

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE**  
FAKULTA SOCIÁLNÍCH VĚD  
Institut politologických studií

**Hana Vargová**

**Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: Soviet vs. American model**

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Autor práce: **Bc. Hana Vargová**

Vedoucí práce: **PhDr. Vít Strítecký, M.Phil., Ph.D.**

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## **Introduction**

The presented Thesis is focused on counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. The author tries to find and describe common features of the Soviet strategy during the invasion (1979-1989) and joint Western approach comprising U.S. mission and NATO during the operation Enduring Freedom launched in 2003.

As David Kilcullen pointed out in his book *Counterinsurgency*, insurgency is the most widespread form of warfare today although military establishments still regard it as irregular or unconventional. As this work will show, in the conditions of Afghanistan, counterinsurgency becomes rather difficult. The Soviet invasion to Afghanistan was heavily marked by the cold war environment and as such needs to be understood. The Cold War, which lasted four decades was a time of rivalry between two major powers in the international system, the United States and the Soviet Union. During this time, those two states never directly met on the battlefield, but provoked, supported, backed and financed many conflicts emerging all over the world. The case of Afghanistan is somewhat different due to Soviet direct intervention in the country whilst the American counterpart remained hidden. This protracted war became one of the shining examples of cold war clashes when the two world powers intervened into a local conflict. The Soviet invasion was meant to be a very quick operation as planned by the USSR leadership. For quite a long time, the Russians had hesitated and did not want to get involved in the problems Afghanistan was trapped into. Finally they stayed for ten years and then left with no victory. In 1989 when the last Soviet troops left the country, the USSR was already on the edge of collapsing. They left behind the destabilized country ready to be used as a safe haven for terrorists plotting the biggest terrorist attack of all times, the attack from 9/11. Here rises the idea that the roots of the next war might lie in the Soviet invasion and American secret support to the insurgents.

Afghanistan has been discussed on daily basis in the international arena for decades and it is still one of the hot spots of current international concerns and security issues. The territory of Afghanistan has always been a battlefield- Russians fought here the British in the so called Great Game at the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, through Russian invasion to Afghanistan because of which the Soviet empire bled to death and created the phenomenon of mujahedeen, to the American longest war. The porous Afghan-Pakistani border, so called AF-PAK border and the tribal areas artificially divided into two countries presents a serious

source of concern and the situation might worsen with the gradual withdrawal of the American soldiers from Afghanistan.

The stability in Afghanistan is fragile. At the beginning of the year 2015 the new NATO Mission Resolute Support was launched, the follow-on mission to the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) Operation Enduring Freedom which started in 2003. The purpose of this mission is to help with the training of the Afghani defence forces. When the forces of the ISAF mission toppled the Taliban government in Afghanistan because they were providing safe haven and support to Al-Qaeda, the Taliban movement moved to Pakistan, more specifically to FATA region (Federally Administrated Tribal Areas) on its eastern border with Afghanistan. Nowadays, when the most of the Western troops were withdrawn from the country after 14 years of presence, comes the question if there would not be a suitable environment in Afghanistan for the Taliban comeback (and so for the terrorists) again. The withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan provides space for struggle between regional powers in South Asia, India and Pakistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan share a long common border also the problematic FATA region that provides shelter for various radical groups<sup>1</sup>. India might choose “wait and watch” approach, so Afghanistan and Pakistan set their problems first. Hrishabh Sandilya, visiting fellow at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague and also at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis formulated three possible scenarios of what might happen in Afghanistan after the Western soldiers are gone at the 4<sup>th</sup> annual geopolitical conference in Prague in November 2014:

1. The government will get into infighting, Taliban would gain control over the eastern part of the country, ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) will hold the urban areas and Taliban will take over the rural regions and the reconciliation of forces will be in terms of Taliban.
2. The society will get into civil and ethnic strife, government is unable to accommodate the claims of warlords, and the situation would get back into 1990s.
3. Positive growth in the future, government accommodates the needs of everyone; the division of Western aid will ensure status quo solution.

India will probably wait and watch what will come out of Afghanistan, will keep open contacts with Uzbeks, Hazaras and Tajiks and other non-Pashtun groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Like Tahrik e-Taliban (also referred to as the Pakistani Taliban) that is an umbrella organization for various Islamist groups based in FATA.

The longest American foreign war began after one of the milestones of modern world history and the biggest terrorist attack of all times. After the 9/11 attacks the president of the U.S., George W. Bush declared national state of emergency and pledged to build international alliance through NATO and other allies to fight against Al Qaeda. The secret services found out very soon that Al Qaeda, the biggest worldwide terrorist group responsible for the attacks had used Afghanistan as a safe haven for a long time. The U.S. thus declared the war against terrorism and the Afghan regime led by Taliban movement. And so the longest foreign war in the American history began.

The presented Thesis cannot be purely a comparison of two cases: Soviet invasion to Afghanistan (1979-1989) and U.S. invasion<sup>2</sup> to Afghanistan (2001-present), given to the nature of strategies the invaders used. It attempts to be a work of two closely connected case studies that need to be understood in a complex framework. The goal is to provide an overview of military and non-military strategies used by the USSR and the U.S (with the Western allies) and to find common features, weaknesses and lessons to be learned.

Strictly speaking, the Soviets did not apply pure COIN strategy in Afghanistan; nevertheless after the opening period of war and after exhausting the potential of conventional force, some elements of COIN strategy were present in their activities. Also the allies resorted to counterinsurgency strategy after almost nine years spent there when they saw that conventional power was simply not working and not bringing the anticipated results.

The aim is to find out how successful or rather unsuccessful were the strategies employed by the two invaders against the insurgents. In order to do so the nature of strategies used by the two invaders need to be clarified, or so to say, whether it can be talked about them as counterinsurgency strategies or not and if so, from which stage of the conflict. As a tool for evaluation of the success or failure of mentioned strategies applied, the author will use the criteria introduced into the counterinsurgency discussion by the French military officer and scholar David Galula in his influential book *Counterinsurgency warfare: Theory and Practice* and other scholars who basically all derive their ideas about counterinsurgency from this classic work from the 1960s. Galula presents classic counterinsurgency theory which howbeit influential, lacks topicality. For that purpose, the author will complete the theoretical framework with thoughts of David Kilcullen, leading scholar in the COIN field who elaborated more on the current counterinsurgency theory. As mentioned above, the two invasions were not built on COIN strategy since their inception, but at the certain point, the

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<sup>2</sup> Understood as the U.S. presence together with parallel ongoing NATO missions.

invaders resorted to the counterinsurgency doctrine. The aim of the work is to identify this “tipping point” and from this on to confront the strategy with Galula’s criteria and the counterinsurgency theory.

The author of this work Thesis tries to answer following research questions: What kind of internal and external factors led to the two wars in Afghanistan? What kind of strategies (and their military and non-military elements) did the invaders applied in Afghanistan? Can we speak in the Soviet case about “counterinsurgency” in its pure sense? Did the U.S. and NATO fulfil all the criteria presented by Galula for a successful counterinsurgency? If not, which criteria were not fulfilled properly? What lessons could the Americans learn from Soviets and did they do so? Are some of the unfulfilled criteria common for both wars? And finally, could be the wrong strategy and the failure to fulfil all the criteria the reason why the both examined wars cannot be considered as victorious?

The dependent variable is therefore the success or failure (and the scale in between) of the counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan in the two wars. Independent variable is the counterinsurgency theory presented mostly by the Galula’s criteria.

The Thesis consists of three main chapters. First chapter provides an extensive introduction into the theory of asymmetrical and insurgency warfare together with theory of counterinsurgency ending with the applying COIN in the conditions of Afghanistan. As a tool for analysis of the two strategies (Soviet and American) will be used thus the criteria set by David Galula complemented by the ideas brought by Kilcullen. Second chapter deals with the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan starting with historical background explaining why the invasion happened at the first place and clarifying the Soviet attitude. Further on, the Soviet strategy during the invasion and its implications will be described. As it will be shown, the Soviet decision to withdraw from Afghanistan was a well thought action. Finally, the evaluation of (counter) insurgency strategy will be made, together with the application of Galula’s criteria in order to do so. The third chapter is devoted to the mostly U.S. engagement in Afghanistan briefly outlining the situation in the country before 9/11, the rise and rule of Taliban. The 9/11 attacks changed the world at the time and for Afghanistan it meant the inception of next war. The U.S. response and the dimensions of Western strategy introduced in Afghanistan present the extensive second part of the chapter ending with the description of the U.S. strategy and counterinsurgency doctrine confronted with Galula’s criteria. Finally, the problems of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan are summed up.

There has been quite impressive amount of books and articles in scientific reviews or newspapers and magazines written about Afghanistan in all possible ways. Many of them

coming from the American provenience are focusing on the question: Why are we still there? This question was asked very often also in USSR during the invasion, both with the other one: What do we fight for?

Very good insight into the Afghan military history provides the book written by Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A military history from Alexander the Great to the war against Taliban*. The theoretical framework will come out the introducing of the theory of asymmetric conflicts, counterinsurgency strategy and outlining the main thoughts and criteria presented by David Galula. The theory of counterinsurgency is quite good covered also by other scholars in the field of strategic studies, like David Kilcullen, who presented two different schools of classical counterinsurgency: enemy-centric approach and population-centric approach.

In the following chapters, the author will build on the information gathered from different primary and secondary sources. In the case of the Soviet invasion, many formerly secret governmental and intelligence documents have already been unclassified. The NATO mission and the American war in Afghanistan are good covered due to extensive work of scholars and journalists. Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan in particular is a subject of the research paper *Counterinsurgency Scorecard* published in 2013 for the U.S. office of the secretary of defense. The authors of the research analyse historical insurgencies to assess the progress and success of the ongoing counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. The research was issued by RAND Corporation and builds on the findings from another paper in 2010 called *Victory has a thousand fathers*, in which the authors by combination of historical case studies and comparative approach provide the demonstration of effectiveness of different counterinsurgency methods. As one of the cases in their research they also picked Soviet counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan.

Moreover, author of this Thesis works with numerous articles, studies and primary sources (such as unclassified records, manuals and other documents).



## **1. Theoretical framework**

The aim of this chapter is to firstly distinguish between conventional strategy and counterinsurgency as both of them were used during the two wars and then to briefly outline the author's understanding of asymmetric warfare and counterinsurgency as a strategy of fight. At last, the counterinsurgency warfare in theory and practice as well as the criteria for successful counterinsurgency as proposed by David Galula will be presented.

According to some scholars like George Friedman, counterinsurgency cannot be understood as a specific type of warfare, it is a strategy used by a disproportionately powerful conventional force in an asymmetric warfare (Friedman 2012). According to Friedman, the idea of counterinsurgency is clearly a response to insurgency. The insurgents are usually small, but highly motivated units possessing also superior intelligence than the invader. He comes with an argument that the occupying power is less motivated in winning the war than the insurgents and that over time, the invader would see the inability to defeat the insurgents and that would compel him to withdraw the forces.

The term "conventional" 'describes thus the forces, that are *designed, trained, equipped and organized for combat between similarly equipped, hierarchically organized forces acting on behalf of a recognized state, regional security or non-state organization* (Popov 2012: 96). The term "counterinsurgency" therefore can be understood as the forces used against the unequally equipped adversary.

Classic counterinsurgency theories postulate that the strength of the insurgents lies in the relationship between insurgents and the general population. Friedman raises the question how ever the occupying power could gain trust and support of the local population among which the insurgents are husbands, brothers, neighbours and friends. There could be two motivation impulses: economic motivation or certainty of protection from the insurgents that might seek revenge (Friedman 2012). However there are always weaknesses of COIN that might spoil the whole process and therefore the effectiveness of counterinsurgency strategies needs to be challenged and eventually replaced by another tactics. This critique will be discussed in the next chapters when the author will elaborate more on specific cases.

### **1.1. Asymmetry: nature of modern wars**

The conflicts we are witnessing today in the world have in most of the cases intrastate nature and as David Kilcullen pointed out, come from insurgencies.

The classical description of irregular warfare provided at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century Thomas Edward Lawrence in fifty words: “*Granted mobility, security (in the form of denying targets to the enemy), time, and doctrine (the idea to convert every subject to friendliness), victory will rest with the insurgents, for the algebraical factors are in the end decisive, and in them perfections of means and spirit struggle quite in vain.* “ (in Kiras 2007: 186) Although he wrote this observation under different circumstances it is accurate also nowadays.

