length and 12km in breadth this fertile valley rests on a perch roughly 7,000 feet above sea level, with precipitous, rocky slopes along its flanks and slender defiles and valleys dispersing in all directions. At the beginning of the war, valley had the population numbered perhaps as many as 100,000. From the May 1980 and August 1982, the units of the 40th Army were intruding into the Panjshir Valley for the fifth or sixth times. Their aim was to crush the power of Ahmad Shah Masoud, a Tajik commander of about 3,000 resistance fighters, whose organizational talent, charisma, and resilience were rapidly making him a near-mythical figure (NTV news 2002). The Soviet military intelligence made several unsuccessful attempts to assassinate Ahmad Shah (Liakhovsky 1999). To sustain its movement, Masoud's resistance front recruited fighters among the local population and established administrative and political authority parallel to fictive local communist power. Masoud separated his combatants into mobile units, each about seventy-five men in strength, and local defense elements, dividing the Panjshir Valley into seven operational areas (Yootov 1998). Thanks in part to foreign assistance, the rebels were increasingly well armed with mortars, RGP-7 rocket launchers, and anti-aircraft guns. By this time, the mujahedins had become skilled at setting ambushes and laying mines along all major routes supporting vehicular movement, thus frustrating Soviet communications. Above all, their superior mobility on foot in the rugged, and impassable terrain had given them an opportunity to maneuver and survive.

In 1983, both the Soviets and Masoud adopted a new tactic, by agreement to set up a six-month truce in the Panjshir Valley. Both sides without anticipating an end to hostilities hoped to

gain some temporary advantage from agreement. For the Soviets it was an opportunity to concentrate more military forces in other locations, such as Herat and Kandahar while Masoud found time to revive his forces and achieve additional outside support.

This was separate agreement and highlighted another crucial aspect of the war—the fragmented character of the guerrilla resistance. Various ethnic groups, in particular Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazara, played significant roles in the resistance camp. The latter was reflection the social and cultural makeup of Afghanistan, where village and clan ties were the primary bases of loyalty, and lacked strong, coherent political and military direction. Strangely, this very lack of cohesion denied the Soviets a true major target or focal point for political and military actions in Afghanistan. The mujahedin’s dispersed resistance but nearly ubiquitous presence across the country left Soviet conventional forces without an appropriate target against which to mass their power. In fact, local animosities were so fierce that, even after the Soviet invasion, opposition factions often fought among themselves. For the most part, however, they temporarily put their internal contradictions aside to focus on the outside intruder. This was necessary not only to resist the Soviets more effectively but also in order to form a more or less united diplomatic front in search of assistance from foreign donors.

There are some obvious differences between the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the United States’ operation “Enduring Freedom.” The Soviets were enforced to restructure and retrain their forces in during the military campaign, while the Americans, based on Soviet experience in Afghanistan and their own in Vietnam, were more prepared during the operation “Enduring Freedom” and their corrections were mostly technical. In spite of applications from the Staff of the 40th Army the Ministry of Defence were slow in adopting new tactics accommodated to the realities of the rugged terrain and uncertain enemy. Eventually, military schools and training

centers began to include Afghanistan combat experience in their programs and to train personnel for Afghani conditions. When the Soviets finally realized the importance of dismounted conventional motorised rifle units or light infantry for close combat, it was too late. The soldiers and even their officers were reluctant to leave the armoured carriers and more used heavy but inefficient artillery and air strikes instead of close combat.

The comprehension of a lengthy and war without any perspectives had transformed many Soviet soldiers into liabilities whose only hope was to survive and go home. But many Soviet soldiers fought bravely throughout the entire war. In particular, soldiers in Special Operation Forces, airborne, air assault, and mountain rifle units, as well as those in separate motorized rifle brigades continually sought to close with the freedom fighters in combat and were accustomed fighting outside of their armoured vehicles.

Soviet tactics and equipment were designed solely to operate within the context of a theater war against a contemporary enemy who would occupy deep and continuous defensive positions. The Soviet Army planned to fight with this defensive belt by physically annihilating hectares of defensive positions through the power of massed artillery fires and then driving through the subsequent gap in defense echelons to encircle and pursue the shattered foe. Future war was seen as a high tempo event where mounted infantry, tanks, artillery and air power were carefully choreographed. Soviet tactics were simple and designed to be performed rapidly by conscripts and reservists. The most important components of these tactics were keeping certain spacing between armoured vehicles, the ability quickly to dismount a personnel carrier, and provide suppressive small-arms fire. Tactical innovations were not encouraged, as it tended to frustrate operational timing.

Unlike the Taleban (at least until March 2002), the mujahedin did not resist the Soviet Army by fighting conventional war. They refused to entrench in positions and wait for Soviet artillery. The Soviets found that massed artillery and simple assaults had little effect on the elusive guerrillas. Tactics had to be accommodated on the Afghani conditions. The air-ground coordination, artillery adjustment and coordination among maneuver units was often weak and required constant "quick-fixes" throughout the war. The most tactical innovation was seen among the airborne, air assault and Special Operational forces. These forces did the best in anti-guerrilla battle. Far less tactical changes were apparent among the motorized rifle regiments. Artillery, the "God of War", was a dominant part of Soviet ground forces. The Soviet divisions brought their tanks and artillery to Afghanistan--where the tanks proved of limited value and tanks were implemented through small units, i.e. platoons rare companies to strength airborne, air assault and motorized rifle battalions. In the most important directions they were engaged in guarding lines of communications. At the initial stage of conflict, when mujahedins had not goggles of night vision tanks were deployed to capture important objects during the night attacks. The artillery proved of greater value, but the target set presented by guerrillas was often difficult to hit. Soviet firing tables and norms were designed for high-intensity war fought on relatively flat terrain by mechanized forces against similar forces. Soviet artillery planning was intended to physically obliterate defending positions within square hectares by normative fires involving hundreds of rounds concentrated in a small area. When the Soviet artillery used these normative fires in Afghanistan, they had little impact on the mujahedins (Rodin 2002). During the course of the war, the Soviet gunners developed new firing techniques, and firing tables to cope with the enemy in mountains and desert. They began to use technologically new as precision-guided munitions and scatterable mines. They found that mortars were frequently

better than howitzers in hitting caves and landscape folds. Howitzers were usually of more value than gun/howitzers and guns in the mountains. Multiple rocket launchers (MRLS) were particularly effective against dismounted mujahedin (Drozdov 1996). A constant problem was the timing between the detection of targets and their efficient engagement. Throughout the war, the Soviet artillery was hampered by a lack of effective tactical intelligence data, which could quickly identify a viable target set and pass the information to the gunners before the enemy disappeared.

The helicopters were always in high demand. Without the helicopter units, the Soviets may have withdrawn years earlier. Their firepower, mobility and initial invulnerability made them invincible and the Soviets used helicopters extensively and ruthlessly against the unprotected guerrillas. But like all new technological innovations in war, this advantage also did not last long. The guerrillas accommodated and fought at night when the helicopter was less effective. Mujahedin intelligence calculated the time and location of planned Soviet attacks and set up air ambushes and dug protective bunkers or concealed their positions using natural advantages of terrain. As the war dragged on, the Mujahedin acquired advanced weaponry, including stinger missiles in 1986 whose impact on the conduct of Soviet tactical operations was significant. At the start of the war, the Mujahedin possessed virtually nothing but small arms with which to combat Soviet aircraft, thus the initial injuries of the Soviet air power were mainly from the bullets of calibre 5,45, 7,62 and 12,7 (Markovsky 1994). Bombs were dropped in huge proportions at low distances, which increased their accuracy and helicopters facilitated the rapid movement of troops and equipment, thereby compensating for the limited mobility of ground columns in mountainous gorges and valleys. Meanwhile, to impede ambushes and to provide smooth movement of columns, the Soviets learned to land troops and keep positions along the

commanding heights overlooking routes of movement. But by the midpoint of the war, if not sooner, guerrillas employed not only of Soviet-made Strela missiles but also Swiss-made Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns, British blowpipe and American Stinger anti-aircraft missiles (Markovsky 1994). The latter, which can hit an aircraft at the height of 3500 meters, especially proved to be extremely lethal and forced the Soviets to operate with far more caution and in higher distances. Subsequently, Soviet MiG-21, Su-17, Su-24, and Su-25 attack aircraft, largely abandoned low-altitude bombing and had to release their ordnance from above 10,000 feet, with a significant corresponding loss of accuracy (Markovsky 1994). In turn Mi-24 and Mi-25 helicopter pilots could no longer without punishment linger over target areas but had to engage in quick runs and rely on nap-of-the-earth flying to avoid premature detection and destruction (Markovsky 1994). The tactical consequences were no less dramatic for ground forces, which were deprived much of their close air support and once became more vulnerable to the guerrilla ambushes.

The Afghanistan War forced the 40th Army to change many rigid approaches fixed in the combat code of the Soviet Ground Forces. However, despite these changes, the Soviet Army never had enough forces in Afghanistan to win. The Soviet General Staff had informed the Ministry of Defence in December 1979 that it would take from thirty to thirty-five divisions to stabilize Afghanistan. Given the actual course of events there, this estimate could be reasonable. Thus, the inability or unwillingness of the Soviets to mass the forces necessary to success still dilemma. The member of the Operative Group the USSR Defence Ministry in Afghanistan Marshal Achromeyev several times applied the Politburo of the CK KPSU to increase the size of the Soviet troops for full coverage of Afghanistan (Drozdov 1996). It may be, initially the Soviets had underestimated the strength of their enemy. Logistically, they were pressed to

maintain the larger military forces and if they could have tripled the size of their force, they probably would have been able at least to stabilize situation and marginalize opposition.

Officially on a paper, as everything in the Soviet Union, the 40th Army seemed to be in good shape, but actually it was unable to maintain adequate personnel strength in its detachments. Regiments often had at single battalion strength, battalions at single company strength and companies at single platoon strength. Often, they could not assemble an entire regiment for operations and had enforced to gather forces from various units to create a mixed regiment. Base-camp, airfield, city and lines of communication (LOC) security tied up most of the motorized rifle forces, but still the mujahedin constantly interdicted the road and pipelines supplying the Soviet and Afghan forces. The Soviets were never able to completely control their LOCs. Consequently, they were never able to consistently transport sufficient supplies into the country to support a larger force (Rodin 2002).

Military detachments were filled twice a year from the spring and fall recruitment. Conscripts sent to the Transcaucasian (Armavir training base in Armenia) or Turkestan Military Districts had six month to a year's training before going to Afghanistan to continue their service. Yet, the ground forces personnel accomplishment remained appallingly low. Poor field sanitation practices, lack of vaccination and poor diet contributed to the spread of disease. From 1/4 to 1/3 of personnel was often sick with hepatitis, typhus, malaria, dysentery, and meningitis (Drozdov 1996).

The 40th Army was chronically short of resources to perform its mission and as a result of miscalculation of its political masters pushed into the inhospitable mountains of Afghanistan, where it did not be properly supplied and maintained. It is unacceptable to blame the 40th Army

for the political fiasco of the Kremlin regime, which formulated tasks for army totally different the latter prepared for.

THE SOVIET MILITARY TACTICS

The Soviet Ground Forces invented the bronegruppa concept to use the firepower of the armoured personnel carriers in an independent reserve once the infantry had dismounted from their vehicles. It was a brave step, for officers of mechanized units who dislike separating their dismounted soldiers from their relatively “safer” carriers. However, combat theatre often dictated that the BMPs, BMDs and BTRs could not follow or support their personnel. Due to bronegruppa concept, the commanders acquired a maneuverable reserve which could attack separately on the flanks, cut expected enemy routes of withdrawal, function as a mobile fire platform, evacuate forces which had infiltrated or air-landed earlier and had performed their task, carry out patrols, and provide escort to columns.

The Soviet Ground Forces adopted new tactic for the movement of columns in ragged areas. The combat vehicle, or a group of them, would occupy dominant positions to ensure the deployment of another vehicle or groups of vehicles, as they would advance. The advancing group would then stop on subsequent dominant position to cover the forward movement of their covering group.

Air assault and helicopter gunship tactics developed steadily during the war. However, the Soviets strangely never brought in enough helicopters and air assault forces to carry out all the necessary missions and often expended these resources on secondary tasks. Helicopter support should have been part of every column escort, but this was not always took place (Markovsky 1994). Dominant area along convoy routes should have been seized and usually held by air

assault forces, but this not always occurred. Soviet airborne and air assault forces were often the most successful Soviet forces in fighting the resistance, yet airborne and air assault forces were low in their quantities. Air assault forces were quite effective when used in support of a conventional ground attack. Heliborne detachments would launch in the rear and flanks of mujahedin positions to isolate them, obliterate bases and close routes of withdrawal. The ground force would advance to connect with the heliborne forces. Routinely, the heliborne force would not insert deeper than supporting artillery range or would take its own mortars with it. However, the Soviets sometimes threw heliborne troops beyond the range of supporting artillery and harvested the sad consequences. The combination of heliborne and mechanized forces worked well at the battalion and brigade level, but the Soviet preference for large-scale operations often altered their tactical efficiency. Ten conventional offensives involving airborne and mechanised forces swept the Pandshir Valley without any success.