To be more precise and less poetic, the author of this Thesis uses the definition proposed by David L. Buffaloe in his paper prepared for the Association of the U.S. Army in 2006:

*Asymmetric warfare is population-centric non-traditional warfare waged between a militarily superior power and one or more inferior powers which encompasses all the following aspects: evaluating and defeating asymmetric threat, conducting asymmetric operations, understanding cultural asymmetry and evaluating asymmetric cost.* (Buffaloe 2006: 17)

Ivan Arrequín-Toft in his famous article *How the weak win wars* puts a simple argument, that if the relative power implies victory in wars, then the weak actors should almost never win against their stronger opponents, especially if the gap in relative power is very large (Arrequín-Toft 2001: 94). On the example of the box fight between Muhammad Ali against Robert Foreman he shows an unexplored feature of interstate conflict as he puts it: how a strategy of weak actor can make a power of strong actor irrelevant (Arrequín-Toft 2001: 93-94). And the modern history in the period following the World War II showed us many cases when military and technological superiority were not reliable guide when it comes to the outcomes of wars: wars in Indochina, Algeria or Morocco to mention just few of them (Mack 1975: 175). Mack’s work had been published four years before the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan occurred, thus it is not included in his list of cases, but certainly belongs there.

When it comes to winning the wars fought in the framework of asymmetric warfare, Andrew Mack in his work *Why big nations lose small wars: the politics of asymmetric conflict* argues, that it is the matter of actor’s relative resolve or interest that explains the success or failure in asymmetric conflicts (in Arrequín-Toft 2001: 94). According to him, the insurgents operating in the uninhabited areas when being supplied from abroad can simply rely on the mountains and forests to protect them. And this might be the case of Soviet invasion to Afghanistan, when the supplies from the U.S. delivered via Pakistani secret service and the geographical conditions of Afghanistan were crucial factors that helped the insurgents de facto to defeat Soviets.

Mack in his paper comes with an interesting observation concerning the outcomes of asymmetric conflict: *The greater the gap in relative power, the less resolute and hence more politically vulnerable strong actors are, and the more resolute and less politically vulnerable weak actors are* (in Arrequín-Toft 2001: 95). But Arrequín-Toft does not agree absolutely, and points out that the best way how to predict the outcome of asymmetric conflict is to look at the strategic interaction. He argues that it is the interaction of the strategies of actors in the conflict what predicts better the conflict outcomes (Arrequín-Toft 2001:95).

## 1.2. Insurgency and counterinsurgency

*“Counterinsurgency is armed social work; an attempt to redress basic social and political problems while being shot at.”* (Kilcullen 2006:8)

Not only in academic, but also in political discussions, the first problem comes with the definition and differences between insurgency, guerrilla, and terrorism and so on. Whilst the term “guerrilla” usually evokes some kind of romantic images of adventures from Cuba embodied by charismatic Ernesto che Guevara, the term terrorism and insurgency bring more negative connotations ending up with sort of “dirty war” (Kiras 2007:188) . There are nevertheless significant differences between “terrorism” and “insurgency”. Although insurgents might resort to certain terrorist methods, the difference lies in the scope and scale of the violence. Terrorism rarely results into political change while insurgency tries to bring change through use of arms. Also, insurgency enjoys the support of the public more often.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the external material and moral support is a prerequisite of success of an insurgency as will be showed later on. However, the lines among guerrilla, insurgency and terrorism are often blurred.<sup>4</sup>

As it was already mentioned in the introduction, the insurgencies are nowadays the most widespread way of warfare and they do possess two qualities that make them highly relevant: protractedness and ambiguity (Metz and Millen 2004: VI). Insurgency is being understood by various scholars as a *struggle for control over a contested political space between a state (or group of states) and one or more popularly-based non-state challengers.*

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<sup>3</sup> This is given by the fact, that statistically, the civilians are those who suffer most from the terrorist attacks.

<sup>4</sup> Kiras puts as an example the Lebanese movement Hezbollah that is often being recognized as terrorist organization and certainly uses this kind of tactics, but also provides social welfare to local communities.

This definition was originally proposed by the insurgency and guerrilla warfare theorist Gordon McCormic and adjusted by David Kilcullen in order to clarify the nature of adversaries (Kilcullen 2006:2).

The U.S. Department of Defence (DoD) understands insurgency as “*The organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself.*” (DOD Dictionary of Military Terms).

Insurgencies have been crucial in the nation building activities throughout the human history and according to Bard O’Neill, “*insurgency has probably been the most prevalent type of armed conflict since the creation of organized political communities*” (Stanton 2009:21).

McCormic certainly became influential scholar in the field of strategy and war studies. He introduced so called “Diamond model” of counterinsurgency comprising four key elements or players and their mutual interactions. These are population, state, international community and counter-state<sup>5</sup> (In Dyke and Crisafulli 2006:41). He claims that it is crucial to have control over population before targeting effectively the insurgents. The targeting insurgents before gaining control over population would be fruitless (Dyke and Crisafulli 2006:36). This factor of controlling the population and gaining the popular support for the government (the actor conducting counterinsurgency) is often present in the COIN strategies what makes it crucial as will be showed further on.

David Kilcullen comes with the notion of “conflict ecosystem” by which he describes the environment that determinates the inception of insurgencies such as social networks (family, tribe, religious group etc.). He argues, that it is necessary to realize, that counterinsurgents are part of the ecosystem (Kilcullen 2006:3). According to him, counterinsurgents need to create “unity of effort” rather than “unity of command”. This action counts with the assumption, that you cannot command what you do not control. The “unity of effort” means that the shared diagnosis of the problem and developed platforms for communication and information sharing both with understanding each others’ strengths and weaknesses. In order to create such a shared diagnosis, Kilcullen proposes “three pillars model” presenting the framework for inter-agency counterinsurgency operations. The model is structured in the form of the base (Information), three pillars (Security, Political, Economic) and roof (Control). Until the base represented by Information is well developed, the pillars of counterinsurgency are ineffective. According to Kilcullen, the information campaign has to be

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<sup>5</sup> By the counter-state McCormic means the individuals who are actively or passively supporting the insurgents in the pursuit of removing the current government or the occupying forces.

conducted at all levels: global, regional and local, because insurgents today draw upon global networks of support, funding, sympathy and recruitment (Kilcullen 2006:5). Once the Information base is well established, the actions conducted in the framework of the three pillars need to be balanced and must develop in parallel. That means, security is not the basis for economic and political progress and the other way around. In achieving the roof, the control, we do not try to reduce violence to zero or to kill every insurgent but rather return the state of the society to normal (depends on the nature of every society) and to transfer the control to permanent and legitimate institutions in the country.

Apart from Kilcullen, many authors tried to analyze the success of counterinsurgencies in the last years. The collective of authors from RAND Corporation in their writing from 2013 *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* analyzed correlates of success in counterinsurgency on 71 insurgencies between World War II and 2010. Their broad study provided nine findings regarding the success of counterinsurgency in modern history. The findings summed up below are lessons learned from the past and Afghanistan is one of a few countries that appear in the list of selected cases more than once (all in all three times: anti-Soviet, post-Soviet and Taliban). Paul et al (2013: 181-185) came to conclusions, that:

- 1) *Seventeen of 24 COIN concepts tested receive strong support; one (“crush them”) has strong evidence against it.*
- 2) *Effective COIN practices run in packs, and some practices are always in the pack: tangible support reduction, commitment and motivation, and flexibility and adaptability.*
- 3) *Every insurgency is unique, but not so much that it matters at this level of analysis; the COIN scorecard discriminates cases into wins and losses.*
- 4) *Quality is more important than quantity, especially where paramilitaries and irregular forces are concerned.*
- 5) *Governments supported by external actors win the same way others do.*
- 6) *The “iron fist” COIN path, focused primarily on eliminating the insurgent threat, is historically less successful.*
- 7) *COIN takes time, but some COIN practices help end insurgencies sooner, leading to a more durable post conflict peace.*
- 8) *COIN takes time: After good COIN practices are in place, the average insurgency lasts roughly six more years. Poor beginnings do not necessarily lead to poor ends.*

The time element plays an important role in the lessons learned from the research of past insurgencies. But time can play with the counterinsurgents or against them as well. According to Kiras, time is the decisive element for both sides. Also Mao Zedong in his works on revolutionary warfare wrote a famous phrase: *“The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue.”* (Mao Zedong 1930:72). In his writings he elaborates more on insurgency warfare and on the role of time in it. He comes with three stages of insurgency:

- 1) **Strategic defensive:** this stage is characterized by avoidance of set-piece battles at all costs, recruiting and training of new fighters and political indoctrination of local population.
- 2) **Stalemate:** this stage begins with the prolonged battle aimed at exhausting the physical and moral strength of the opponent. The government presence in rural areas is neutralized and the public support is being channelled into building capable, conventional forces.
- 3) **Strategic offensive:** the end game, popular and main forces conduct the battle and use massive force to destroy enemy forces in their defensive positions. (in Kiras 2007:190).

Many insurgency campaigns often result in deadlock after a period of time, when neither side is capable to conclude the conflict. This might be the case of Afghanistan as well and in both examined wars the conflict got so protracted and conventional strategies simply did not work out to conclude it from the part of the counterinsurgent.

### 1.3. Counterinsurgency tailored for Afghanistan

Finding the most effective<sup>6</sup> counterinsurgency strategy for Afghanistan is an ambitious goal. The two authors from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School- John R. Dyke and John R. Crisafulli in their writing came with an idea that the COIN strategy used in Afghanistan has

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<sup>6</sup> “Measuring” effectiveness of counterinsurgency is certainly problematic. For that reason the scholars use the method of establishing certain conditions that need to be fulfilled in order to consider counterinsurgency effort as effective. This is the case for example of the David Kilcullen’s „three pillars“ model and the COIN actions conducted in accordance with it. For the purpose of this Thesis, the conditions established by David Galula and their right fulfilment, is the tool for measuring effectiveness of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan.

not brought desirable results so far<sup>7</sup>, so they propose an unconventional COIN strategy instead. Their unconventional COIN campaign model includes the Constabulary Force (CF), the village Self-Defense Force (SDF), the Movement-to-Contact Force (MTC), and the Quick Reaction Force (QRF). And the main role as an effort force in their unconventional COIN model plays the Afghan CF advised by U.S. Army Special Forces (Dyke and Crisafulli 2006:VIII). The successful insurgency depends on the efficiency of the actions conducted by the actors named above. The purpose of the CF is to protect and secure the local population and both with U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF) should organize, equip and train the SDF to support the CF mission. Another important element supporting the unconventional COIN model is the MTC. It's function is to press on the insurgents and by patrolling alongside the AFG-PAK border. Other components of the unconventional COIN Campaign model that need to be mentioned, include the intelligence collection, a decentralized command and control (C2) structure, clearing areas of insurgents, establishment of the long-term control and others (Dyke and Crisafulli 2006:VIII). The authors claim, that the proposed unconventional counterinsurgency model should replace the standing strategy used in Afghanistan by the allied forces. This might be a valid argument in the light of the many civilian and military casualties the war in Afghanistan caused so far.

However, the aim of this work is to evaluate the success or failure of the strategies used in the two examined invasions: the Soviet invasion (1979-1989) and the invasion of NATO allied forces- Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2014). In order to do so, the author will analyse the fulfilment or failure of compliance the conditions or steps of successful counterinsurgency established by David Galula. First of all, the insurgency warfare as understood by Galula will be briefly outlined followed by the necessary COIN operations steps he formulated.

Galula writes about three different ways how to take power by force: revolution, plot (or coup d'état) and insurgency. Revolution is usually very explosive upheaval, sudden, brief and unplanned, it is rather an accident. A plot is a hidden action of some insurgent group planned and directed at overthrowing the leadership in the country. By contrast to revolution, plot is a clandestine action and therefore does not include masses. A coup d'état is actually a gamble. Finally, the insurgency is a protracted struggle that is conducted step by step in order

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<sup>7</sup>The Thesis called *Unconventional counter-insurgency in Afghanistan* was written in 2006 and the authors argue, that year 2005 was the most violent year-to-date for U.S./Coalition forces serving in Afghanistan with 239 American casualties. The logical conclusion is that something is wrong with COIN in Afghanistan.

to gain certain objectives with the final goal to overthrow the current existing order (Galula 2006: 2). Further on, Galula establishes four prerequisites for a successful insurgency. It is:

### *1. Necessity of a Cause*

The cause is indispensable for the insurgent in order to gain support and to mobilize and control the population. Logically, the best cause for the insurgents is one that can attract many supports and repel the minimum of opponents. The idea is that the insurgent must be capable of identifying itself totally with the cause. Finally, the cause must be lasting. The nature of the cause is actually a problem the society and the states are suffering from. It might be political, economic, social, racial or artificial if it is solid enough to be accepted as a fact. The insurgent might have multiple causes or one encompassing cause. It is important for the insurgent to have the cause/s tailored for the groups or society that he is seeking to attract.

### *2. Weakness of the counterinsurgent*

Once the “cause condition” is fulfilled, it is necessary for the insurgent to find any weakness of the counterinsurgent, because without that, the insurgency is destined to fail already at its beginning. The combination of these factors thus determines whether an insurgency is possible or not. Strengths and weaknesses of the regime (= counterinsurgent) might have different nature. It can be absence of problems, national consensus, and resoluteness of the counterinsurgent leadership, the counterinsurgent leaders’ knowledge of counterinsurgency warfare, the machine for the control of the population and at last, geographic conditions. The last factor can be divided into four instruments of control relevant in a revolutionary war. These are the political structure, the administrative bureaucracy, the police and the armed forces (Galula 2006:17-22)

### *3. Geographic conditions*

The role of geography is significant in the ordinary war, in the revolutionary war it might be decisive. The geographical factors can help an insurgent or can condemn him to failure before he even starts. *Location* of the country can be favourable to the counterinsurgent if it is isolated by natural barriers or surrounded by countries opposing the insurgency. *Seize* is also decisive, the larger the country, the more difficult for the government to control it. Other aspects are configuration (if the country is archipelago for instance, it is almost impossible for an insurgency to spread), international borders (long coastline tends to help the



counterinsurgent, because it can be easier controlled), terrain (if there are obstacles like mountains or swamps it is a great advantage for an insurgent), climate (harsh climate conditions favour the counterinsurgency effort), population (general rule: the more inhabitants, the more difficult to control them, however, if the population is scattered it is more difficult to control it) and finally, economy (it works in both directions-developed countries are often more vulnerable to short and intense actions of terrorism, but if it lasts too long, the insurgency can lose the support of population. On the other hand, underdeveloped country is more open to guerrilla warfare).

#### *4. Outside support*

Outside support, in Galula's words, can take different forms: It can come in the form of moral support (insurgent benefits from it without any effort), political support (pressure applied directly on the counterinsurgent or in the indirect form by some diplomatic actions in the international forum), technical support (takes often form of the advise how to organize the movement and how to conduct operations), financial support (can be overt or covert) and military support (can be in the form of direct intervention, or by providing an insurgent with the training facilities and equipment) (Galula 2006:25-26).

Galula further identifies two strategic patterns of insurgency that emerged in the history of past revolutionary wars:

1. The orthodox pattern (Communist) - consists of several steps aimed not only at overthrowing the current establishment, but on completing the transformation of the country. These steps include creation of the party, rallying allies, guerrilla warfare, and movement warfare and at the end the annihilation campaign.
2. The bourgeois-nationalist pattern- the goal of the insurgency group is in this case only the seizure of power with no secondary preoccupations. In this case the insurgency steps include only two kinds of actions: blind terrorism and selective terrorism (Galula 2006:30-40).

From the point of view of the counterinsurgent, the revolutionary war is divided into two periods: the "cold revolutionary war" (the insurgent's activities are legal and non-violent) and "hot revolutionary war" (the activities become illegal and violent). In this course of events, there are four possible ways for the counterinsurgent how to react:

1. Direct action against the insurgent (works if the cause of the insurgent has little appeal or if the counterinsurgent has the legal power to act at his disposal, or if the counterinsurgent is able to prevent the insurgent from gaining publicity).
2. Indirect action against the insurgent
3. Infiltration of the insurgent movement
4. Strengthening the political machine

Having explained the nature of the revolutionary war, Galula established four laws of counterinsurgency warfare comprising the importance of the population support to the insurgent and also to the counterinsurgent, then the idea that the support is gained through and active minority, that the support from the population is conditional and finally the intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential (Galula 2006: 52-55). In the counterinsurgency strategy he proposed, we can find some common points with other thinker, Brigadier General Samuel B. Griffith who came with three points some three years before Galula: the anti-guerrilla operations he recommends can be summed up into three words: location, isolation and eradication.

Deriving from those laws, Galula creates a COIN strategy followed by its translation into tactics. This strategy includes eight inevitable steps:

1. *Concentration of armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents.*
2. *Deployment of the static unit: detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent's comeback in strength, install these troops in the hamlets, villages, and towns where the population lives.*
3. *Establish contact with the population; control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas.*
4. *Destroy the local insurgent political organizations.*
5. *Set up, by means of elections, new provisional local authorities.*
6. *Test these authorities by assigning them various concrete tasks. Replace the softs and the incompetents; give full support to the active leaders. Organize self-defense units.*
7. *Organizing a Party: Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement.*
8. *Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants.* (Galula 2006: 55-56)

This brief theoretical overview of the author's understanding of asymmetrical conflicts, insurgency warfare and counterinsurgency provides background for further research in accordance with the objectives set. The counterinsurgency strategy consisting of eight steps formulated by David Galula present a tool the author will use for explaining the success or failure of strategies used during the two analyzed invasions to Afghanistan in the following chapters.

Galula presents the classical literature on counterinsurgency, written during the Cold War and the aspects of the insurgency warfare and steps for a successful counterinsurgency he established present solid basis for the current scholars to build on. However, after having explained the theory of COIN, the transformation from strategy to tactics is needed. David Kilcullen with his extensive field experience provides a guideline for the troops on the ground and in his work *Twenty –eight articles* talks about company-level counterinsurgency. He recommends certain actions during the preparation for the COIN operation, then sets series of steps to be taken during the operation and finally advises what to do if (and it certainly always will) something goes wrong. His COIN tactics in the field comprises following stages and actions:

### **1. Preparation stage**

- Know your turf: by this Kilcullen means to know well the environment the soldier (COIN actor) is going into-to know the people, topography, economy, history, religion and culture, every village and field, road, group and tribal leader and their ancient grievances.
- Diagnose the problem: having already the knowledge of the factors mentioned in previous step, the COIN actor should start asking questions like: Who are the insurgents and what motivates them? The COIN actor needs to understand also what motivates the people and how the insurgent mobilizes them.
- Organize for intelligence: this step builds on the presumption that killing the enemy is easy, but to find him is often impossible, therefore intelligence and operations are complementary. Kilcullen underlines the importance of linguists and their effective employment as an asset that often wins the battle.
- Organize for inter-agency operations: COIN is in principle, inter-agency strategy. Almost everything the COIN actor does is connected to civilian

actors and local indigenous partners that cannot be controlled. Kilcullen recommend the soldiers involved in operation to learn how to work in inter-agency operations and not to scare the civilians. Finally it is important to know, that the COIN operation will provide some breathing space, but it is the stabilization provided by civilian agencies what will ultimately win the war.

- Travel light and harden your CSS: this point regards ammunition and armoury, the idea is that the insurgent are usually lightly armed (rifles and RPGs), so the key is to adapt to this model and be better at manoeuvring. Also hardening the CSS (Combat Service Support) is crucial since the enemy usually targets the weakest points.
- Find a political/cultural adviser: for the successful conducting the operation, finding of such an advisor is crucial, it can be official or not, but he needs to be able to understand and shape the environment.
- Train the squad leaders-then trust them: it is important to train the squad leaders to act intelligently and independently without orders and the training should be focused on skills like patrolling, security on the move and at the halt and basic drills. After finishing such a training, the commanders need to trust the squad leaders, there is no other choice in COIN, according to Kilcullen.
- Rank is nothing-talent is everything: COIN is different from conventional forces, anyone can learn the basics, but a few natural talents exist. The point is to spot them and put them into positions where they can do the difference.
- Have a game plan: The final step of the preparation task is to prepare so called “plan of the game”, or the picture of the development the COIN actor expects. Certainly, the plan will probably need to be adjusted over time once the forces hit the ground and the leadership will get better idea of what needs to be done and of their own limitations.

## 2. The Golden Hour

- Be there: for the counterinsurgent is very important to be in the place of action anytime possible, live in the local villages and not far away in the secure basis to be understood by the population as the real people who want to help them and not the invaders from the armoured convoy.
- Avoid knee jerk responses to first impressions: it is necessary to avoid any rush judgements without knowing the data first and get used to the “normality” of life in the area, so to say, distinguish among different kinds of violent acts (personal vendettas, “normal” level of violence in the region and attacks from the insurgents)
- Prepare for handover from Day One: the process of handing over the power to the successors is the other step that needs to be taken.
- Build trusted networks: this is the real meaning of the term “to win the hearts and minds”. To win the “hearts”, the COIN forces have to persuade the people that their victory is in the best interest of the local population and to win the “minds” means convincing them, that the invader could protect them.
- Start easy: that means not trying to hit the main insurgent stronghold, but to work gradually through small winnings and extending the local networks.
- Seek early victories: early (even small but decisive) victories can set the tone for the whole operation.
- Practise deterrent patrolling: to adopt patrolling system that would deter the insurgent from attacking instead of provoking him by using numerous small patrols working together for instance.
- Be prepared for setbacks: in the case of doing mistake (loosing people, killing or detaining the wrong person) it is crucial to regain the balance, take a step back and stick with the game plan.
- Remember the global audience: the COIN operations conducted today are significantly different from the ones in the past and the biggest difference makes the role of media. Every move made by the (counter) insurgent is being taped and broadcasted so the audience is really global. In order not to lose this battle, the COIN forces have to get the media on their side and spread their story.
- Engage the women, beware the children: women present crucial element in the family and traditional societies. The goal is to make them counterinsurgents, to persuade them through economic and social programs to influence them against the insurgents

(being in most of the cases presented by men, husbands, brothers). On the other hand, getting too close to the local children is often harmful for the COIN forces and for the local community as well (children can be punished or used against the soldiers). Kilcullen recommends hardening the heart and keeping the distance.

- Take stock regularly: counting bodies tells you generally quite little about the operation progress, therefore it is necessary to monitor other kind of metrics-economic activity, percentage of engagement initiated by the insurgents and those initiated by COIN forces and others.

### **3. Groundhog day**

- Exploit a “single narrative”: this step is an art, not science in Kilcullen’s words and deals actually with finding sort of “unification story” for the local population that brings them together for a long time, but the art in this is to exclude the insurgents from it (nationalistic, religious or redemption stories). This narrative emphasizes the rightness of the cause.
- Local forces should mirror the enemy, not ourselves: the local forces (trained or supported by the COIN forces) should seek to supplant the insurgent’s role.
- Practise armed civil affairs: civil affairs are central counterinsurgency activity and the point in this is to restructure the environment and displace the enemy from it. The role of the counterinsurgent is in providing protection, identifying needs, facilitating civil affairs and using improvements in social conditions in order to mobilize population and build networks.
- Small is beautiful: the mistake made very often is the transplanting or replicating the small-scale programs on a larger scale, but the small programs usually work well precisely because they are small (conducted on the company level only).
- Fight the enemy’s strategy, not his forces: at this stage of the conflict, the insurgent often go to the offensive, but the massive campaign against him is contra productive, because it might undermine the confidence of the people. Kilcullen rather advises fighting against the strategy, not on the battlefield.
- Build your own solution-only attack the enemy when he gets in the way: the approach of the counterinsurgent must be environment-centred rather than enemy-centred and not distracted by the will to kill or capture the insurgents. Sticking to the plan of the campaign developed before is crucial. Kilcullen sums this up: *defection is better than*

*surrender, surrender is better than capture and capture is better than a kill* (Kilcullen 2006:9).

#### **4. Getting Short**

- Keep your extraction plan secret: the units come and go and the locals are used to it, but the counterinsurgent cannot allow the leak of information about the extraction to provide the opportunity for the insurgent to hit.
- Whatever else you do, keep the initiative: the insurgents' reactions are often unexpected- the attacks and withdrawals are too fast to react, but the COIN forces cannot be drawn into purely reactive operations, keeping the initiative is everything.

These twenty-eight articles David Kilcullen presented in 2006 elaborate deeper on the steps established by Galula and provide more actual 21<sup>st</sup> century insight to the counterinsurgency work on the ground. He continues further with the list of “what if” events and the accurate reactions on them.

This whole complex theoretical framework will be used to better grasp and understand the strategy adopted and operations conducted in Afghanistan by the two examined invaders- the Soviet Union and the Western forces.

## 2. Soviet strategy in the Afghan war: counterinsurgency or not?

The Soviet army invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 and the last troops left the country in February 1989. This almost a decade long war was one of the conflicts that occurred during the cold war in which one of the bipolar powers (USSR) was directly involved and the other (USA) went under cover. The American support to the insurgents<sup>8</sup> in the covert operation “Cyclone”, especially arms supplies through Pakistani secret service, was according to many authors the decisive factor that determined the outcome of conflict and certainly contributed to the final collapse of the Soviet Union. Others, like Jonathan Steel, the Guardian columnist, who covered Afghanistan for many years, in his book *Ghosts of Afghanistan: Hard Truths and Foreign Myths* published in 2011, claim that U.S. supplies of Stinger missile weapons were not the main reason for the Soviet withdrawal since the politburo decision to leave Afghanistan had been made several months before Stinger missiles entered the country (Steel 2011).