Enveloping squads were used frequently in Afghanistan. The unit in the strength of battalion or company were split off from the main group and sent on a separate route to the flank or rear of the mujahedin, to support the advance of the main forces, perform a separate task, block the withdrawal of mujahedin forces, or conduct an attack from one or more unexpected directions. If the enveloping squad was dismounted, it was usually consisted of airborne, air assault or reconnaissance forces. If the enveloping squad was mounted, it was just the unit's armoured group.

Generally, ground reconnaissance units were better equipped and trained than the average motorized rifle units. But, they used more actively in conventional combat than reconnaissance missions. Usually, the guerrillas had better reconnaissance than the Soviets. Their country-wide net of observers and messengers maintained Soviet forces under constant surveillance. The

Soviets relied primarily on aerial reconnaissance, radio intercept, and agent reconnaissance for their intelligence data. In Afghanistan for the counter reconnaissance and the assistance of Afghani secret police (XAD) Soviets organized the special “Kaskad” squads of the KGB USSR (Yootov 1998). Quite often, counter reconnaissance sources failed to acquire usable tactical intelligence and operative information. Because of the shortage of conventional forces, reconnaissance forces were employed in active combat, convoy and guard missions. It is difficult to explain the Soviets reluctance to engage more conventional troops in countryside and to use their reconnaissance units for their primary mission.

The 40th Army experimented with different force structures during the Afghan ~~campaign~~ campaign. It had self-sustaining motorised rifle brigades and motorised rifle battalions in its structure. Soviets formed mountain rifle battalions for independent actions. They introduced mixed arms battalions and motorised rifle companies with four line platoons. All of this was done to cope with an optimum troop combination for counterinsurgency and independent actions. Airborne, air assault and special operation forces began to employ more comfortable BTRs and BMPs instead of BMDs. Taking into consideration the Afghani lessons, structure of the Russian Army currently contains a combination of corps and brigades for maneuver war and non-linear combat divisions and regiments for positional, conventional offense and defense.

The political preparedness (term used in the Soviet Army to identify morale) of the Soviet soldiers was low. Draft-age Soviet youth tried to escape the military service during the war in Afghanistan and if it was affordable parents paid bribes to exempt their children from recruitment. Therefore, majority of the 40th Army’s soldiers came from poor layers of the Soviet population. At the training centers, the political instructors told that they were going to fight

American imperialism and to defend revolutionary people of Afghanistan. When they got to Afghanistan for their international mission soon understood that they were unwelcome occupiers in a hostile land and were involved in a futile civil war. In Kabul airport there was plate with the words “We are fighting for the peace” and Russians joked that sooner after their “fight for the peace” stone on the stone would not remain. As in other armies, the soldiers in frontline positions were too busy to get into internal trouble, but in the units in rear the breakdown in discipline was apparent and soldiers had too much time to engage in drug and alcohol using. Many soldiers and officers acquired a narcotics habit in Afghanistan. Narcotics were sold to them deliberately by cheaper prices and soldiers in many cases sold equipment, ammunition and weapons to finance their habit (Yootov 1998). In many cases, officers and soldiers under the influence of vodka and narcotics settled quarrels with grenades and small arms.

In a country where tradition of “blood revenge” is still exist the Soviets murdered whole villages in retaliation for ambushes or suspected aid to mujahedins deepening hatred toward them and their client regime. The more Soviets troops involved in atrocities (sanctioned or spontaneous), the larger became social basis of opposition. Obviously, the mujahedin’s morale overmatched the Russians.

THE SOVIET EQUIPMENT

The soviet military industry introduced and field-tested many new systems of the weaponry and equipment during the Afghanistan war, but most had been designed and tested pre-war years. They include the BMP-2 (combat vehicle of infantry), the BTR-80 (armoured transporter), the vasilek 82 mm automatic mortar, the AGS-17, the BM-22 MRLS, the Su-25 air assault aircraft and the AKSU-74 rifle. Tanks were present, but were in limited value in mountain warfare. The

T-64 was only modern tank tested in Afghanistan. The Mi-24 helicopter's several models were developed during the war (Markovsky 1994).

According to the combat code of the ground forces of the USSR the soldiers were never supposed to be more than 200 meters from their vehicle. Their heavy equipment, uniform, weaponry, and other attributes reflected this concept, while, in Afghanistan light-infantryman was in high demand and it was a gap in the Soviets tactical planning. In general, the Soviet infantry remained tied to its personnel carrier. The standard bullet-proof jacket weighed 16 kilograms (35 pounds). This was acceptable when fighting less than a kilometer near vehicle, but during the advance of several kilometers from carrier it was inevitably caused soldier exhaustion. The bullet-proof jackets in reconnaissance units were lighter and better, but in short supply (Drozdov 1996).

The Soviet field uniform was restrictive, uncomfortable and in terms of camouflage patterns inappropriate for Afghanistan. Soviet boots were too noisy and unsuited for climbing in mountains and frequently soldiers wore sport shoes.

The Soviet rucksacks were produced by the technology of 1950s and were inappropriate for continuous use outside of an armoured vehicle. However, mountain rifle battalions and Special Operation Forces were equipped by modern rucksacks, boots, ice axes, but again these were in short supply. [The Soviet sleeping bags were not waterproof and during the rain they soaked up water and became heavier](#) (Drozdov 1996).

~~[The Soviet sleeping bags were not waterproof and during the rain they soaked up water and became heavier.](#) (source 25)~~

The Soviet emphasis on massed artillery and air bombardment instead of precise strike meant that the infantry carried a lot more ammunition than American soldiers during operation

“Enduring Freedom.” Heavy weapons always accompanied the Soviet dismounted squads. The 12.7-mm heavy DShK machine gun weighs 34 kg (75 pounds) without its tripod and ammunition. The new AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher weighs 30.4 kg (66 pounds) and each loaded ammunition drum weighs 14.7 kg (32 pounds). Soviet soldiers were heavier and could not catch up with the mujahedins.

The unique Afghani conditions gave an opportunity to develop experimental systems. The AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher was mounted on trucks and BTRs. Ordnance racks of different types were developed for helicopter gunships and aircraft. The Soviets understanding the inefficiency of conventional bombs began to use precision guided rockets in mountains. New mine-clearing equipment was tried with varying success. The Soviets developed a new helmet and bullet-proof jackets that provided better protection.