The aim of this chapter is to outline the events that occurred before the Soviet troops entered Afghanistan and to analyse the military and non-military aspects of the strategy the invaders decided to apply and its implications. Finally, the evaluation of overall results and the comparison with the Galula and Kilcullan recommendations will be made.

### 2.1. Historical background

The first hint suggesting, that Afghanistan would become one of the Cold War battlefields was the coup made by Mohammad Daud Khan in 1973. He seized control over government with the backing of Soviet- trained Afghan Communist political faction He seized control over government with the backing of Soviet- trained Afghan Communist political faction (McEachin 2002:1). Daud served before as a prime minister (1953-1963) before was ousted. During his mandate he established close relations with Moscow<sup>9</sup>. On the 17<sup>th</sup> July 1973 Daud seized a coup and took control over government. He changed Afghanistan from monarchy to

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<sup>8</sup> Afghani insurgents were named „mujahideens“. This Arabic word for the ones involved in jihad and is often being translated as „freedom fighters“

<sup>9</sup> He did it of pragmatic reasons, because of the U.S. cooperation with Pakistan and Iran, Afghanistan regional contestants.



republic<sup>10</sup> and held the position of prime minister, president, minister of defence and minister of foreign affairs.

Daud realized that Afghanistan got too close to the USSR and needs to return to the former policy of neutrality (Vogelsang 2010:293). For this reason he started searching for allies. He normalized relations with Pakistan and found an ally in the Saudi Arabia that had the intention to support anticommunist policy in Afghanistan. Daud ceased to be a trustworthy partner for the Soviet Union. In April 1978 Daud was overthrown by the communist led coup organized by the second man of Khalq (political party), Hafizullah Amin. Noor Muhammad Taraki was named the president and the state “Democratic Republic Afghanistan” was declared. The coup was carried out without the approval from Moscow, but USSR accepted new Afghani leadership immediately and signed treaty of alliance. The U.S. acknowledged the new government as well and provided further support to the country. CIA did not confirm the Russian involvement in the coup so the relations between the two global players were not significantly harmed (Nálevka 2010:160-161). For this reason the Soviet politburo hesitated with the direct involvement in the domestic Afghani issues. In 1978 Taraki visited Brezhnev in Moscow and in the year after, Afghanistan became the main Soviet priority. In the meantime the Islamic opposition in Afghanistan was formed and since 1979 supported with weapons from Iran, where the Islamic revolution took place.<sup>11</sup> The Carter administration cut its already modest economic assistance to Afghanistan (MacEachin 2002:12).

The USSR promised more extensive support (but no direct intervention) under condition of settling issues with Babrak’s Khalq and isolation of Amin, who was too radical in his actions. The Soviet leader Brezhnev himself in a conversation with Taraki in March 1979 proposed the Afghan president only political support, in his words:

*“...we must widen the base which supports the leadership of the party and the country. First of all, of great importance here is the unity of your party, mutual trust, and ideological-political solidarity throughout its ranks from top to bottom. It is worth thinking about creating a single national front under the aegis of the People’s democratic party of Afghanistan as the recognized leader of the people. Such a front could include already existing socio-political organizations and be supported by groups of workers, peasants, petty and middle bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and students, youth, and progressive women.” (Brezhnev 1979).*

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<sup>10</sup> The king and Daud’s cousin Zahir Shah was at that time in Rome. He resigned on his position shortly afterwards and since then lived in Rome.

<sup>11</sup> The pro- American government of Shah Reza Pahlavi was replaced by the shia regime of Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Soviet leader talked also about securing the clergy to support the revolutionary government or at least not to speak out against it (Brezhnev 1979). Nevertheless, he still refused to engage militarily.

*“And now for the question of the possibility of deploying soviet military forces in Afghanistan..... I will tell you frankly: this should not be done. This would only play into the hands of the enemies—yours and ours.”* (Brezhnev 1979)

The disclosed documents prove that Taraki met with the representatives of politburo several times in 1979 asking for military support, but kept being rejected. In the combat with Amin he failed though and was assassinated by his adherents. The Soviets had to deal with the turbulent situation in Afghanistan. Whilst the Soviet army was against the invasion reminding the American failure in Vietnam, KGB advocated direct military intervention.

Finally in December 1979 a small group inside the politburo<sup>12</sup> decided for the intervention to Afghanistan (Nálevka 2010:164).

The USSR had several tactical goals to achieve:

- 1) Disposal of Amin and his closest followers,
- 2) Elimination of mujahedeen (holly warrior) resistance via intimidation or if necessary by military blows,
- 3) Reform of the PDPA
- 4) Broadening the base of popular support
- 5) Healing the Parcham- Khalq rift (Arnold 1985:97).

Although Brezhnev thought, the invasion would be over soon this was not the case because Karmal had no popular support in the country and the opposition uprising was spreading fast (Nálevka 2010:164-165). The resistance in Afghanistan had two characteristics: it was an extremely popular movement that had arisen spontaneously among many different kinds of people with varying motives and it was not manpower that the guerrillas lacked, but weapons. Secondly, the Afghan movement was one of the weakest liberation struggles in the world in its organization, coordination and strategy (Chaliand 1982:47). On the other hand, Soviets underestimated the importance of the particularity of Afghan space and were driven into a conflict they were unable to win. Despite of the Soviet military and material dominance

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<sup>12</sup> Consisting of Andropov, Brezhnev, Gromyko and Ustinov.

the invader was defeated and to this conclusion led numerous international and domestic, military and political factors.

Political goals the politburo wanted to achieve were mentioned in the previous paragraph. All in all, most of the historians provide quite convincing argument that the main political goal Soviets wanted to achieve was to stabilize the situation in at-risk client regime in which it had invested significant resources. The intervention is often viewed also as one of the Soviet Cold War battles and also the Soviet leadership came to Afghanistan with this image in mind- to come and intimidate any resistance by simple presence of the troops (just like they did it in other “stabilizing operations” in Ukraine (1945-1951), East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) (Stillwell 2002:6). This argument supported General Valentin Varrenikov, Deputy Head of Soviet General Staff from 1979-1984 by claiming Afghanistan to be “*a buffer against our enemies that were beyond Afghanistan— primarily Pakistan, which was completely allied with American policy*“. He further noted that “*We had set ourselves the task of turning Afghanistan into a stable, friendly country...*” (in Stillwell 2002:3). Some scholars came with different findings, but these when compared with disclosed documents proved to be at the best only partial explanations.<sup>13</sup>

## **2.2. Soviet strategy during the invasion and its implications**

The aim of this subchapter is to describe what kind of strategy (if any) did the Soviets used, what were the goals and if the undertaken steps match with the recommendations and categories presented by Galula and Kilcullen. Furthermore, the reasons why the successful invasion at the beginning turned to be a failure (at least partially) will be presented.

First of all it needs to be clarified, who were exactly the enemies against whom the Soviet Union fought for almost a decade. The Russians called them “ghosts” because they merged with the population by day and stroke by night. It was already mentioned that the common term for them is “mujahedeen”, but who were they? These multi-national, heterogeneous groups basically composed two main alliances: *Peshawar Seven* and *Tehran Eight*<sup>14</sup> (Starr

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<sup>13</sup> Among these arguments are for example the Soviet fear from spreading the Islamism in Central Asia or the Soviet ambition of gaining strategic position in the Gulf region and getting Access to warm ports and in this process Afghanistan being a natural intermediate step.

<sup>14</sup> The fighters in Peshawar Seven recieved military training in Pakistan and China whereas the Teheran Eight received support from the Islamic republic of Iran.

2004:158). It does not need to be mentioned that no common mujahedeen program emerged nor could it given historic tribal divisions. The world remembers only few of the mujahedeen commanders and one worth remembering was Ahmad Shah Massoud who proved to be among most capable commanders.<sup>15</sup> While Massoud is sort of romantic figure and in a certain way a “hero” at least in minds of the Afghans, far more controversial person was the other warlord Gulbudin Hekmatyar, who was accused of fighting more the other mujahedeen than the Soviets. He also served as a prime minister of Afghanistan before the Taliban takeover.

According to Baumann, the overriding element of Soviet military strategy in Afghanistan was to limit the level of its military commitment and the whole invasion was planned only to be a resuscitation of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan’s army (DRA) (Baumann 1993: 135). In the circumstances that DRA represented only a small part of urban population and the fact that the creation of unified military command among the tribes in Afghanistan is from historical reasons impossible combined with the Soviet support to the regime to keep it in power, according to Baumann, the Soviet strategy in Afghanistan was focused on five objectives:

*Military objectives:*

1. Securing Kabul and the highways connecting the capital with Kandahar and Herat in the south and Termez on the border with USSR and the security of Salang highway.<sup>16</sup>
2. Targeting the suspected resistance pockets (destroying villages, crops) combined with forcing the inhabitants that supported them to exile in order to weaken the insurgency.
3. Sought to close the border with Pakistan to avert caravans from supplying the rebels with guns and ammunition.

*Non-military objectives:*

4. Recognition of urgency of rebuilding the infrastructure of the Afghan government and the army by educating new cadres.
5. The acknowledgment of the unpopularity of the client regime appointed by the USSR. It was necessary to organize a plan of civic and political action to win adherents.

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<sup>15</sup> Massoud was a Tajik who fiercely fought against the Soviets, the regime of president Mohammad Najibullah afterwards and until his death countered Taliban as well. He was killed by a bomb set in camera symbolically two days before 9/11 by one of the rare interviews he gave.

<sup>16</sup> 60% of Soviet forces, mostly motor-rifle units were committed to this task.

The USSR thus supported the Afghan regime economically and militarily during the whole invasion and even after the withdrawal until January 1992 when the Soviet Union was on the edge of collapsing. The client regime could no longer survive, because was not able to pay the militias or the military and Najibullah fell from power just four months later as Massoud and Hekmatyar's troops occupied Kabul and surrounding areas (Fivecoat 2012:47).

Speaking in military terms, Soviets adopted several steps before the deployment of forces. The USSR military leadership identified the Red Army to be their strategic centre of gravity. The Soviet 40<sup>th</sup> Army was organized in the Turkestan military district already in October 1979 under the command of Colonel General Iu.V.Tukharinov. The Russian forces were deployed in Afghanistan during December 1979<sup>17</sup> and the first step they undertook was paralysing Kabul, seizing the airfield in Bagram, disarming loyal units of Ministry of Interior, locking up the garrison of the Afghan 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> divisions and storming the palace of president Amin (Baumann 1993:138). Amin was killed and Soviets installed Babrak Karmal instead of him by 28<sup>th</sup> December. The first major offensive, the Soviets conducted in Kunar Valley in February-March 1980. According to Stillwell, the pattern of this offensive was repeated over the course of the next nine years with minor variations (Stillwell 2002: 9).

Considering the army capabilities, Soviets very soon overwhelmed and subsumed the DRA and their numbers ranged between 90 000 and 104 000 men. The 40<sup>th</sup> army that was deployed in Afghanistan since the beginning of the invasion comprised four divisions, five separate units, three separate regiments and number of support units that employed air assault, airborne, motorized and mountain rifle units and Spetznaz (Baumann 1993:135)<sup>18</sup> Soviets conducted aerial bombings, often massive what caused an exodus of more than five million Afghans abroad, mostly to Iran and Pakistan.

The Soviet military invasion triggered uprisings and chaos across the country, to the contrary to Soviet expectations.<sup>19</sup> The invaders did not use any counterinsurgency strategy at the time they entered Afghanistan, because they did not expect to fight in this kind of warfare hence they applied conventional brute force. However, already early in the war Soviets, but also the rebels had to adjust their tactics. Soviet forces could use their huge military

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<sup>17</sup> By the time of the invasion, there were 5000 Soviet personnel and Soviet deployed strength increased to 50 000 troops within a week.

<sup>18</sup> It is an English abbreviation of the Russian term *Войска специального назначения*, or in English: Special Purpose Forces that the Russians used in numerous post-Soviet countries. Although this term refers to Russian forces, some of the post-Soviet countries adopted this term for their own special forces (Spetsnaz Belarus).

<sup>19</sup> The presence of Soviet troops did not cause fear, but anger.

predominance, but were unable to hunt down and route the resistance- the fighters just melted away into the mountains. Also the mujahedeen found out very soon that large armed groups of thousand and more combatants are an easy target so they resorted to partisan strategy and attacked in small groups of 20 to 200 men. Soviets on the other hand realized that fighting a regular large scale war is without effect. Despite these calculations, following events showed the Soviet inability to adapt the new type of warfare. As an example can be mentioned the large scale operations in strategic Panjshir Valley, nest of Shah Massoud and his fighters, located north of the capital in 1981 and 1982 which brought no greater success.

Soviets quite successfully managed to keep control over the main cities and highways, but according to one estimate, 80 % of the Afghan territory remained outside effective government control (Baumann 1993:143). In May 1982, Soviet troops cooperating with DRA conducted major campaign of the war to date. The combat in the Panjshir valley continued for more than a month and the allied forces suffered 3,000 casualties compared to the estimated 1,000 on the side of the rebels. After seeing such results, the allies withdraw from the valley and in the following month tried to drive into the Paghman area.

As it was shown in other offensives conducted in those months of 1982<sup>20</sup>, Soviets could hold the area only by remaining physically on the ground. As soon as the forces departed, the resistance took control. The Soviets relied more and more on battalion- size manoeuvres supported by heliborne assault. Some authors compares this strategy to the one used by the Americans in Vietnam, others name it “scorched earth” strategy<sup>21</sup> (Baumann 1993: 141-142).

During following years, especially in 1985, Soviets and rebels led many campaigns to control and keep garrisons and cities<sup>22</sup>. Mikhail Gorbachev replaced Konstantin Chernenko on the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR and he informed they (USSR) and the Afghan government had one year to make decisive progress in Afghanistan and by this he meant military victory as the only solution. The terms of combat for Soviets in Afghanistan were heavily marked by the geographical conditions of mountainous terrain and also by the absence of well-developed infrastructure. The Soviet government increased training and equipping of the Afghan military, but by the end of the fighting season, Gorbachev recognizing the military lack of success charged Karmal to distance from communism and “widen the social base” and make dialogues with the tribes and get the support from the clergy.

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<sup>20</sup> Like the one in Paghman area in June and July.

<sup>21</sup> By this term is meant the Soviet tactics of destroying villages, crops, livestock and everything that could guerilla use.

<sup>22</sup> As examples can serve battles for Kunar Valey, Paktia, Barikot, Peshgor, Khowst and city fights in Kandahar.

### 2.3. Soviet withdrawal strategy

By 1986 the Soviets were unable to obtain military solution<sup>23</sup> and they started to prepare for withdrawing. This decision can be read as the Afghan unsuitability for communism, Soviet's unwillingness to make long-term commitment and to aversion to widen the war to stop the flow of money, arms and fighters from Pakistan. USSR began to "Afghanize" the war by transferring most of the responsibility for combat operations to DRA (Fivecoat 2012:44). The Afghan forces (military and militias) grew and in 1987 USSR forces and DRA achieved ratio of 32 soldiers per 1000 members of the population.<sup>24</sup> However, the Afghan government controlled only 35% of the Afghan districts.

Overall assessment of their success can be summed up in the fact that the allies enjoyed limited success in interdicting resistance supply lines by air due to the effective growing intelligence village network. In general, Soviets invested significant resources in an attempt to cut off the resistance supply routes. In 1986 the unpopular DRA leader Babrak Karmal was replaced by Dr. Najibullah Admadzi. This step overshadowed the events on the battlefield and it was also a sign for another step in Soviet strategy: Karmal's removal paved path towards the National Reconciliation Campaign by which the regime showed its openness to all political faction in Afghanistan (Baumann 1993:145). At this time Soviet Union was already planning gradual withdrawal from the country and they tried to hold the initiative and the withdrawal should have not been seen as a defeat, but rather the intend of the USSR to leave the country they did not want to occupy at the first place. On April 14, 1988 the Pakistani<sup>25</sup> and Afghan government signed an agreement which basically stipulated, that the Russian 40<sup>th</sup> army will withdraw from the country that will begin on May 15, 1988 and end by February 15, 1989, that the president Najibullah remains in power and that the U.S. and USSR could continue supporting their allies (Geneva Accords on Afghanistan 1988). The deadlines, Soviet leadership presented, were supposed to force the Afghan government to take more responsibility on the operations.<sup>26</sup> As a part of the Soviet long-term commitment they left in Kabul 200 military and KGB advisors (Fivecoat 2012:47).

Leadership plays always great role in the transition process and Gorbachev led it with firm hand and the removal of Karmal and his replacement by Najibullah showed to be very

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<sup>23</sup> Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev called the war in Afghanistan a „bleeding wound“.

<sup>24</sup> The U.S. army field manual states the ideal ratio for counterinsurgency troops between 20 and 25 counterinsurgents for every 1000 residents.

<sup>25</sup> The Pakistani government acted here as a solicitor for Afghan resistance.

<sup>26</sup> In reality, the information that Soviets want to withdraw from the country, caused real panic in Kabul.

pragmatic. Also his decision to seek military victory in 1985 and then use its failure to shift to a withdrawal strategy was brilliant (Fivecoat 2012:48).

As it was already mentioned, the USSR promised to provide Afghanistan money and weapons after the withdrawal, but they could do it only until 1992 when the USSR broke down. The Afghan economy has relied upon high levels of aid and subsidies for the past century and the Soviet experience showed us that the lack of this support led directly to the raise of Taliban regime to power what indirectly caused another war in Afghanistan.

## **2.4. Soviet counterinsurgency or not? Strategy evaluation**

There are many disputes among scholars if the strategy applied by the Soviet leadership in Afghanistan during the invasion in 1980s can be described as “COIN strategy”, but certainly, the USSR troops fought against insurgency and it was an important lesson for this kind of wars to come. To make it simple, but appropriate, the Soviets owned the day and the rebels owned the night and the Soviet efforts followed the paradigm “three steps forward, three steps back”.<sup>27</sup> To answer the question if the strategy the USSR used can be named COIN strategy, the answer can be that it combined older paradigm with elements of emerging new forms. The Soviet Union already had certain experience with COIN before they decided to invade Afghanistan. Shortly after Bolsheviks came to power, the newly established regime had to consolidate its power in the rest of the country and as example of uprisings that emerged against the Soviet rule in Central Asia is often used the fight against Basmachi movement. Interesting fact is that Soviets used similar mixture of “hard and soft” measures back then and afterwards in Afghanistan as well (Oliker 2008:2).

The insurgency in Afghanistan was specific also for other reason: it clearly went far beyond its borders. The Soviet troops fought the Afghan tribesmen, but the insurgency was affected and supported from outside and marked by globally oriented Islamic ideology (Doohovskoy 2009:22). According to Doohovskoy, the Soviet reaction to the Afghan insurgency was a synthesis of various approaches: on one hand they adopted many enemy-centric principles (to kill as many insurgents as possible) and on the other hand they included non-coercive principles aimed at persuading the population to support their cause<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> As quoted one Russian general, veteran of the Afgan war (Doohovskoy 2009:5).

<sup>28</sup> They invested significant resources in the infrastructure and education and also in building institutional and human capital.



(Doohovskoy 2009:23). They also pushed the government in Kabul to improve life condition of the populace.

The decision of Kremlin to invade Afghanistan was really challenging. Afghanistan was/is a country with known for its resistance of outside influence and centralized rule. They had certain although limited experience with counterinsurgency as it was already mentioned above, but for long and large scale counterinsurgency war they were not prepared. As described in the previous subchapters, the military solution was not enough to beat the resistance and its combination with “soft measures” in the form of building infrastructure, improving education system, providing funds and pushing for political reforms was not properly executed or if they were it did not bring desired results. The insurgency groups on the other side fulfilled all four prerequisites established by Galula for a successful insurgency:

1. *Necessity of a Cause*

Although the rebellion groups did not manage to form a unite army<sup>29</sup> and remained divided, they certainly had a cause: to remove the USSR-client regime in Kabul and during the Soviet invasion to expel the foreign troops from the Afghan soil. The mujahedeen were brothers, husbands and sons, crucial part of the population so they could target it very effectively also in the context of the civilian casualties Soviet armed forces caused- Doohovskoy talks about 2, 5 million civilians killed or maimed.

2. *Weakness of the counterinsurgent*

There was also certainly present the element of weakness on the side of the counterinsurgent- DRA and Soviet troops starting with problems of control the areas once conveyed, desertion, nationalist disturbances in Soviet troops and more. Last, but not least, the Soviet army was originally trained to fight against NATO forces in the European theatre and not to fight irregular war in mountain environment somewhere in Central Asia.

3. *Geographic conditions*

Geographic conditions played in the Soviet-Afghan war, the mountainous terrain and complexes of caves that were used by mujahedeen and later Taliban and Al-Qaeda became legendary. Soviet army even held courses for soldiers to learn them how to neutralize tunnels because the soldiers very unwillingly to fight underground which

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<sup>29</sup> With a small exception of the group of Massoud who could attract fighters also from neighbouring regions.

was very justifiable fear given the problems it brought like immediate contact with the enemy or put-up traps, artificial or natural, like scorpions or snakes (Bahmanyar 2004: 24-25). And places like Salang pass became world known, also due the tragedy that occurred in November 1982 when about 700 Soviet soldiers were killed and 200 injured both with hundreds of Afghan civilian casualties on a big tunnel fire (Afghan blast toll is put in hundreds 1982).

5. *Outside support*

The outside support for the insurgency in Afghanistan is also very good documented thanks to the disclosed U.S. documents. The whole covert CIA “Operation Cyclone” was orchestrated for this purpose and the U.S. president at that time Jimmy Carter made decision about the U.S. covert engagement in Afghanistan already before the invasion, in July 1979 (The White House Executive report 79-1579). During the Reagan term, the funding, arming and training were taken to a much higher level.

After the list of advantages the Afghan insurgency could benefit from, the evaluation of the strategy applied by the Soviet leadership in the context of Galula’s steps needs to be done.

9. *Concentration of armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents.*

Already at the first point comes the problem: the insurgents did not create any “main body” of the resistance to be attacked since the rebels were mostly tribes based.

10. *Deployment of the static unit: detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent’s comeback in strength, install these troops in the hamlets, villages, and towns where the population lives.*

The problem of the Soviet troops to hold the areas was already mentioned in the previous subchapters. The burden of holding the areas was gradually transferred from Soviets to DRA forces but also those had difficulties and could fulfil the task only by physically staying there, once they left, the area soon fell again to the hands of the insurgents.

11. *Establish contact with the population; control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas.*

Non-military elements in the strategy for Afghanistan were for the Soviet leadership less important than the military victory. Nevertheless, many Soviet political initiatives worked with the idea of winning over the population by strengthening political institutions and processes. While these objectives were not completely achieved,

Soviet leaders facilitated some social initiatives and advocated political conciliatory approach (Doohovskoy 2009:35).

*12. Destroy the local insurgent political organizations.*

This point is related to the first one and thus similar conclusion is to be made: the insurgent did not create any significant local political organizations. However, some political entities raised from the insurgency, like the movement Hazb-e Islami Gulbuddin founded in 1977 by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar that operated on the Afghan-Pakistani border. Although it is recorded as political party, its destroying would have required using armed forces anyway since the movement operated also on the battlefield and was supported from outside through Pakistani secret service what complicated the situation even more.

*13. Set up, by means of elections, new provisional local authorities*

*14. Test these authorities by assigning them various concrete tasks. Replace the softs and the incompetents; give full support to the active leaders. Organize self-defense units.*

The two next steps are interconnected and Soviets certainly understood their importance and made significant efforts in these areas. Already Brezhnev ordered to Taraki to pursue a comprehensive social and political program in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Soviet leader advocated the use of socio-political groups to work with pheasants, workers and women (Doohovskoy 2009:36).

*15. Organizing a Party: Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement.*

The USSR during the invasion supported the government party PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) that run the country and the replacement of Karmal with Najibullah was very pragmatic together with pushing for national reconciliation program.

*16. Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants.*

The last point was the stumbling block of the whole Soviet operation. They never succeeded in finishing their enemy completely. They might have won the day, but they lost at night as it was already said. Another fact was that the insurgency groups did not participate on negotiations in Geneva (Pakistan acted on behalf of the resistance) and they were not included properly in the reconciliation process.

## 2.5. From a good start to unlucky finish-concluding remarks

The military strategy of the USSR during the invasion (1979-1985/1986) had several weak points:

1. Although Soviets applied brute force on the insurgents, they were unable to definitely finish their enemy.
2. The Soviet leadership lacked a charismatic commandant worth following, someone like Massoud whose continuous success inspired and attracted also guerrillas from neighbouring provinces that is a rare occurrence in such a traditionally fragmented tribal society.
3. The Soviets and the Afghan government did not work or did not know how to work effectively with the populace in order to persuade them not to support guerrillas and rather put their trust into DRA. The government programs of sending large numbers of Afghans to the USSR for education and indoctrination did not proved to be working well over the war.
4. The rate of desertion from the DRA was debilitating.
5. Soviet troops consisted mostly of Slavs, but there were also significant numbers of Central Asian combatants who often caused disturbances in the army and some of them felt affiliation to the enemies they fought due to national or tribal proximity.
6. The insurgency groups did not participate on peace talks and were not properly included in the national reconciliation process.
7. The Soviets did not succeed in sealing the Pakistani border in order to interrupt the supplies coming from there- this point is also missing in Galula's criteria for a successful insurgency campaign.
8. And finally, as the Russian analyst, Gennady Bocharov states in his book *Russian roulette*, actually no one from the Soviet Union seemed to know why they were in Afghanistan (Bocharov 1990:137-138).