THE SOVIET LOSSES

After nearly a decade of futile bloodshedding in Afghanistan, Soviet forces withdrew resulting subsequent loss of a client state and the international condemnation. The political and strategic fiasco in Afghanistan deepened emerging fissures in Soviet society and contributed to its eventual disintegration. According to the Soviet official statistics, **14453** Soviet soldiers and officers were killed and 53753 were wounded. Soviet equipment losses included 118 jets, 333 helicopters, 148 tanks, 1334 armoured personnel vehicles, 434 artillery pieces or mortars, 510 engineering vehicles and 11,369 trucks. (Slovo 2001).

THE LESSONS

Not always the technological advantage guarantees an absolute success and it depends on the circumstances, which shape theatre of military actions such as the terrain, the opponent and the objective. Contemporary conventional forces are still in peril when committed to fight asymmetric warfare on rugged terrain. The Soviet-Afghanistan war approved that:

A guerrilla war is not a war where technology contests with peasantry. Rather, it is an endurance of national will and moral commitment. Thus, irrelevant to evaluate the war in terms of military success; the Soviet Army never lost any battle to mujahedins, however, their defeat was strategic because of ill-formulated political objectives and means to achieve those. The Soviet political leadership, without understanding the specifics of Afghanistan threw modern army to solve exclusively political problems. At the beginning of the war (at least summer of 1980 when opposition applied to the guerrilla tactic) strategic initiative was in the hands of opposition and Soviets were passive followers of the rules established by outside. Of course, the 40th Army with different success resolved military tasks but these tactical gains never transformed into strategic one.

Secure logistics and secure lines of communication are important for the belligerent forces. Security missions such as garrisoning, escort missions, guard of important economic objects tied up most of a conventional force.

– Weapons systems, field gear, communications equipment and transport that are effective in a conventional war often failed to work on rugged terrain.

– Tactics for conventional war were irrelevant against guerrillas. Forces needed to be reequipped, restructured and retrained to be more mobile and prepared for specific small operations. The most effective combatants were special operation forces.

Tanks and howitzers had a limited utility for the 40th Army, but were as an efficient reserve on the plain terrain. Infantry fighting vehicles and helicopters played an essential role in mobility and fire support. Motorised forces usually were efficient only when dismounted and when used their carriers as a maneuver reserve. Qualified engineer troops were necessary for both sides.

- Field sanitation, vaccination, and preventive medicine were important in complicated sanitary environment. Immediate medical support to wounded soldiers was often hard to provide.
- There was direct correlation among logistics, the scope of activity and size of forces deployed by the Soviets.
- The lack in unity of command among opposition deprived the Soviets to adopt more or less cohesive policy toward opposition.

Domination of the air was less important than in conventional war and air strikes efficiency was increasing only by precision targeting.

Captured terrain was temporarily advantageous.

It is hard to say that control of the cities were important. Besides, Kabul did not represent the psychological center of gravity of the country.

The mass support of all segments of the population was essential for the mujahedins to win.

CHAPTER 2.

THE US AND NORTHERN ALLIANCE MILITARY OPERATIONS

The American campaign of 2001-02 in Afghanistan was a classic air-ground war in which heavy air power support decided a contest between two land armies. The new in this [campaign](#) was an unprecedented quantity of available precision firepower, which proved crucial for success. The key to success in conventional warfare is the close interaction of fire and maneuver—neither of which is sufficient alone and nobody of belligerent sides could win without sizeable conventional forces trained and equipped at least as well as their opponents. Unlike the Soviets [campaign](#) In Afghanistan, US allies provided these ground forces for them. Without this, neither the bravery of the American special operations forces nor the sophistication of precision guided munitions (PGMs) can ensure the collapse Taleban regime.

While the operation “Enduring Freedom” was unique in some respects, it is difficult to say about revolutionary transformations in a warfare strategy, and there were undeniable continuities between Afghanistan and prior military experience. The media reports mostly exaggerated the role of The American air power and special operational forces that directed it, and tended to reduce role of Northern Alliance as a secondary. To avoid biases in this case, necessary take into consideration that prior to the American intervention allied ground forces were engaged in long-term intensive civil war and The Americans air strikes have changed only balance between already deployed together 60-80,000 troops (let alone the Southern ally Pashtun tribes that

increase as the fighting moved south) (O'Hanlon 2002). These troops were fighting to take and keep ground in very conventional ways prior to the American ~~campaign~~ campaign, and Taleban continued to contest control of key logistic sites until the end of Operation ANACONDA in March 2002 (Krushelnycky 2002). It is implied very different situation, while compare with the Soviet war in Afghanistan. In fact, prior to the Soviet intervention there was not large-scale military confrontation, and the resistance to ruling regime was in limits of small guerrilla actions and subsequent outside intervention did not much changed in this pattern. The Russians, in contrast to the Americans were involved in guerrilla warfare, failed to provide minimum interface with local population and instead of native client forces were themselves engaged in counterinsurgency.

In American war, even after the failure in all frontlines the Taleban detachments in Shah-i-kot valley (operation ANACONDA) firmly stood their ground and didn't melt away in guerrilla fashion as it happened during Soviet war. The Northern Alliance offensive accompanied with extensive close combat, the great majority of which was waged by light infantry. Of course, the outcome of this positional struggle was influenced profoundly by commandos-directed precision air power. But it was not the only decisive factor of war. Well-prepared ground forces was necessary to exploit effects of air support once the Coalition began to encounter motivated and skilled Taleban and al Qaeda opponents. The resistance overcome required both precision air strikes and ground maneuver; neither alone was sufficient in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance generally proved not to be less prepared for its enemies tactically, and in key battles like Bai Beche it was able efficiently to exploit the American close air support. In the Soviet-Afghan War, by contrast, the Army of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was generally less skilled and motivated than its mujahedin foes—and Soviet air support was

correspondingly less decisive. When Soviet's Afghan allies met opponents with superior tactical skills, even lavish Russian air support proved insufficient. Many now consider that in Afghanistan Americans turned irregular peasantry into conquerors who subsequently overwhelmed a superior enemy by simply walking forward in the edge of precision bombing. But the course of the war was not actually in this way. American ~~campaign~~campaign was a continuation of prior war experiences on the need for combination of air power and ground maneuver to overcome skilled and motivated opponents. The peculiarity of this war were revolutionary changes in terms of increased firepower's range, precision, round-for round lethality, timing between target determination and engagement, and flexibility. Moreover, the increasing lethality of remote precision engagement has made the combined action of air power and ground forces much more powerful. Tight integration of JDAMs or laser-guided bombs with skilled ground maneuver is far more effective today than general carpet bombardments and large-scale army operations of the Soviets during their war in Afghanistan. This is an important development and has greatly increased the real military power of the United States today relative to any plausible foe. The Afghan ~~cea~~campaign has demonstrated US ability of rapid projection land and air power at very long distances. It has demonstrated the importance of strategic airlift and long-range strike capability and the ability of US military forces to operate with limited forward basing. Neither technological leverage, nor well-trained and properly equipped ground forces alone were preconditions to succeed. The Afghan campaign was a combined air-land struggle in which the ability to integrate American air power with Northern Alliance detachments made the blitzkrieg possible.