J. William Derleth in his article *The Soviets in Afghanistan: Can the Red Army fight the counterinsurgency war?* comes to similar conclusions and compares them with Frunze's five points of successful COIN campaign- (1) controlling urban areas, (2) protecting lines of communication, (3) driving the guerrillas into isolating areas where it is easier to engage them, (4) locating guerrilla units and employing large formations to eliminate their base camps and (5) sealing border areas. He points out, that Soviets succeeded only in achieving objectives 1,2 and 4 (Derleth 1988:50).

The strategy Soviet leadership applied after the decision on withdrawal was made actually proved to be well elaborated and sufficiently executed. The crucial was the national reconciliation program, continuous financial support and, arms supplies and other forms of aid. As the history showed us, once the foreign supplies stopped, the regime lasted only few months until the Taliban regime raised from the insurgents took power. The development of this process as the prologue for the next war and the evaluation of the Western allies' engagement in Afghanistan will be analysed in the following chapter.

### **3. The American longest war**

Afghanistan has been called a “graveyard of empires”. Alexander the Great ran into fierce resistance there during his campaign in 327 BC. Genghis Khan and the great Mughal emperors established great empires but only until they entered Afghanistan. The British engagement in two wars here in 19<sup>th</sup> century turned to be a disaster as well. Premier historian of Afghanistan, Louis Dupree, identifies four factors that contributed to the British failure (Bearden 2001):

- 1) The occupation of Afghan territory by foreign troops,
- 2) The placing of a unpopular emir on the throne,
- 3) Harsh acts of the Afghans (British supported) against their local enemies,
- 4) Reduction of subsidies paid to the tribal chiefs by British,

The British Empire repeated those mistakes in both wars, as would Soviets the century later as it was shown in the previous chapter. The question if the Americans learned the history lessons would not fall into the same problems remains to be answered in this chapter.

The American government was interested in Afghanistan long before it became safe haven for terrorists and famous story says it was the U.S. who “created” terrorists when they supplied and trained mujahedeen in the war against Soviets. The covert “Operation Cyclone” was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. When the Soviet Union collapsed and could not longer support Afghan client regime, the government of president Najibullah was toppled and civil war follows. Pakistan, India and Russia supported different factions in this war in order to protect and extend their influence in the region. The war lasted till 1996 and unlike the previous war with Soviet engagement; this one affected mostly the urban areas. For the purpose of this study, next paragraph will focus only on one of the mujahedeen groups- Taliban that took power at the end of civil war in 1996 and their rule lasted till the U.S. invasion in 2001. In the next subchapter, the development in Afghanistan after the Soviet aid was stopped till the U.S. invasion will be outlined.

#### **3.1. Civil war of the 1990s and Taliban’s rule**

First of all it is necessary to make clear, that Taliban is not one homogeneous group or just only one Taliban movement, because Taliban simply means “students”, in this case “religious students” or “seekers”. The Taliban movement is believed to be rooted in the Cold War environment of Islamic revolution in Iran, Soviet invasion to Afghanistan and the U.S.

effort to beat the Soviet Union. Taliban emerged at the beginning of 1990s in northern Pakistan after the Soviets withdrew their troops from Afghanistan. They firstly appeared in religious seminaries funded mostly by the Saudi Arabia and teaching an extreme interpretation of Sunni Islam (Simpson 2013). According to Taliban sources they came into existence in summer 1994 as a small group around mullah and mujahedeen Mohammed Omar, commonly known as “mullah Omar” (Vogelsang 2010: 316).

When the Soviets left the collapsed Afghanistan in the neighbourhood of destabilized Pakistan, the U.S. stopped to care about the region either, leaving here thousands of mujahedeen<sup>30</sup> fighters trained to fight against Soviets<sup>31</sup>. Taliban was one of these mujahedeen groups joined by many other Afghani tribe men educated in Pakistani madrasas<sup>32</sup>. This predominantly Pashtun movement attracted the popular support by claiming that they would bring stability and rule of law to the Afghanistan after years of conflict. Their first public appearance occurred in September or October 1994 when they seized huge arms depot (AK-47s and ammunition) stockpiled near Kandahar (Tanner 2003:279). When the movement took over the city Kandahar they got access to the city’s arms including tanks, Mig-21 jets and helicopters. Taliban thus has got access to the arms supplies and in couple of months they had under control significant part of Afghani territory.

The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan were complicated since the end of the Soviet occupation. The Rabbani government was not able to hold the Afghani territory under control and to fight against various armed groups. The only two warlords who were capable of holding the control over their provinces were Ismaíl Chán in Herat and Rashíd Dóstum in Mazar-e Sharif. In 1994 Pakistan decided to open the road to Central Asia through Kandahar and Herat<sup>33</sup>, but the thirty-truck convoy sent to test the road was kidnapped by an Afghani warlord. By November 1994 Taliban was already very well equipped so they could attack the kidnappers. They won and managed to conquer the tribal areas in the South Afghanistan and headed north toward Herat, Ghazni and the capital (Tanner 2003: 279). After series of battles between Taliban (joined by some local groups) and governmental forces and other alliances

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<sup>30</sup> „Freedom fighters“.

<sup>31</sup> The trainings of the mujahedeens were funded and supported by the U.S. through Pakistani secret service in the framework of so called „Operation Cyclone“.

<sup>32</sup> Madrasa is a type of school or seminar where students are educated in Islamic religion often in its very orthodox interpretation.

<sup>33</sup> Pakistan wanted to execute this plan already since the breakdown of the Soviet Union in order to have direct access on the ground to newly independent Central Asian republics. The route through Kandahar and Herat was one of two options. The other one was through Kabul and Salang mountain pass.

they seized the capital Kabul from a Tajik president Burhanuddin Rabbani who they viewed as corrupt and anti-Pashtun<sup>34</sup>.

According to various sources, Taliban controlled 90% of the Afghani territory by the end of 2001 although they gained diplomatic recognition only by three states: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. Taliban imposed a specific justice system in the country drawn from Pashtun pre-Islamic tribal code and interpretation of sharia influenced by Wahhabism<sup>35</sup>. The social system was not working in the country and women faced many prohibitions, oppression and abusive treatment (Laub 2014).<sup>36</sup>

Already before Taliban seized control over the vast part of Afghani territory, some countries expressed their concern about the procedures (Sunni) Taliban was adopting<sup>37</sup>. The U.S. did not involve so much as before though they still provided funding to the UN humanitarian assistance. Besides they secretly send money to Taliban again through Pakistani secret service (Vogelsang 2010: 320). The reason for this is quite simple, the idea of this *“mysterious new army, rifles in one hand and Korans in the other, rolling over the countryside leaving order in the place of chaos, was not unpleasing”* (Tanner 2003: 280).

In the years 1996-1997 the civil war in Afghanistan continued. Taliban controlled the south of the country, Rabbani and Massoud<sup>38</sup> the south-east and Dostum<sup>39</sup> the north. In May 1997 Taliban defeated Dostum<sup>40</sup> and its troops seized control over Mazar-e Sharif. The radicals moved further to the eastern border and by this forced Rabbani to flee from the country too. Taliban had under control majority of the Afghani territory and the population was informed that they were planning to introduce the form of Muslim society already established in Kabul, Kandahar and Herat. This step provoked public protests mostly from the Shia part of the society, Hazars and Tajik-Ismaili community which ended up in bloodshed when thousands of Talibs were killed and executed (Vogelsang 2010: 322). The only provinces that resisted Taliban de facto till 2001 remained only Badakhstan and Panjshir controlled by Massoud and his forces called United Front (UF).

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<sup>34</sup> There were many battles in which Taliban lost and regained the capital over the years of civil war.

<sup>35</sup> Given to the Saudi financial support for madrasas

<sup>36</sup> UN Security Council issued two resolutions in 1998 in which they urged Taliban to end this.

<sup>37</sup> Among these was Iran, Russia and Central Asian republics.

<sup>38</sup> Ahmad Shah Massoud was one of the leaders of the mujahedeens under the Soviet occupation and then fought against the pro-Soviet president Mohammad Najibullah and until his death he countered Taliban as well.

<sup>39</sup> Abdul Rashid Dostum is currently serving as a Afghani vice president. He is the warlord and leader of the Uzbek community in Afghanistan and fought against the mujahedeens in the 1980s and against Taliban in the 1990s.

<sup>40</sup> He fled to Turkey in the meantime.



Afghanistan got into an international isolation and during the years 1999 and 2000 the UN imposed sanctions embargo on arms and freezing foreign accounts of Taliban (The UN Security Council Committee official website). The world started to pay even more attention to the conflict in Afghanistan in spring 2001 when Taliban dynamited two huge Buddha statues (3-5<sup>th</sup> century) as well as others pre-Islam monuments.

### **3.2. 9/11 attacks and the U.S. response**

Few things had happened before the attacks on September 11, 2001 occurred. In 1990 Osama Bin Laden moved from Afghanistan and in 1992 he settled in Sudan where he started to build the world's biggest terrorist organization, Al Qaeda. During 1990s Al Qaeda plotted few terrorist attacks on American targets- U.S. soldiers blown up in Saudi Arabia in 1995, two attacks on the American embassies in the capitals of Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the attack on U.S.S. Cole in 2000 being just the best known examples. In 1996 Bin Laden came back to Afghanistan in the pursuit of safe haven and base for his organization after being denationalized from the side of Saudi Arabia and asked to leave the country from Sudan. He settled in a cave complex and through 2000 Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar started to work closely together. The head of Taliban saw in Al Qaeda the well-organized world network of fighters and scholars dedicated to jihad. Bin Laden on the other side used religious schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan for recruitment (Tanner 2003:287).

Only few days before Al Qaeda terrorists kidnapped four U.S. airplanes and crashed them into World Trade Centre and Pentagon<sup>41</sup> in the last bastion of counter-Taliban resistance on the Afghani-Tajikistan border Massoud allowed doing an interview with two Algerian journalists with Belgian passports. He was killed during the interview by a bomb hidden in the camera both with the journalists. They were Al Qaeda terrorists, Massoud died few hours later and Taliban next day took control over the territory of its most formidable opponent. The day after Al Qaeda executed its most significant attack and shaped the future of the international security. The U.S. invasion to Afghanistan has become both with Iraq the legacy of George W. Bush and was heavily criticised over the years since it turned to be longer and more difficult than anyone had expected. Obama set his own goal as a president- to withdraw the U.S. soldiers from Afghanistan and vowed to end the American war by the end of his presidency (Jaffe and Nakamura 2015).

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<sup>41</sup> The last plane crashed into the fields of Pennsylvania before getting to the planned target- the White House.

After the 9/11 attacks the U.S President George W. Bush declared national state of emergency and pledged to build international alliance through NATO and other allies to fight against Al Qaeda and Taliban. A month later, the U.S. entered Afghanistan with some support of NATO and Northern Alliance<sup>42</sup> that secured the fall of Northern provinces and cities Mazar-e Sharif, Herat and Kabul. (Rashid 2008: X). For the sake of this Thesis, the forces deployed in Afghanistan to fight the insurgency and help with reconstruction of the country will be called further on “Western allies” when addressing the U.S. army and NATO forces.

However the first step already before the invasion was the U.S. request that the Taliban government handed over Bin Laden, but Mullah Omar instinctively refused. Also Pakistani authorities tried to convince Mullah Omar at this point to do what the Americans asked for, so he started to negotiate, but had a lot of conditions and demanded “convincing evidence” of Bin Laden’s involvement. The negotiations though did not bear fruit and also the Taliban’s last ally, Pakistan, offered its full support to the U.S. On the October 7 American and British forces attacked Afghanistan. The bombings lasted for couple of weeks but proved to cause more damage than benefit and international criticism arose. Meanwhile the Northern Alliance defeated Taliban in the northern areas and set free Mazar-e Sharif, Kunduz and Toliqan. Despite their promise to the U.S. they entered Kabul and were celebrated as heroes.

In December 2001 Afghanistan seemed to be clean from Taliban, but there was a doubt that Taliban actually rather disappeared than was defeated. On the meeting of the council of Afghani leaders in Bonn they agreed to name Hamid Karzai a head of interim government (Tanner 2003: 307). After two terms in office, the presidential elections took place and after turbulent election process, the new president was named: Ashraf Ghani, former minister of finance and ex-World Bank economist won over Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. When the results went public, the two statesmen signed a power-sharing agreement that creates a chief executive position similar to prime minister for Abdullah. The two will share control over key institutions such as Afghan army and others (Gul 2014).

Much has been written about the war in Afghanistan and scholars always like to find historical analogies. The case of Afghanistan reminded to some the U.S. failure in Vietnam. But unlike the Vietnam War, there was no draft for the invasion to Afghanistan. That was the lesson American leaders learned from this conflict, because as the professor David Ray Griffin points out: *“If the sons and daughters of wealthy and middle-class parents were coming home in boxes, or with permanent injuries or post-traumatic stress syndrome, this*

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<sup>42</sup> Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras.

*war would have surely been stopped long ago.*” (Griffin 2010) The same author adds that the U.S. presence besides never being legally justified has also never been morally justified. And as Noam Chomsky, the famous American leftist philosopher and great critique of the U.S. policy in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq likes to say, *“the U.S. invades, destroys the country, kills couple hundreds of thousands people, incites sectarian conflicts that tear the region apart and calls it stabilization. If someone resists that attack, that’s destabilization”* (Chomsky 2015).

### **3.3. Western strategy in Afghanistan- political dimension**

The invasion to Afghanistan started, as it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, by the U.S. and their close ally, United Kingdom as they launched the “Operation Enduring Freedom” on October 7, 2001 by air strikes on Al-Qaeda and Taliban targets. The first reported ground operation occurred on October 19, when the U.S. troops searched a compound used by Mullah Omar. In the upcoming days, the British Armed Forces Minister announced deployment of forces to Afghanistan and more countries followed the example.<sup>43</sup> Roughly a month later, on November 13, the U.S. air strikes and ground operations led by anti-Taliban Northern alliance caused the fall of Kabul. On the UN conference in December, resulting Bonn Agreement creates the Afghan Interim Authority and outlines the process of creation of the new constitution and election of a new government. Shortly after, the UN authorizes International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission to Afghanistan. NATO assumed responsibility of the operation in August 2002 (CNN Library). When Taliban got evicted from their positions soon after the invasion, they departed Afghanistan in large numbers and moved primarily to Pakistan and have been operating from there and from the border region.

The fundamental components of the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan were very accurately summed up by Catherine Dale in her report *War in Afghanistan: Campaign Progress, Political Strategy, and Issues for Congress* reflecting the end of ISAF mission and also announced end of American war from January 2014. These components include:

- 1) the U.S. national security interests in Afghanistan and the region,

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<sup>43</sup> Turkey, Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, France, Poland.

- 2) The essential conditions (economic, political, security) that would need to be pertain in Afghanistan and in the region in order to protect those U.S. national security interests,
- 3) Current and projected U.S. approaches for helping Afghans establish and sustain those conditions,
- 4) The timeline by which and extent to which the Afghans would be able to sustain those conditions with limited help from the international community,
- 5) Risks to U.S. national security interests if the Afghans are unable to do so,
- 6) The overall effort (given to the timeline, costs and risks) compared to other U.S. priorities. (Dale 2014:3).

President Obama in his remarks on the new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009 identified two core goals for the war: to defeat al-Qaeda and to prevent future safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Obama 2009). The first goal, according to the current president has been achieved<sup>44</sup>. This statement has been challenged constantly by politicians, scholars and intelligence officers though. But the truth is that the U.S. managed to kill majority of Al-Qaeda's leaders including Osama Bin Laden and the world attention is nowadays more focused on ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) than Al-Qaeda which is widely considered as defeated.

The second goal, Obama wanted to achieve in Afghanistan (and Pakistan)<sup>45</sup> is more a long way run. Certainly, Afghanistan is more secure place than it used to be, the infrastructure is more developed and the society is slowly getting up from its knees. Nevertheless in the light of the ending of ISAF mission and Obama's plans to conclude the war in Afghanistan once and for all, the stability in the country and the region becomes a topic again. India and Pakistan might seek influence in the country once the Americans are gone. As Dasgupta pointed out, Americans made Pakistan after 9/11 their major non-NATO ally, but India has been seen as a more trustful partner over the years. Besides, to Indians preventing Afghanistan from becoming "terrorist state" once again means preventing Pakistan from getting influence there (Dasgupta 2013: 9). The fear of a new wave of Islamic radicalization

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<sup>44</sup> Obama claimed that the NATO alliance had succeeded in the al-Qaeda defeat for instance at the occasion when he called for an alliance against the Islamic State in September 2014.

<sup>45</sup> The U.S. strategy aimed at dealing with the situation in both states given to the very porous border between the two which is dividing the Pashtu ethnic group.

in Afghanistan might be accurate- the vast openings of privately ran madrassas<sup>46</sup> in the second half of 2014 can be just a sign of it.<sup>47</sup>

### **3.4. Invasion to Afghanistan-tactical dimension**

Some might argue that at the time when the U.S. and the British forces invaded Afghanistan they did not fight the rebels, but the government itself represented by Taliban. Therefore, the invasion not only could be legally justified, it also was not a counterinsurgency operation. This argument, however, can be questioned since Taliban government had been recognized as legitimate only by three other governments (Stauss 2012).

The U.S. and its allies came to Afghanistan to destroy the terrorist network, the Bush administration stated that it is not out to replace one government by another (Gossman 2001:8). The deposition and eviction of Taliban from Kabul invoked fear that this action might create a power vacuum similar to the one that accompanied the fall of the communist government and the anarchy and civil war followed. After initial success when the coalition forces overthrew the Taliban government, the invaders got into a protracted conflict fighting a mixed group of insurgents comprising Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network, foreign fighters, local tribes, and criminal organizations (Jones 2008: iii).

Since 9/11 the American administrations have tried to find the way how to make Afghanistan a state inhospitable to terrorist organizations. The goal was clear enough, but the fulfilment has proved complicated. The Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, retired U.S. lieutenant general and former ambassador in Afghanistan in his lectures given at the Stanford University in 2014 and 2015 divides U.S. strategy in Afghanistan into four time periods (Eikenberry 2014):

1. **2001-2003:** The U.S. forces note great initial success against Al Qaeda and their presence in Afghanistan and they pushed them across the border to Pakistan both with great successes in the fight against Taliban. These initial years of the invasion were focused on pursuing Al Qaeda and their destruction together with preventing Taliban to regroup and come back to

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<sup>46</sup> Islamic schools where they teach an extremist interpretation of Quran.

<sup>47</sup> The document which monitors this process of radicalization of young girls was transmitted by Al Jazeera in December 2014.

Afghanistan. The U.S. used the methodology of “light footprint”<sup>48</sup>. The U.S. and the Afghan forces jointly believed, the time was on their side. The interesting fact is that at this point no one in Washington D.C. called for broad international coalition to come to Afghanistan<sup>49</sup> although NATO volunteered for the mission. In that time, the U.S. forces lacked any knowledge about Afghanistan and underestimated the role of time, resources and complexity of the mission.

2. **2004-2008:** Taliban begins to reconstitute itself and the weakness of the Karzai government starts to emerge. The international security forces under auspices of NATO are brought to Afghanistan in this period. The U.S. strategy is focused on state building and on building of Afghan national security forces but the resources become to be an obstacle.<sup>50</sup> On the tactical level, the U.S. forces started to lose intelligence gathering capacities and troop’s capacities. Also the U.S. Department of State pays more attention on Iraq.

The U.S. chairman of Joint Chief of Staff Adm. Michael G. Mullen said before House Armed Services Committee the famous and very accurate acknowledgment: “*In Iraq we do what we must. In Afghanistan we do what we can*” (Mullen 2007).

3. **2009-2011:** the situation in Afghanistan is getting close to its tipping point and president Obama assumed office in the beginning of this period. He ordered additional commitments to Afghanistan in military and civilian terms to push back Taliban momentum and to refocus efforts against Al Qaeda<sup>51</sup>. The strategy is focused also on the building of the Afghan national security forces so they could take responsibility of providing security services from the international coalition and on increasing the capacity of the Afghan government. By surging the U.S. capacity in Afghanistan, Obama also claims to start pulling back the military and civilian personnel in summer 2011 setting

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<sup>48</sup> This methodology means not to have a lot of troops and embassy personnel on the ground.

<sup>49</sup> The U.S. did not want to have their hands tight and to get stuck in some restrictions put by NATO for instance.

<sup>50</sup> The invasion in Iraq started to consume more and more resources.

<sup>51</sup> At the time when Obama assumed Office as president, the U.S. had 35 000 troops in Afghanistan. One and half year later, there were 100 000 troops there. Also the U.S. embassy counted around 330 personnel and after two years of Obama in the Office it grew to 1400. Moreover, the U.S. Congress eventually confirmed the committment of 4,1 billion \$ as development aid funds.

conditions for Afghan transition. Also the dialogue between the Afghan government, the U.S. and Taliban started.

4. **2011-2014:** the U.S. military and civilian personnel starts to withdraw and come back home. This transition period is manifested by Afghan national security forces (the army and the police) taking full responsibility for provision of security throughout their country with some back, logistic support from the allies still present in the country. It needs to be mentioned that this transition process was fully sanctioned by the UN, NATO, and Afghan and U.S. governments.

At the time of the peak of counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan, the four-star general David Howell Petraeus served as commander of ISAF mission and Commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan (2010-2011). He is the author of an influential COMISAF's counterinsurgency guideline which first update was issued in August 2010. The instructions he gives to the soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and civilians sum up the goals and procedures how to achieve those goals and they correspond with classic counterinsurgency theory and the roots of them can be find in the U.S. counterinsurgency field manual 3-24. The author elaborates on this further on. Basically, Petraeus considers the population to be crucial in the COIN efforts together with cooperation with the Afghan partners in fighting against extremist insurgency. The sensitive, targeted and wisely used force is also one of the most important points. This point is closely connected with the thesis: "hold what we secure" which proved to be problematic in the case of Soviet invasion (Petraeus 2010:1-4).

The U.S. in a way repeated the mistakes the USSR did in Afghanistan twenty years before. Although the massive conventional attack worked at the beginning of the campaign, it proved to be unsustainable. The current U.S. counterinsurgency strategy (or doctrine to be more precise) has been applied in robust way Afghanistan since 2009 and corresponds with the last two periods of war defined by Eikenberry. Advocates of the counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan claim, it would be successful, but was applied late and not in the sufficient extent and that is the reason why the western allies are still in Afghanistan. Occasionally, some achievements occur in the news but these are more the result of successful and capable military and civilian officials and the problem is not the doctrinal inadequacy but inadequacy of the members (Eikenberry 2013).

The U.S. Army together with Marine Corpses issued a crucial document for the ongoing counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in that time- *Field Manual 3-24*

published in 2006. The manual is considered to be the resurrection of the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy and was designed to fill the 20 years gap. This “COIN handbook” provides principles and a guideline for the U.S. forces deployed on the ground and defines counterinsurgency as “offensive, defensive and stability operations conducted along multiple lines of operation” (FM 3-24 2006). This guideline identifies eight historical objectives of COIN (FM 3-24 2006:21-24):

- 1) Legitimacy is the main objective,
- 2) Unity of effort is essential,
- 3) Political factors are primary,
- 4) Counterinsurgents must understand the environment,
- 5) Intelligence drives operations,
- 6) Insurgents must be isolated from their cause and support,
- 7) Security under the rule of law is essential,
- 8) Counterinsurgents should prepare for a long-term commitment.

All these principles basically match with the classic counterinsurgency theories presented in the theoretical framework at the beginning of this Thesis.

Also, the field manual works with five COIN imperatives the U.S. forces should stick to (FM 3-24 2006: 24-26):

1. Manage information and expectations,
2. Use the appropriate level of force,
3. Learn and adapt,
4. Empower the lowest levels,
5. Support the host nation.

However, the manual acknowledges that those above listed principles and imperatives present complex and often unfamiliar set of missions and considerations. The additional value of the handbook can be the “set of COIN paradoxes” put just after the principles and imperatives (FM 3-24 2006:26-28). This part actually corresponds with the overall message given by the Kilcullen’s *Twenty-Eight articles* about counterinsurgency on the company level outlined in the theoretical chapter:

1. Sometimes, the more you protect your force, the less secure you may be,
2. Sometimes, the more force is used, the less effective it is,



3. The more successful the counterinsurgency is, the less force can be used and the more risk must be accepted,
4. Sometimes doing nothing is the best reaction,
5. Some of the best weapons for the counterinsurgents do not shoot,
6. The host nation doing something tolerably is normally better than us doing it well,
7. If a tactics works this week it might not work next week: if it works in this province it might not work in the next,
8. Tactical success guarantees nothing,
9. Many important decisions are not made by generals.

The general assumption is that the force is not counterproductive, if you kill the right people, if there is a purpose the people can understand, if the information campaign is consistent with the action, if the counterinsurgent uses appropriate force for the situation or if the force creates security as a part of nested plan.