THE US AIR CAMPAIGN

The bombing campaign commenced the night of October 7, 2001, and focused initially on obliterating the Taliban's limited air defense and communications infrastructure. Based on intelligence data the US military planners prepared target lists including early warning radars, ground forces, command and control facilities, al Qaeda infrastructure, airfields and aircraft and controlled the movement of all warplanes in Afghan airspace from the sophisticated operations center 1,000 miles away at Prince Sultan Air Base, in Saudi Arabia. (PBS Frontlines 2002). In air ~~campaign~~ participated Navy jets (flying 500 miles from carriers in the Arabian Sea), Air Force bombers (flying six-hour round-trip missions from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean), and Air Force fighter bombers (flying eight to nine hours from bases in the Persian Gulf).

During operation the military flew about 200 sorties a day. The head of US Central Command, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, said that the US needed about 10 aircraft to take out a single target in Desert Storm, while in Enduring Freedom, a single aircraft was used to take out two targets on average (PBS Frontlines 2002).

~~According to~~The initial calculations of the US Military planners at Central Command ~~it~~ concluded that it might take as long as five months to capture Kabul, but after only 20 days of air strikes, Northern Alliance forces began their offensive on the capital and seized it 24 hours later (Global Security org. 2002).

On 20 November 2001, the senior officials said that more than 10,000 bombs or missiles had been dropped into Afghanistan during the war, of which over 60 percent were precision-guided munitions. (O'Hanlon 2002). By the end of November 2001, the eight B-1s and ten B-52s flying from Diego Garcia had dropped most of the 4,700 tons of munitions delivered by the Air Force,

comprising 72% of the war's total by that time. The B-1 force was making four sorties per day, while five B-52s were operating daily (Herold 2002). Generally, planning is done at night and prior to a strike, aircrews study flight plans. At Diego Garcia, the support team works without a rest. By the end of November 2001, the US Air Force had flown more than 15% of the combat missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Aircraft employed included the B-1, B-2, B-52, F-15E, F-16 and AC-130H/U. These aircraft had dropped about 10,000 tons of munitions, amounting to more than 75% of the Operation Enduring Freedom total (Global Security org. 2002). By the end of November 2001, a total of 600 cluster bombs had been dropped, consisting of 450 BLU-103 and 150 BLU-87 munitions. By the end of November 2001 Air Force support aircraft—UAVs, RC-135, U-2, E-3, and EC-130E/H -- had flown more than 325 sorties (PBS Frontlines 2002).

From 7 October and 23 December, when intensity of air operations reduced the US flew about 6,500 strike missions over Afghanistan. About 17,500 munitions were expended on over 120 fixed target complexes and over 400 vehicles and artillery guns. A total of Fifty-seven percent of the weapons used were precision guided. Navy carrier-based planes flew 4,900 of the 6,500 strike sorties—75% of the total. The Air Force, flying 25% of the sorties, delivered 12,900 weapons, over 70% of the total delivered. The B-1 and B-52 bombers flew 10% of the strike sorties, and delivered 11,500 of the 17,500 total munitions expended. (Global Security org. 2002). The B-52 bombers reportedly dropped more bombs on Afghanistan than any other aircraft, and received recognition as a critical workhorse of the conflict. (Birnbaum 2002).

As of 10 December 2001 approximately 12,000 bombs and missiles had been used. Of these munitions, about 60 percent were precision-guided bombs or missiles, while the remainders were

unguided gravity bombs. As of mid-January 2002 about 4,600 of the 12,000 munitions expended were reportedly the Joint Direct Attack Munitions (O'Hanlon 2002).

On 7 February 2002 US Central Command commander Gen. Tommy R. Franks testified that 10,000 of the 18,000 bombs, missiles and other ordnance used to date were precision-guided munitions (O'Hanlon 2002). Of the 10,000 precision munitions, about half were laser-guided bombs and the other half was GPS satellite guided bombs. U.S. aviation assets had flown over 20,000 sorties to date, with aircraft from US Navy aircraft carriers accounting for half the sorties, and US Air Force assets accounting for the other half. The Tomahawk targeting cycle had been reduced from 101 minutes during Allied Force to 19 minutes during Enduring Freedom, with half of the Tomahawks having been fired from submarines.

Tankers flew nearly 5,000 refuelling sorties over Afghanistan between the time operations began on 7 October 2001 and late February 2002. Another 5,000 tanker sorties were flown from 11 September 2001 through late February 2002 to refuel US fighters over the continental US (Global Security org. 2002).

From the start of operations in October through the battle of Shah-i-Kot in March 2002, the US dropped around 20,000 bombs on Afghanistan (Global Security org. 2002).

By the end of March 2002 a total of 21,000 bombs and missiles had been dropped, the bulk of them precision-guided, since the American campaign in Afghanistan began in October 2001 (PBS Frontlines 2002).

THE US AND NORTHERN ALLIANCE GROUND CoAMPAIGN

The American and British Special Operation Forces' squads had been conducting reconnaissance missions in Afghanistan a week prior to the beginning of the air campaign, and

had been landed for combined offensive action against the Taleban. Some of the first major combat actions in which they participated took place in the mountains south of Mazar-e-Sharif, as SOF squads acting with the forces Northern Alliance warlords Abdul Rashid Dostum and Atta Mohammed clearing their way north toward Mazar up the Dar-ye Suf and Balkh river valleys- (PBS Frontlines 2002). In the extraordinary terrain and conditions (at elevations of up to 6,400 feet) the columns passed through mountain trails in which huge rocks were sometimes separated from deep drops by no more than a four-foot width of narrow trail. Special Operation Forces substituted vehicles (no vehicles able to overcome such paths) to mountain ponies with wooden saddles to wear over 40 pounds of equipment per man and move with General Dostum's groups. There were several combats between belligerents, but the key battle took place when Dostum's forces met with Talebani detachments occupying old Soviet-built defensive redoubts at the Bai Beche. On November 5, as a result of the Dostum's cavalry and American air forces joint assaults these positions were overcome. After this success Atta's troops seized the important strategic site Ac'capruk on the Balkh River, and the door was open for the further advancement to Mazar-i-Sharif, which Northern Alliance occupied on November 10, 2001. After the fall of [Mazar-i-Sharif](#) ~~Mazar~~ the Talebani units in Bamiyan surrendered the city after brief resistance on November 11 (Associated Press 2001). Two days ~~after~~ ~~later,~~ ~~in~~ ~~on~~ [November 13,](#) ~~November~~ the Talebani troops withdraw from the capital of Afghanistan Kabul and Alliance units moved into the city without a fight. ~~Necessary to mention that~~ [Interestingly,](#) in ~~the~~ Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul the Taleban leaders had anticipated the inevitable defeat and began to withdraw ~~select~~ ~~some~~ detachments before their positions completely collapsed under pressure. The 5,000 Talebani and Al Qaeda forces in the city of Konduz, the Talebani stronghold in the Northern Afghanistan that was populated by Pashtuns during the monarchy period, after a 12-day siege ~~they were~~

surrendered on November 26 (Associated Press 2001). The fall of Konduz undermined Talebani positions in Northern Afghanistan and the Americans and their allies concentrated efforts to the Taleban's stronghold of Kandahar in the south. Hamid Karzai's forces with the support of the American aviation and Special Operational Forces advanced on the city from the north and the squads of Gul Agha Shirzai moved from the south. From November 18 to December 6 there were several battles and on the night of December 6, the Talebani leader Mullah Omar with ~~its~~ his staff left the city, ending Taleban regime in Afghanistan. Allied forces subsequently encircled a group of Al Qaeda fighters to a series of redoubts and caves in the White Mountains near Tora Bora (O'Hanlon 2002). There were some rumours that Usama Bin Laden was among this group, but the accuracy of such information was highly questionable. After a 16-day battle the Americans captured enemy positions, but many Al Qaeda terrorists crossed encirclement line to hide in Pakistan. In March another concentration of Al Qaeda troops was detected in the Shah-i-kot valley and surrounding mountains; thus began Operation ANACONDA. 1000 troops of the US two regular infantry battalions from the 101st Airborne and 10th Mountain divisions were major offensive forces, and supported by allied Afghani 1,000-1,500 troops and 200 troops of special operational forces from several Western (Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany and Norway) nations (PBS Frontlines 2002). It was the last major combat operation in Afghanistan.

~~Necessary to mention that~~ In terms of combined action with the Afghani allies, the outcomes of these operations ~~were~~ very resemble quite similar to those by the Soviet troops ~~in terms of combined action with Afghani allies.~~ The goals of Afghani allies ~~were~~ as not always coherent with the objectives of their outside partners and even during a combined combat the local allies could turn to resolve ing their own tactical ~~issues-objectives, which were~~

[their](#) partner's. In these operations the American troops, [acted as](#) the sole offensive force, while [the](#) Afghans were allowed only to encircle and isolate the battle area to prevent escape of enemy. In contrast, sometimes the Soviets fought with native allies along the same frontline and latter's desertion [often](#) left them in difficult situations.

The US air war dramatically challenged the ability of the Taleban movement to maintain its frontline positions in the north and to control of the situation elsewhere. Bombing disrupted coherent governance and targeted the Taleban's core, which included 5,000 Taleban and Al Qaeda select units (NTV news 2002). At the beginning of the American ~~campaign~~ campaign, Taleban hoped to manage this challenge by surviving until winter conditions when the pressure on frontlines and intensity of bombing ~~campaign~~ campaign would be reduced. But as a result of integrated military actions of the ~~United States~~ air power and the Northern Alliance ground forces Taleban could not withstand as an organised military opponent.

The US special operational forces co-ordinated synergy of US air strikes and Northern Alliance ground offensive. Air bombardments tore gaps in the Taleban defense positions, which also were widened by group desertions. The Taleban performed regular maneuvers to rotate troops at the frontline to fill the gaps, but their efforts were futile as the intensity of the US bombardments increased and more concentrated on frontlines. Northern Alliance commanders exploited the growing gaps in the Taleban positions and directed their attacks to the enemy flanks and rear, so disintegrating an opponent and depriving it of an opportunity to withdraw in orderly fashion.

But there were ~~quite significant~~ differences in a disposition of Taleban forces in the north and the south of the country. In the south, where ~~ren~~ the Taleban forces finally quit their positions, they were able to melt into their surroundings, and it gave the impression that they simply

disappeared. This process was obvious in Jalalabad, where former mujahedin leader Khalis with strong Pashtun tribal connections, negotiated the turnover of the city from the Taleban. By agreement the Taleban commanders leave the region, but lower-level Taleban soldiers with local ties remained and many even joined Khalis' forces. - Actually, such dealings were intrinsic to all areas populated by Pashtuns (Denyer 2002).

In the north Taleban movement troops, particularly Pakistanis, Arabs, and Chechens could not easily re-integrate locally. Many, in groups or individually, were chased in Mazar-i-Sharif, Konduz, Khanabad, Samangan, and Taloqan, surrounded, killed or captured by US air power or Alliance detachments (PBS Frontlines 2002). However, some the Taleban units departed in order and Northern Alliance forces were not strong enough to overtake those. Nor were the American air forces able to identify and fully impede Taleban's retreat. Of course, the limited number American military aircraft could not cover a country that in size more than France, especially most of air power were deployed 700 miles away from the theatre of military action.

Withdrawing armies usually try to fall back on their major lines of communication, and without great losses to return their home areas. In essence, this tactics Taleban attempted, so they withdrew core units that held their political-military coalition together. The Taleban's objective was to dislocate its best fighters in and around their base areas in the south, where they might wage a combination of conventional and guerrilla warfare. Necessary to mention that these select Taleban units separated from most of the Al Qaeda fighters, which took defensive positions in the fortified Tora Bora base.-

More than a tactical military withdrawal, the Taleban had performed a-changes in strategic planning, relinquishing any pretence to power in three-quarters of the territory previously under their authority. The Taleban's rapid divestiture of power met the logic of Afghan tribal warfare.

They might have calculated that surrender of the Kabul, retreat to their provincial positions, and separation from Al Qaeda forces, would be enough to satisfy the war objectives of their counterparts. In the Afghani war parameters, the transformation of the Taleban to the provincial party could be feasible, but in this case such manipulations were meaningless. The Americans did not operate within the parameters of tribal warfare, therefore, US mission was not only in toppling the Taleban reign in Kabul but also in their complete destruction as a force in a whole territory of Afghanistan. Taleban leadership already identified itself with bin Laden and their belated attempts to separate their forces from Al Qaeda could not reduce the pressure on them. The Taleban forces retreat to the south and concentration its best units in the defense of a much smaller area, made them more vulnerable for the US air power. Moreover, the new frontlines in the south were much closer than those in the north to the American aircraft carriers in Arabian Sea. Therefore, the flight times reduced for combat aircraft, which means more sorties and bigger weapon payloads. Actually, the Taleban forces strategic retreat in one hand was favourable for them in terms of an opportunity to disperse among local population, but in another made their deployed units easier prey for the US air forces.