Broadly stated, modern COIN doctrines are focused on protecting the civilian population, on the elimination of insurgent leaders and infrastructure and on helping to establish a legitimate and accountable government that would be able to provide essential human services. The COIN in Afghanistan has been based on three crucial assumptions according to Eikenberry: *“...that the COIN goal of protecting the population was clear and attainable and would prove decisive, that higher levels of foreign assistance and support would substantially increase the Afghan government’s capacity and legitimacy, and that a COIN approach by the United States would be consistent with the political-military approach preferred by Afghan President Hamid Karzai.”* (Eikenberry 2013).

However, after several years of conducting COIN operations in Afghanistan, those three assumptions proved to be incorrect and the strategy itself incoherent and difficult to prosecute. The protection of population is a very tricky term in the environment of Afghanistan. What does it mean actually “to protect the people”? – To protect them against the insurgents (Taliban, Al-Qaeda), or also against narcotraffickers, or should the counterinsurgent protect the civilians in inter-tribal armed dispute with roots dating back a century or more? Or does the protection of people include the protection from unemployment, given to the high number of recruits coming from the unemployed young men? Or does it

even include building hospitals, providing health care and so on? These theoretical questions have become harsh reality in Afghanistan. And this is what Galula meant by saying that the counterinsurgent/*the soldier must then be prepared to become...a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout. But only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians.*” (FM 3-24 2006: 2-9) However, Galula works with the assumption that the soldiers should conduct that kind of operation but only at the early stage of the COIN campaign and eventually military should be revealed from civic duties by civilian entities capable to do it well. But such transfer did not happen in Afghanistan (Eikenberry 2013). Eikenberry adds another interesting fact when compares Galula’s COIN principles with the reality in Afghanistan: Galula established a path for the counterinsurgent to follow but he did not specify a destination and it is extremely difficult to conduct a counterinsurgency campaign when you do not know when or where it ends.

Another problematic aspect in Afghanistan is the simple establishment of democratically elected accountable government that would provide all the services the population needs in return of their taxes and payments. If the government proves unable to do so, the electorate can replace it in the next elections. This process common in democratic societies does not work in Afghanistan, since the Afghan government collects extremely low level of revenue and large share of its income is rather from customs than taxation. Afghanistan is still very dependent on foreign aid. Ultimately, in the light of the above stated, the civilians have looked at the U.S. not as a protectors, but supporters of the weak and corrupt government (Eikenberry 2013). Eikenberry concludes that counterinsurgency doctrine needs to be bounded politically and before the next proposed COIN toss the Americans should have a transparent debate about its ends and means.

### **3.5. Problems of the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan**

For the U.S. the war in Afghanistan began long before 9/11. The secret support of the American government to the mujahedeen during the Soviet invasion connects these two wars in a way that it makes the current situation more complex. Main factors that contributed to the failure of big empires in Afghanistan were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Some mistakes repeated the Soviets after British, and frankly, some of them repeated Americans and western allies too. Occupation of the foreign troops certainly is one of them; the western military and civilian personal has been in the country for more than 13 years now. The question is, if the successful invasion can be done without it. We can argue, if Karzai was the

“unpopular emir on the throne”, truth is that the relations between him and the western allies worsened over time and to use the Eikenberry football dictionary, if the Americans played American football in Afghanistan, it was not clear what sport Karzai was playing or whether he was even in the same stadium as the Americans (Eikenberry 2013). Harsh actions of Afghans (western supported) against their local enemies is not considered a significant problem in this war, but the reduction of subsidies certainly might be. The COIN operations are protracted by nature and costly.

When making evaluation of the advantages the insurgency operates with (according to Galula’s categories) they remain pretty much the same as in the last war against Soviets, only the ideology of the invaders changed: from the communist model to the liberal democracy. Perhaps the element of religion and its extremist understanding plays bigger role now than before.<sup>52</sup> Regarding the success of the COIN operations when evaluated in the terms Galula established it can be said that in theory, the western allies were more successful than Soviets. The communist model simply did not work for the Afghanistan while the democracy (in Islamic terms so to say) can be the path to go. However, the point in which Galula postulates the assignment of various tasks to the local active leaders causes difficulties.

The “winning hearts and minds strategy” also showed to be nicely planned but there have been serious ruptures in its execution, starting with the weakness of the Karzai government and the U.S. unwillingness to admit that the main body of the insurgency moved to Pakistan which has been widely politically considered as an ally in this war. The political commitments and their introduction into practice are crucial. Western allies have spent more than 13 years in Afghanistan fighting insurgency, building the state and teaching Afghans how to handle the situation on their own and how to take responsibility for their own security and provision of services. Barack Obama set a goal to end the war in Afghanistan in his presidency, but the American soldiers are still there and will be for the next one and half year at least. Certainly, the bounds once built cannot be broken instantly same applies to the foreign financial help Afghanistan depends on. If this happens, the scenario of 1990s can easily repeat. Western allies slowly withdraw their personnel from Afghanistan, but the Americans have to stay. It is understandable since they started the war and have biggest financial, technical and personal primarily military resources. But the U.S. policymakers have to ask themselves the same question the Soviets have to: “what are we doing in Afghanistan and why are we still there” to put it simple.

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<sup>52</sup> However, in the case of Afghanistan, the tribal traditions have played traditionally more important role than religion.

## Conclusion

*„We will never be a pawn in someone else’s game. We will always be Afghanistan. “*

Ahmad Shah Massoud

The quote written above expresses very accurately the spirit of the Afghans. Generations of Afghans (those who have not emigrate) have survived their lives in continuous war. It all began actually already in 1973 with the Soviet-backed coup and proceeded with the political struggle of pro-communist government against rebels which reached its tipping point with the USSR invasion. Soviets hesitated from intervening and after the decision was made and the Soviet troops entered Afghanistan they hit on the fierce resistance and due to many factors, were forced to withdraw after few years, thousands of civilian and military casualties. Difficult years of civilian war and the rise of extremist Islamic movement Taliban followed. Afghanistan became a safe haven for various radical groups including Al-Qaeda. 9/11 attacks predestined the Afghan faith for the next decades.

The aim of this Thesis was to find out whether are the Afghans such a brilliant undefeatable fighters against the conventionally stronger opponent or is the unsuitable strategy the reason why the big empires fail in Afghanistan. On the two examples of wars the author tried to show the complex security framework of the Afghanistan. The two invasions were chosen because of their nature (in both cases the invader operated with significant conventional superiority and noted successes at the beginning of the invasion while using conventional force but later was forced to resort to counterinsurgency tactics). However, as the research showed, the two wars proved to be unsuitable for comparing as a whole. Author analysed the strategies applied during the whole invasion and identified a “tipping point” when the invader resorted to counterinsurgency strategy. From this tipping point on, the counterinsurgency doctrines of the two powers (Soviet and American) were analysed from the perspective of Galula’s criteria and the counterinsurgency theory presented in the first chapter.

To answer the research questions set at the beginning, it can be stated that there were many external and internal factors leading to the Soviet invasion in 1979 summed up in the political instability in the country under the client pro-communist regime and the radicalism of the president Noor Muhammand Taraki. The U.S. cut off the support for Afghanistan and the Afghan government pledged for help from Moscow in order to suppress the opposition.

Soviet leadership hesitated and did not want to get involved directly in military terms.<sup>53</sup> The Soviet army was against the invasion reminding the American fiasco in Vietnam, but a small group inside politburo decided in favour of the intervention. The main element of the Soviet strategy was to limit the military commitment and the whole invasion was planned only as a resurrection of DRA (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's Army). Soviets identified several military and non-military goals to achieve. In the military terms it was securing Kabul and the main highways, targeting the suspected resistance pockets (destroying villages, crops) combined with forcing the inhabitants that supported them to exile in order to weaken the insurgency and finally an attempt to close the border with Pakistan to avert caravans from supplying the rebels with guns and ammunition. In non-military terms, the USSR sought to achieve the rebuilding the infrastructure of the Afghan government and the army by educating new cadres together with planning to win adherents for political representation. Firstly, they applied brute force and once this strategy reached its tipping point (when the conventional tactics stopped working and the insurgents resorted to the partisan strategy in the mountains and the invader was forced to adjust his tactics). Although the Soviet leadership realized the necessity of changing the strategy their showed their inability to adapt to this new type of warfare. The success of the insurgents in the war against Soviets can be explained by the fact that they sufficiently fulfilled the Galula's criteria for successful insurgency as it was shown in the second chapter. Regarding the fulfilment of Galula's criteria for successful counterinsurgency, the Soviets failed in the majority of them. This evaluation works with the assumption that the strategy the Soviets applied was a counterinsurgency strategy from the time when they were forced to adjust the tactics due to the nature of conflict. For this argument speaks also the fact that Soviets pushed the Afghan government for the national reconciliation program, replaced unpopular Afghan leader and adopted more steps which can be considered as part of the counterinsurgency strategy. Another fact that needs to be taken into account is that the Soviets were actively engaged in combat until 1985 when they started to plan the withdrawal and as it was shown in the analysis, the withdrawal strategy was sufficiently planned and executed. The crucial was the continuous financial, political and other forms of aid the USSR kept providing Afghanistan until 1992. The reason why the outcome of the Soviet-Afghan war is widely considered as failure is more complex and the analysis has shown that the insufficient fulfilment of Galula's criteria or rather inability to do is just part of the answer.

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<sup>53</sup> Given to the state of relations between USSR and the U.S.

Regarding the second part of the Thesis dealing with the American engagement in Afghanistan, following conclusion can be made. The internal and external factors leading to the U.S. invasion and the follow-up NATO ISAF mission have been clearly described. Afghanistan after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and interruption of foreign aid became a rogue state under the rule of extremist Islamist Taliban movement and provided safe haven to radical groups including the worldwide terrorist organisation Al Qaeda which planned and executed 9/11 attacks, the biggest and most extensive terrorist attack of all times. The U.S. government led by President Bush invaded Afghanistan soon after and fought the war at first only with the British, then other Western allies joined them followed by NATO mission. The Americans to certain extent repeated Soviet mistakes and the strategies were similar in some points. The U.S. forces like the Soviets before noted significant success at the beginning of the invasion when applied brute conventional force and manage to gain control over Kabul relatively early, so they succeeded in the first Galula condition- to expel the insurgency main body. Insurgency leaders moved to Pakistan and this step complicated the campaign, since Pakistan has been understood as the U.S. ally in the war and at the same time the allies found out the insurgents acquired shelter there. The allies sought to limit their engagement in the first periods of invasion and the robust COIN doctrine was introduced in 2009 with Obama becoming the U.S. president. The resources were boosted and the conditions were prepared for Afghan transition. In 2011 the allied forces gradually started to withdraw from the country and the withdrawal process is still ongoing. In general, the limits of the U.S. counterinsurgency as the analysis showed reside in the discrepancy between the declared goals, objectives, strategy and tactics and their execution. Some argue that on the paper strategy looked well and the reason why it failed is because of lack of resources and incapacity of its executors. The Americans wanted to introduce the policy of “winning hearts and minds of the people” is it has been mentioned many times and certainly, they succeeded in establishing close contact with the population. If they succeeded in winning their trust is questionable. The Karzai government appointed by the Western allies to rule the country after the Taliban expulsion proved to be weak and corrupted and the state bodies unable to assume responsibilities to provide security and other civil services to the inhabitants. The term “protection of civilians” no longer means military protection of their lives. Anyway, Galula assumes that at certain point, the burden of protection the civilians and securing other services will be transferred to local authorities and also the U.S. FM 3-24 works with this fact by claiming “The host nation doing something tolerably is normally better than us doing it well”. Certainly, the foreign assistance at training the Afghan army, police and civil service is the

crucial element in the Western counterinsurgency efforts. But as it was shown in the analysis this is just part of the problem solution. Afghanistan is still almost exclusively dependent on foreign financial, humanitarian and other forms of aid. Long term commitment from the side of the U.S. and its allies is more than needed as well as supporting Afghan economy and here comes the historical lesson to be learned from the Soviet failure to do so. The last Galula's condition for successful insurgency remained unfulfilled in the case of the Soviet war and it looks like it remains unfulfilled in the current conflict as well: *Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants*. Although Obama claimed Al Qaeda as defeated, there are signs occurring that Taliban movement is far from being defeated and waits for the comeback. The time will show if the Americans did not leave the country too quickly and whether there is a possibility they would have to come back eventually because Taliban lost its only strong opponent. As the Taliban mullahs are fond of saying: *"The Americans have wristwatches but we have time"*. The message in this is simple: *"The Americans may stay for five years, they may stay for ten, but eventually they will leave and when they do, we will come back"* (Johnson and Mason 2006: 87).

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