The Taleban regime's military defeats and transformed political conditions in the south had undermined the basis of their political power and they could not reconstitute previous authority in their home areas. The Taleban leaders grossly underestimated the huge imbalance between their military capabilities and those of the United States. But this was not simply because of deficient factor analysis. The Taleban leadership refusal to hand over bin Laden and adoption of the American contest contradicted the core interests and values of their movement, which they could not quit without a fight. The Afghans successful war against the Soviet Army could also induce Taleban leaders in their decision.

THE LESSONS

- The American military ~~campaign~~ in Afghanistan (at least until March 2002) had continuity with prior military experience. It was conventional warfare where the American air power was tightly integrated with local allies' ground forces. The new in this ~~campaign~~ was unprecedented availability of close air support to Afghan ally forces. It was not difficult for the American military to annihilate massed and exposed targets in the open area and the Taliban's belated attempts to cover, conceal, and disperse its positions could not had much influence on the outcome of war. The Americans allied with skilled and committed indigenous forces that gave them a chance to defeat enemies with little casualty rate and a limited U.S. political footprint.

Precision engagement technology is enforced the American opponents to cover in complex terrain and the American military planners should pay special attention in encountering dispersed, covered, and concealed targets. To cope such targets the units must be well trained and combine many types of arms.

Among the important requirements for the Afghan warfare is the relatively high proportion of dismounted infantry to accompanying mounted units. Precision engagement is efficient only if it is tightly integrated with ground maneuver.

THE AMERICAN LOSSES

Fifty-two American servicemen and women have been killed in ~~the war against~~ Afghanistan ~~while and~~ more than 200 have been injured. Coalition forces have also

suffered deaths and injuries while supporting Operation “Enduring Freedom.” The CIA suffered one killed in action in Afghanistan. (Associated Press 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

Afghanistan is a unique place and this uniqueness implied its specifics to the warfare tactics and strategy. The mountainous terrain, which in south plainly becomes desert, climate, absence of road network, perpetuated tribal war, lack of the center of gravity, all these factors endangered military missions and political objectives behind Soviets and Americans. The political objectives of the Soviets were to stabilize shaky regime, to incorporate Afghanistan in its socialist camp and by this make Afghanistan trampolin for further penetration of Southeast Asia and Gulf region. But Soviets inserted political regime in Afghanistan with totally unacceptable values for the society based on strong local and tribal loyalties, and under tremendous influence of religion.

American political objectives were more realistic: to topple already internationally marginalized regime of Taleban, which provided bases for international terrorism and become dangerous for all neighbouring countries. American actions were supported by all key foreign players including Russians, meanwhile the Soviet invasion brought counteractions by Iran, Pakistan, USA and created tensions between the Soviet Union and Muslim World. The Soviet Union kept in Afghanistan from 84000 to 120000 troops, meanwhile Americans keep only 8000 troops avoiding by this to provide lucrative targets for the Taleban and Al Qaeda. This was the major difference between and implied different tactics and strategy. The Soviet were themselves engaged in ground operations instead of pushing the Afghani army, depriving themselves mobility in relations with different Afghani factions. The American military forces participated in air assaults and their small ground forces acted only as correctors of air attacks and used in specific special operations. Northern Alliance and other American allies (Pashtun tribes under Humid Karzai in south) were ground forces engaged in difficult battles with Taleban, thus providing Americans an opportunity to avoid pushing own ground forces into battlefields and to

become lucrative targets for Al Qaeda and Taleban forces. The American military campaign was a classic conventional warfare with the combination of air assaults and ground maneuver (a unique combination of satellite guided JDAM, Cruise Missile Tomahawk and General Dostum's 19th century cavalry). The military forces were structurally formed from American airpower, special operation forces and native or indigenous ground forces that were at least not less motivated and prepared than their local enemies. In contrast, the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan was asymmetric, guerrilla warfare. The Soviets and their local ally never engaged in conventional military actions as Americans and Northern Alliance. Instead, the Soviets without resistance occupied all-important logistic sites in the country, but soon found themselves in the trap of guerrilla war. Their local ally was less motivated and prepared than those of Americans; and the Soviets made tactical error in participating in military actions with the local army in the same line. In such situations the units of Afghani army, which were on the flanks or in the center of offensive left their positions by this endangering the positions of the Soviet units. Americans never repeated this mistake. During the offensive operations in Tora Bora and ANACONDA performed by American units, the allied Afghani troops were in position of outside encirclement.

The factor of defection, which is an adopted practice in Afghan internal warfare (i.e. during the war to pass from one to another side) made the cooperation between the Soviets and Afghani military at least less valuable. In many cases the complete units of Afghani army deserted and with the equipment provided by Soviets passed the mujahedins' side. Meanwhile, during the American campaign the same process took place, but in opposite direction: the Taleban commanders "put aside" their weapons and surrendered to the allies.

The technological advantage that had both Soviets and Americans was more completely used by Americans at least for two reasons. First, the Americans in their air assaults used mainly

precision-guided weapons: satellite guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions, laser guided munitions, cruise missiles Tomahawk, while the Soviets used unguided gravity bombs (some were produced in the 1940s and 50s) with the inefficient tactics of carpet bombings. Second, in a position warfare in which Northern Alliance and Taleban were engaged, the concealed and covered Taleban positions were even more vulnerable than the small and mobile groups of mujahedins, which fought in non-linear fashion during the Soviet campaign.

In the warfare in Afghanistan the light infantry is highly valuable. The Americans used in ground operations the military personnel highly trained for close combat, while the Soviets considered close combat by dismounted infantry superfluous and accentuated more on the huge expenditure of heavy artillery, i.e. tanks, howitzers, which were less effective.

The Soviet reconnaissance squads and special operation forces were the most prepared and highly valuable units, but they were strangely used in many situations not according to their direct functions (guarding objects, accompanying caravans, participating in conventional military offensives) and in limited quantities.

Afghanistan is the country divided by internal factional hatred, which neither quitted in the face of the Soviet intervention, nor during an operation “Enduring Freedom.” Moreover, the Soviets and Americans in some instances were unwillingly involved in internal competition. Often they had received from local source an information about enemy concentration and opened fire to that place. But after inquiry it was proved that information was false and the victims of attacks were not enemies of Americans or Russians, but the rivals of the information providers.

The Soviet and American units were different in terms of personnel professionalism. While the Soviets recruited unprepared youth for military service in Afghanistan, the Americans deployed elite and highly trained troops for the [campaign](#). Without denying the bravery

of the Soviet soldiers and officers, the functionality and effectiveness of the Americans was incomparably higher. Actually, using the term heroism referring to combat, we should note that in many cases it substitutes correct military planning and skilful implementation.

The cost of war in financial terms for the Soviets was \$40 billion. The Americans until October of 2002 spent over \$25 billion. In Afghanistan, the Soviets lost 14453 lives of their soldiers. Americans lost 54 lives. As a result of Soviet ~~aggression~~ invasion and occupation 1,240,000 Afghans ~~was~~ were murderedkilled. During operation “Enduring Freedom” 3000 Afghans were ~~dead~~ killed.

~~In this paper,~~ Earlier in this paper, the Soviet Military campaign was divided into four phases. To divide American military campaign into phases is not expedient, because operation “Enduring Freedom” is not over yet. However, it can be separated chronologically into two periods: from October 2001 to March 2002 (operation “Anaconda”) ~~where~~ when intensive military actions took place and Taleban and Al Qaeda forces were defeated and dispersed, and from March 2002 until now (December 2002) as the time of relative stability.

APPENDIX A: THE AMERICAN EQUIPMENT

The equipment used by the American Special Operation Forces in Afghanistan:

ALICE pack—All-purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment. Designed to distribute large loads.

Beretta (9 mm) pistol—Easily concealed general-purpose pistol of the US military. (2,5 pounds)

Radios for use between members. Has a GPS-type locator beacon.

Claymore mine--Plastic mine filled with about 700 steel balls to be used against infantry. (3,5 pounds)

Night vision goggles (NVG)—Worn on a helmet or handheld, NVGs amplify star or moon light millions of times. (1,5 pounds)

M4 (5,56 mm) combat rifle—This modified M16 rifle is preferred for its small size and light weight. (5,5 pounds)

Palm and laptop computers—Send and receive encrypted intelligence data. Can connect to radio or satellite systems.

Ground laser target designator—Portable laser used for targeting and guidance of bombs and missiles. (12 pounds)

Mp-5 (9 mm) submachine gun—Used in urban and close-quarters combat and raids. (5 pounds)

M24 (7,62 mm) sniper rifle—Made of aluminium, fiberglass and Kevlar composite. (12 pounds) (Associated Press 2002).

Bombers used in Afghanistan

B-52

Updated with modern technology the B-52 will be capable of delivering the full complement of

joint developed weapons and will continue into the 21st century as an important element of U.S. defenses. Current engineering analyses show the B-52's life span to extend beyond the year 2045. The B-52A first flew in 1954, and the B model entered service in 1955.

B-1B Lancer

The B-1B was first used in combat in support of operations against Iraq during Operation Desert Fox in December 1998. B-1s have been subsequently used in Operation Allied Force.

B-2 Spirit

The first B-2 was publicly displayed on Nov. 22, 1988, when it was rolled out of its hangar at Air Force Plant 42, Palmdale, Calif.

Fighters used in Afghanistan

F-16 Fighting Falcon

The F-16A, a single-seat model, first flew in December 1976.

F-15, F-15C Eagle & F-15E Strike Eagle

The first F-15A flight was made in July 1972. The first production model of the F-15E was delivered to the 405th Tactical Training Wing, Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., in April 1988. **F-14**

Tomcat

The F-14 entered the fleet in 1973.

F/A-18 Hornet

The single-seat F/A-18 *Hornet* is the nation's first strike-fighter.

F-117A Nighthawk-Stealth Jets

Officially named F-117A Nighthawk, but better known to the world as the stealth fighter, the Nighthawk made its combat debut Dec. 19, 1989, when six F-117As left their base in Nevada,

headed for Panama.

AC-130H Gunship

The AC-130 gunship has a history dating to Vietnam.

MC-130E/H Combat Talon I/II

The Combat Talon first flew in 1966.

Missiles, Guided Munitions, and Bombs

GBU-31 JDAM

The Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) is a guidance tail kit that converts existing unguided free-fall bombs into accurate, adverse weather "smart" munitions.

GBU-28 Bunker Busters

The GBU-28 is the famed bunker buster first used in Desert Storm.

AGM-86 Missiles

The AGM-86B air-launched cruise missiles and AGM-86C conventional air-launched cruise missiles were developed to increase the effectiveness of B-52H bombers.

AGM-154 Joint Standoff Weapon

JSOW is currently flying on the F/A-18 and F-16 aircraft and will soon be flying on the Air Force's B-52 and B-2.

Tomahawk Cruise Missile

Tomahawk cruise missiles are designed to fly at extremely low altitudes at high subsonic speeds, and are piloted over an evasive route by several mission tailored guidance systems. The first operational use was in Operation Desert Storm, 1991.

Daisy Cutter Bomb—BLU-82

The world's largest bomb the daisy cutter has to be parachuted from a cargo plane. The designers optimised this bomb to clear vegetation while creating little or no crater. It explodes three feet off the ground and clears almost a 1000-foot radius.

Helicopters

SH-60 Seahawk

The UH-60 Black Hawk was fielded by the Army in 1979. The Navy received the SH-60B Seahawk in 1983 and the SH-60F in 1988.

HH-60G Pave Hawk

The Pave Hawk is a highly modified version of the Army Black Hawk helicopter which features an upgraded communications and navigation suite that includes an integrated inertial navigation/global positioning/Doppler navigation systems, satellite communications, secure voice, and Have Quick communications.

CH-53E Super Stallion

The Sikorsky CH-53E Super Stallion is the largest helicopter in the western world.

CH-46D/E Sea Knight

The CH-46 Sea Knight was first procured in 1964.

AH-64D Longbow Apache

The AH-64D Longbow Apache is the most advanced, versatile, survivable, deployable and maintainable multi-role combat helicopter in the world.

Transports

C-17 Globemaster III

The C-17 is the newest, most flexible cargo aircraft to enter the airlift force. The C-17 is capable of rapid strategic delivery of troops and all types of cargo to main operating bases or directly to

forward bases in the deployment area. The aircraft is also capable of performing tactical airlift and airdrop missions when required.

C-130 Hercules

Four decades have elapsed since the Air Force issued its original design specification, yet the remarkable C-130 remains in production.

Unmanned Air Vehicle

RQ-1 Predator

The RQ-1 Predator is a medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle system (Bellis 2002).

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